



"A Manchester Tradition For Over 100 Years"

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Hometown artist wins prestigious award for her first children's book.

Lisa Greenleaf, formally of Manchester By-The-Sea, was recently awarded the Bronze Medal for Illustration from the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards for her newly published book *John Greenleaf Whittier's The Barefoot Boy*. Ms. Greenleaf fulfilled a dream of bringing her ancestor's poem and story back to life through 26 captivating illustrations. Ms. Greenleaf's adaptation also includes a brief biography of Mr. Whittier's countless achievements and accomplishments as a New England Quaker, poet, abolitionist, mentor to Louisa May Alcott and Mark Twain, and a contemporary of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and the Fireside Poets.

The beautifully drawn color illustrations within the book are both detailed and captivating -- you can almost pluck strawberries from the page, hear the creeks meandering through the New England landscape, and recall the freedom of running barefoot in the summer sun. The imagery from John Greenleaf Whittier's childhood home in Haverhill, MA comes to life as the poem recounts his summers as a youth.

As a child, Ms. Greenleaf learned that her family was related to the late poet John Greenleaf Whittier. As a Girl Scout, she worked on her family tree and lineage, which sparked her curiosity in Mr. Whittier and his poems. Throughout the years, she continued her research on this remarkable New England icon. She recalls her father telling her once that he had to memorize "The Barefoot Boy" poem when he was a boy. He also used



Lisa sitting and drawing at her ancestor's John Greenleaf Whittier's Desk

to recite the poem to Ms. Greenleaf and her two sisters when they were young children themselves. Ms. Greenleaf believes this may be why the poem is so meaningful to her. The poem is a reflection and a reminder for all of us to cherish the exuberance of youth and always hold it close to you.

Ms. Greenleaf grew up in Manchester-by-the-Sea where she found her passion in drawing and painting at a very young age. In a recent interview, Ms. Greenleaf spoke of her early childhood:

"I struggled with reading and writing as a child, so I never even considered being a poet or writer. Plus, teachers told me that I wasn't going to amount to anything. But I had always viewed myself as an artist since the first grade. As Mr. Whittier escaped into his words in his youth, I escaped into my drawings. It has always allowed a freedom of expression and a relaxing outlet for me. I think that many poets, authors, and artists



experience the same feeling. Being a designer and artist in various mediums allows me to express my thoughts and myself in different ways at different times. As an interesting aside, I have overcome my early struggles with writing and wrote the four page biography of Mr. Whittier in this book.”

When asked about what inspired her to embark on this project, Ms. Greenleaf went on to say:

“I have always had a passion for inspiring people. In the case of ‘The Barefoot Boy’ project, I hoped to inspire people, especially children, through my drawings and my explanation of the journey to complete this book. I want children to realize they can aspire to great things by first examining who they truly are, and by not letting others decide for them. You have to believe in yourself first before others will believe in you.”

I would like others to remember that Mr. Whittier was a man who was passionate in his beliefs who inspired people to action. It is a timeless message that transcends generations. There is so much we can all learn from that. Inspiration can be on a large or small scale with so much personal satisfaction along the way. If I can inspire one person to believe in himself and pursue his dream, then I have accomplished a great thing!

Visiting John Greenleaf Whittier’s homes was one of the most important parts of illustrating this

book. I made countless visits to the John Greenleaf Whittier Birthplace in Haverhill, MA for inspiration. Many images in the book contain references to the home itself, the barn, the Poet’s Bridge (which was recently dedicated). There is a beautiful quilt in the birthplace, which I used to draw in the image of the Barefoot Boy jumping out of bed to greet the day. Sarah Greenleaf’s rocking chair, Mr. Whittier’s desk and the painting of the Whittier Birthplace are all reflected in the book. I wanted the readers to experience and make connections to the farm and its surrounding beauty. I also visited the Amesbury home of Mr. Whittier. Again, this experience was so inspiring and helped to bridge Whittier’s youth to his adult accomplishments as mentioned in the biography. I was lucky enough to draw at Mr. Whittier’s desk thanks to the generosity of the Whittier’s Birthplace Homestead Trustees.”

Ms. Greenleaf has over 25 years of experience in educational publishing, designing and illustrating. She successfully established *Lisa Greenleaf Design Studio* in 2004, a small company that provides clients with graphic design services, book publishing, illustrations and fine arts. She is available for book signings and educational events. Her books, fine art, gicleé prints, note cards are available online at www.Lisagreenleaf.com, as well as local shops, *Zack’s* and *The Book Shop of Beverly Farms*.

