

IF THOSE CLOTHES COULD TALK...

BY BRIAN SCHWARTZ



DEBBIE BLACK IS A DEBUT AUTHOR FROM CAYUCOS. Her first published book is “Deetjen’s Closet”—a magical, historical fiction for eight-to-twelve-year-old readers.

This first book in the series begins in San Luis Obispo and stretches to Watsonville. The iconic Deetjen’s Inn in Big Sur is where the magic begins.

Black, a self-professed history nerd, has a love of old buildings. While spending the night at Deetjen’s Inn, a nearly 100-year-old hotel, she wondered what unfolded throughout history within its four rustic walls. As she unpacked for the evening, she began to imagine the clothing of past guests, and the idea hit her: *What if those clothes could talk?*

Through the eyes of the main character, ten-year-old Sara, Black realized she had found her muse. And what followed was a five-plus-year journey of writing, researching, and editing what is now the first book in the “Sara and the Ghost Clothes” series.

Being historically accurate was important for Black as she enjoys doing research and making new discoveries—like how the fortune cookie was invented by a Japanese samurai.

She wants parents and educators to know that her stories are filled with themes of friendship, struggle, and empowerment, in addition to compelling, true historic vignettes.

Her dream is to see her book on the summer reading list for children entering the fourth grade (when history enters their curriculum), as her books spark curiosity and excitement about history.

The location of the “Deetjen’s Closet” will be familiar to many of us on the Central Coast. To revisit them from a ten-year-old point of view makes her book appealing to both children and adults.

“I’ve worked hard to provide factual histories and actual locations, akin to a Rick Steves book for kids—but with splashes of magic, of course.” Black successfully merges education and entertainment to create ‘edutainment,’ which is valued by today’s young readers and appreciated by their parents.

During her career as a landscape architect, writing was always a hobby. As she was approaching retirement, she began to consider what she’d like to do next, and her writing became more than a hobby.

Writing allows Black to get into a flow state. It’s when she loses track of time as the story unfolds. She feels books can provide an antidote to today’s constant barrage of negativity and is grateful to be part of the writers’ community. Like her role as a landscape architect, the writing process allows her to create something from nothing, fueling a creative fire from within.

The next book in the series takes place in McMinnville, Oregon, home of the historic “Hotel Oregon” built in 1905. Along with her husband Garth, she looks forward to her ‘research’ trips to seek out landmarks she’ll no doubt weave into every story. **SLO LIFE**



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