

Terry Pierce

Writing satisfies
'creative drive'
for author of
'Blackberry Banquet'

By **LAVENDER VROMAN**
Showcase Assistant Editor



Mark Pierce

LATEST RELEASE — Children's book author Terry Pierce signs copies of "Blackberry Banquet" during a book launch event at Red Rock Books in Ridgecrest.

series of joke books and a Random House "easy reader" about tae kwon do.

As a child, Pierce enjoyed writing — "I wrote a lot of bad poetry," she said, laughing — but never considered sharing her words with anyone else.

A Montessori school teacher, working with 3- to 6-year-olds for more than 20 years, Pierce became very familiar with children's books.

"I would read a book to my class and think, 'I wouldn't have done it that way. I would have ended it like this or, you know, I might not have had that word choice. I would have done this instead,'" she said.

Pierce began writing stories instead of lesson plans during her students' naptime. Then, in 1999, she made the big leap, quit her teaching job and began writing at home.

"I very naïvely gave myself a five-year deadline to get a book published," she said. "I later found out that it usually takes about 10 years. Most people quit after five years because it's so competitive and it's so difficult. But I dove into it 100%."

She read books about writing for children, took online courses and drew inspiration from the more than 400 children's books she's collected over the years.

"I did everything I could to learn about the craft of writing for children," she said.

Four years later, in 2003, her first book, "Two Tales of Hawaii," inspired by a visit to the Kilauea volcano, was released by Island Heritage Publishing.

"When I started, I was under the mistaken belief that children's authors, you make a lot of money when the books come out," Pierce

said, laughing.

"I make less money now than I did teaching, but I love it. It satisfies a creativity, a creative drive in me."

An author's work doesn't end once a book is finished, Pierce said. Signings, school visits, Web sites, blogs and other promotional activities are part of the job, too.

"You do have to step out of your comfort zone," she said. "I call it stepping out of the bunny slippers, heading out of the house."

Pierce's favorite promotional duty is paying visits to schools, where she conducts assemblies about writing and makes classroom visits, giving students an opportunity to ask questions.

"I love hearing what they want to know about being a writer," she said. "Kids can be so sharp. I've had kids ask me specific things about writing, like, 'How do you come up with a good simile?'"

Pierce and her husband, Mark, moved to Ridgecrest from Manhattan Beach in 1981. She does most of her book promotion locally, in the high desert and Southern California.

She belongs to the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, serving on the organization's regional board and as the Kern County assistant coordinator.

"The children's writing community, we are so supportive of each other because we know how hard it is to get published," she said.

"You can't help but applaud each other, even though in some ways we compete with each other. I don't worry about that because everybody's got their own story and nobody's going to have the exact same story to tell."

lvroman@avpress.com



STORYTIMES & CLUBS

There are plenty of opportunities to introduce children to the joys of reading in the Antelope Valley. Here's a list of local storytimes and book clubs for young bookworms.

Many library programs require registration and are limited to specific age groups, so it's a good idea to call before attending.

Storytimes

Antelope Valley Mall

J.C. Penney Courtyard
1233 West Ave. P, Palmdale
(661) 266-9150

► **Club Imagination** — 10 a.m. second Wednesday of the month. Children's stories and activities.

Barnes & Noble

39228 10th St. West, Palmdale
(661) 272-9958

► **Toddler Storytime** — 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays.

► **Pajamarama** — 7 p.m., second Friday of the month. Kids come in pajamas for craft, storytime.

► **Character Storytime** — 11 a.m., first Saturday of the month.

Lake Los Angeles Library

16921 East Ave. O, Suite A,
Palmdale
(661) 264-0593

► **Preschool Storytime** — Tuesdays; call for details.

► **After School Reading Club** — Tuesdays; call for details.

Lancaster Public Library

601 West Lancaster Blvd.
(661) 948-5029

► **Toddler Storytime** — 11:30 a.m. Mondays.

► **Preschool Storytime** — 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays.

Palmdale Youth Library

38510 Sierra Highway
(661) 267-5600

► **Wee Read Lapsit Program** — 10 a.m. Thursdays, for 1-year-olds and caregivers.

► **Terrific Twos** — 10 a.m., 10:30 a.m. Tuesdays, for 2-year-olds and caregivers.

► **Preschool Storytime** — 11 a.m. Wednesdays, 11:30 Thursdays.

Quartz Hill Library

42018 50th St. West
(661) 943-2454

► **Preschool Storytime** — 9:30 a.m. Mondays.

► **Family Storytime** — 6 p.m. Tuesdays.

► **Toddler Storytime** — 10:30, 11:30 a.m. Wednesdays.

► **Baby Storytime** — 11:30 a.m. Fridays.

Wanda Kirk Branch Library of Kern County

3611 Rosamond Blvd.,
Rosamond
(661) 256-3236

► **Preschool Storytime** — 10:30 a.m. Thursdays.

Book clubs

Barnes & Noble

39228 10th St. West, Palmdale
(661) 272-9958.

► **American Girls Club** — 7 p.m., third Thursday of the month.

► **Stephenie Meyer Book Club** — 7 p.m., third Friday of the month.

► **Harry Potter Book Club** — 7 p.m., first Monday of the month.

Lancaster Public Library

601 West Lancaster Blvd.
(661) 948-5029

► **Teen Book Club** — Meets monthly; registration required. Call for details.

► **Book and Movie Club** — 4 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 14. For grades three to five; features books based on films. Call for more details.

Littlerock Library

35119 80th St. East
(661) 944-4138

► **Preschool Storytime** — 10:30 a.m. Fridays.

Palmdale Youth Library

38510 Sierra Highway
(661) 267-5600

► **Storycrafters Club** — 4:15 p.m. Wednesdays.

► **Smart Cookies Junior Book Club** — 4:15 p.m. first Tuesday of the month. Ages 7-9 read selected titles, talk about stories and eat cookies.

► **Cocoa Cafe Book Club** — 4:15 p.m. second Tuesday of the month. Ages 9-12 discuss latest book selection and enjoy refreshments.

Quartz Hill Library

42018 50th St. West
(661) 943-2454

► **Quartz Hill Readers Club** — 4 p.m. first Wednesday of the month. Ages 8-12 eat snacks and talk about books.