Meet the Author

Amy Crane Johnson



Amy Crane Johnson, author of the seasonally themed *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón*, is a native of Green Bay, Wisconsin. From her backyard she can watch the squirrels gather food and build their homes in the fall, count the snowflakes and wonder how other animals deal with winter, hide safe in her home while spring storms blow over, and witness the rolling spread of the city into formerly pristine areas. The immediacy of the seasons in Wisconsin coupled with a vibrant imagination has enabled her to capture the stories relevant to the cycles of year in the north woods.

Ms. Johnson's devotion to the written word prompted her to attend the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay where she earned her B.A. in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing. From there she spent several years in advertising where she produced award winning video and radio scripts. Finally, Amy arrived where she belongs, Raven Tree Press. Here she spent several months researching and composing each of the books in *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón*. These include *A Home for Pearl Squirrel / Una casa para la ardilla Perla* (Fall), *Lewis Cardinal's First Winter / El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal* (Winter), *Cinnamon & the April Shower / Canela y el aguacero de abril* (Spring), and *Mason Moves Away / Mason se muda* (Summer).

Each title in the series deals with both the day-to-day life of the forest as well as the universal themes of friendship, transition and individuality. The inspiration for her books stem from her observations of people and the natural world.

A wife, mother of two, and devoted canine caretaker, Amy has recently become a Grandmother. While balancing work, family, and her writing she has appeared in numerous anthologies, periodicals, and online publications. She is currently seeking a home for her poetry manuscript *Beyond the Breakers*.

In addition to her writing, Ms. Johnson enjoys watercolor and acrylic painting, watching live hockey, and sing-a-longs. She is a horror-film fanatic and it is rumored she once even went to a screening of "Night of the Living Dead, II" alone. When asked about this, she only replied with a low gurgling moan.



The Solomon Raven Series written by Amy Crane Johnson / illustrated by Robb Mommaerts
La serie del cuervo Salomón escrito por Amy Crane Johnson / ilustrado por Robb Mommaerts
A Home for Pearl Squirrel / Una casa para la ardilla Perla, © 2004, ISBN 0-9724973-4-X
Lewis Cardinal's First Winter / El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal, © 2004, ISBN 0-9724973-5-8
Cinnamon & the April Shower / Canela y el aguacero de abril, © 2002, ISBN 0-9720192-2-7
Mason Moves Away / Mason se muda, © 2003, ISBN 0-9720192-3-5
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Published by Raven Tree Press 200 S. Washington St., Suite 306 Green Bay, WI 54301
phone: 920-438-1605 fax: 920-438-1607 www.raventreepress.com raven@raventreepress.com

Questions for the Author

Amy
Crane Johnson



1. Who or what inspires you to write or draw?
Amy draws her inspiration from such day-to-day occurrences as washing the dishes or conversations with friends and family. She is socially conscious and often finds ideas for her writing in the course of world affairs. Dealing with personal woes, hers and others, Amy finds it cathartic to write.

2. What is your favorite writing environment? Describe your workspace.
Though ideally she would like to write outside, she finds herself surrounded by an old beloved corduroy couch, a curious selection of photos and paintings, and many magic charms and do-dads in her basement office.

3. Are there any special supplies you use for writing?
Hating to mess up all of her fancy journals, Amy insists that any kind of paper is fine with her. She is not picky about her instrument either claiming, "Any kind of pencil or free-give-away pen with a company name and logo on the side is great." She does have a preference for black ink. Quite often she ends up using a Bic Roller pen and a yellow legal pad.

4. Describe your creative process? What is a 'must have' when you are in the creative process?
Write it all down as fast as the pen/pencil will move. Go back and move this here, that there, add, subtract and do it all again. Then Amy shows it to her writing group and goes back and moves this here, that there, etc. If you smell coffee and clove cigarettes on your way in you know she's revising.

5. Who are your favorite authors / illustrators? What influence have they had on your work?
Amy is a strong believer in the power of digestion. Though she is not always sure how her favorite authors have influenced her, she knows that they have. Amy enjoys reading in a wide variety of styles and genres. Her favorite children's authors include Robert Munch, Robert Louis Stevenson, A.A. Milne, and Kevin Henkes. If reading adult fiction she turns to Joyce Carol Oates, Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen King, Anne Tyler, and Wally Lamb. When it's a poetry fix she needs you'll find her wrapped in the words of Charles Bukowski, B.F. Fairchild, Billy Collins, Ellen Kort, Emily Dickinson, and Dr. Seuss.



Questions for the Author (continued)

Amy
Crane Johnson



6. What specific message do you want people to get from this book and why? What experiences have you had that directly reinforce your book's message?
Each story in the series has a season and an issue as its foundation. Many lessons of friendship, dealing with fears and change, and environmental issues can be found in the stories. Kids and adults can learn new ways of dealing with these issues. These books are a springboard for discussion in the home as well as school and library venues.

