

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT



SUSAN STOCKDALE

on *Fantastic Flowers*

Q: What inspired the idea for *Fantastic Flowers*?

A: While visiting the U.S. Botanic Garden, I was charmed by an orchid that looked just like a monkey's face. The idea for the book came to me in a flash—a book about flowers that look like other things! It struck me as such a playful and fun theme, but one that could have real educational heft, too.

Q: How did you find these unique flowers?

A: I did a lot of research. I pored over flower books, magazines, and online images. I was looking for the most fantastic and colorful flowers that resembled unusual things—both animate and inanimate.

Q: How did you go about researching them?

A: In addition to my print and online research, I consulted with botanists. I really leaned on them to make sure that my text and illustrations were factually accurate. I probably emailed the pollination expert 10 times with questions.

Q: How does nature continue to inspire your work?

A: Nature is the best designer. I never tire of trying to capture and interpret its magnificent colors, patterns, and shapes in my artwork.

Q: What intrigues you about the intersection of nature and art?

A: I enjoy the challenge of spotlighting specific aspects of nature that might pull readers in—from how and why animals wear their stripes to how flowers resemble other things—in words and pictures.

Q: How do you marry the rhythm of your text with your art?

A: I try to accomplish this with my pagination. In *Fantastic Flowers*, I featured two single-page images followed by two double-spread images to establish a predictable, rhythmic page turn for my reader that mimics the cadenced text.

Q: What is your process like as both the author and illustrator of a book?

A: My creative process is the same for every book. After coming up with an idea, I research, write the text, sketch the illustrations that would best fit the text, and paint, in that order.

Q: Which authors and illustrators do you admire?

A: I am a big fan of Steve Jenkins, Melissa Sweet, and Peter Sís.

Q: How do you hope teachers will use your book in the classroom?

A: I hope teachers read the book aloud, so children can appreciate its rhythm and rhyme, and that they use it as an introduction to teaching about the splendor and science of flowers.

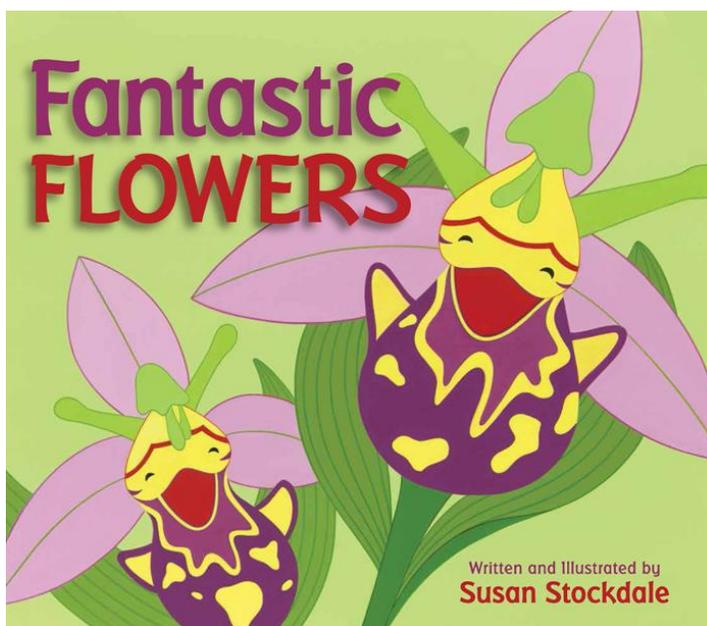
Q: What do you hope young children will draw from this book?

A: I hope *Fantastic Flowers* will open young eyes to the surprising beauty and importance of flowers, and inspire children to appreciate and spend time in our natural world.

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A former textile designer, Susan Stockdale has always been fascinated by pattern and color. She has written and illustrated a number of picture books—including *Spectacular Spots*, *Stripes of All Types*, *Bring On the Birds*, and *Fabulous Fishes*—which have received awards from the American Library Association, Bank Street College of Education, the Cooperative Children’s Book Center, the National Science Teachers Association, and the Parents’ Choice Foundation. She lives in Maryland with her husband, and speaks frequently at schools and conferences. Visit her website at www.susanstockdale.com.



FANTASTIC FLOWERS

Written and illustrated by Susan Stockdale

Peachtree Publishers

ISBN: 978-1-56145-952-0

\$16.95 | Ages 2–6

March 2017