7. Do you have any interesting hobbies that other's may be interested in?
She is especially fond of watercolor and acrylic painting. Either in an attempt to hang fast to her childhood or to impress visiting dignitaries, Amy also collects tea accessories.

8. How long have you been at work on this book? Why did you write it? Where did your ideas come from?
All the books in *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón* took several months to write, including revisions. The characters directly influenced the stories. They grew out of each other. The ideas came from themes that Amy felt were important, such as self-esteem, embracing diversity, and some seemingly unavoidable environmental changes, especially urban sprawl.

9. Did the book involve special research? Please include.
Amy researched animal habitats, migration and hibernation. She also read up on the birthing cycles of certain animals that are portrayed as characters in the books to see when their offspring appear in the seasonal cycle.

10. Detail any fun things that have happened/or are happening because of the publication of this book.
The book readings and signings are always fun for Amy. She is thrilled when kids are familiar with one of the books and get excited when they recognize a character that reappears in another book in the series. She finds that many kids are writing their own stories, and in telling her about their writing she finds their enthusiasm contagious.



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Meet the Illustrator

Robb Mommaerts



Robb Mommaerts, illustrator of the seasonally themed *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón*, is a native of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Robb has had a lifetime fascination with both the natural world and cartooning. Growing up near the north woods, and witness to the seasons in all their glory, he is able to translate his familiarity with these environments with a love that can take the bite off even the coldest winters.

Originally earning his BFA in Graphic Design and Illustration, Robb later took his abilities as an artist and his knack for working with children a step further. He earned his teaching certification in 2001. Though he currently works as a graphic designer with award winning advertising firm Aketype Inc., and is not currently a teacher, he speaks with children at Green Bay area schools about his work as well as their own creative talents whenever he can.

Robb spent about three months illustrating each of the books in *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón*. These include *A Home for Pearl Squirrel / Una casa para la ardilla Perla* (Fall), *Lewis Cardinal's First Winter / El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal* (Winter), *Cinnamon & the April Shower / Canela y el aguacero de abril* (Spring), and *Mason Moves Away / Mason se muda* (Summer). He used his work on these books as a good excuse to take a few extra nature hikes and to do a lot of photographic "research."

Robb started each illustration as a black and white colored pencil drawing on bristol board paper with a Berol Prismacolor® black pencil. He then colored the art in a layered digital Adobe® PhotoShop file. Several overlays of color were used to achieve the look and mood that was needed. He is currently exploring the use of watercolor in his work.

Robb's work has appeared in many places and has won several awards including ADDY's Best of Show. He has published a story with Dark Horse Comics, winning their 2003 Strip Search Competition. He has illustrated *Gene Shepard's Wisconsin Hodag* by Badger House Publishing. A man of many talents and faces, Robb is a husband, illustrator, teacher, and self-proclaimed nerd.



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Questions for the Illustrator

Robb Mommaerts



1. Who or what inspires you to write or draw?
When Robb was three he asked his mother to draw for him. When he found out that there were certain things she could not draw Robb decided he'd just have to draw them himself. Since then Robb has found inspiration in the work of illustrators from every background including the graphic novel.

2. What is your favorite illustration environment? Describe your workspace.
"Three's Company" commercial-breaks into the "Facts of Life." Surrounded by books and old movie posters, Robb is painting in watercolors while re-runs of old sit-coms play in the background.

3. Are there any special supplies you use for illustrating?
Watercolor, pencils, Adobe® PhotoShop, Robb has a knack for working in and manipulating a variety of mediums. Given tools, Robb will find the time.

4. Describe your creative process? What is a 'must have' when you are in the creative process?
Coffee is a plus. Robb also likes to keep music or an old sci-fi movie playing in the background. It helps him keep the child inside occupied while the craftsman applies himself to the drawing board. He begins with a rough character sketch, the design being his favorite part. Sometimes he nails it right away. Often he has several sketches before he starts to create the finished product.

5. Who are your favorite authors / illustrators? What influence have they had on your work?
Robb enjoys the work of William Joyce, Frank Frazetta, Mike Mignola, and Norman Rockwell. These artists have influenced Robb's sense of color, layout, character design, and emotion. They have also inspired Robb's strong sense of craftsmanship.



6. What specific message do you want people to get from this book and why? What experiences have you had that directly reinforce your book's message?
Robb is a brilliant example of individuality. He wants his readers to be proud of who they are and celebrate their own uniqueness. He also wants them to understand the positive role friendship and community plays in our lives. In *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón*, Pearl's big eyes express her enthusiasm and excitement. Solomon's stern beak and hint of a smile show he's a tough community leader with a soft side and genuine concern for his neighbors.

Questions for the Illustrator (continued)

Robb Mommaerts



7. Do you have any interesting hobbies that other's may be interested in?
Robb's work is his hobby. He also enjoys a quiet nap under a tree watching rabbits duck and hide. Robb is a history buff and a naturalist. He loves to travel, especially to places like exotic Canada.

8. How long have you been at work on this book? Why did you write it? Why did you want to illustrate it? Where did your ideas come from?
Each book took approximately three months. Robb wanted to illustrate *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón* because he finds the characters and their environments interesting. Many of Robb's ideas stem from his experiences growing up near the north woods.

9. Did the book involve special research? Please include.
Robb used his work on the series as a good excuse to take a few extra nature hikes and to do a lot of photographic "research."

10. Detail any fun things that have happened/or are happening because of the publication of this book.
Robb has had the opportunity to visit and share his work with a ton of great people at schools and public events. He is inspired by the other illustrators and authors he's met at Raven Tree Press, and it must be admitted, is equally inspiring to them. The presentations he gives allow Robb to spread his love of art, a message of fun and creativity.



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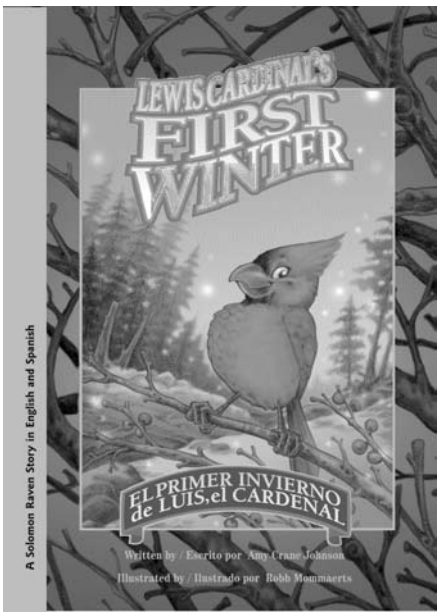
About the Book

Lewis Cardinal's First Winter/ El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal



Welcome to the world of Solomon Raven. In the second book in *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón* by author Amy Crane Johnson and Illustrator Robb Mommaerts, we meet Lewis Cardinal.

It is Lewis's first winter in the north woods and Cinnamon Bear and Polly the frog are getting ready to hibernate. Silver the fish is swimming deeper than usual. Roberta and the other birds are starting their migration. Lewis is worried that he too should be preparing for the snow, and that some of his friends are leaving.

Solomon Raven, the wisest bird in all the forest, notices how sad Lewis is and explains how each of his friends spend their winters. He tells Lewis not to worry for they will all be back in spring. Besides, not all of Lewis's friends are leaving. Solomon points out the various ways the rest of Lewis's and our woodland friends, including Pearl Squirrel, prepare for the winter.

The intimacy of the illustrations and the touching relationships that continue to grow from the first book in the series creates a welcoming community your children can enter time and time again through each story. Recurring characters move through the series and through the seasons creating a comfortable familiarity and repetition that children love. Done in pencil and colored in Adobe® PhotoShop, the illustrations play up the colorful contrast of vibrant plummage and winter's landscape.

Lewis Cardinal's First Winter / El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal introduces children to the various ways animals prepare for and spend their winters. It helps them gain an appreciation for the diversity of nature and our place in it. It is guaranteed to quickly become one of your children's favorite stories. Pick up your copy of *Lewis Cardinal's First Winter / El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal* today.



This story is presented as a full text translation. In a full text translation the story text is included fully in both English and in Spanish. In general, both texts are supplied on the page with an icon separating the two. Different ink colors for each text further distinguish the English from the Spanish. The book ends with a keyword vocabulary page for learning both languages.

Lewis Cardinal's First Winter: A Solomon Raven Story
written by Amy Crane Johnson / illustrated by Robb Mommaerts
El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal: Un cuento del cuervo Salomón
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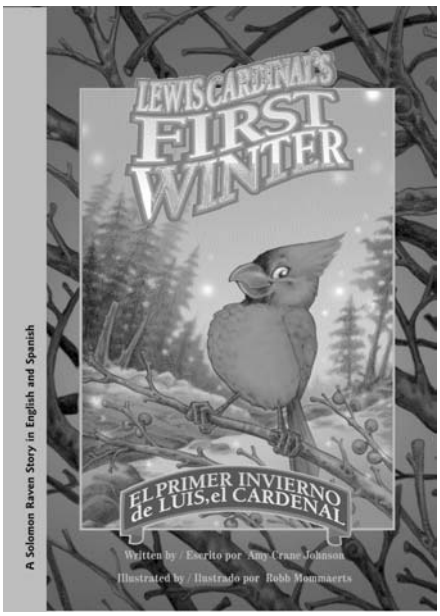
Rave Reviews

Lewis Cardinal's First Winter/ El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal



"The reassuring words of wise Solomon Raven and the subsequent appearance of an adorable little female cardinal put Lewis at his ease and leave him feeling secure again. The acrylic cartoon illustrations are big, bright, and appealing..." **—School Library Journal**

"Young Lewis Cardinal learns about hibernation and migration as his woodland friends get ready in different ways for winter. Colorful and dramatic illustrations by Robb Mommaerts show Lewis and Solomon Raven, the wisest bird in the forest, as they watch the flurry of autumn activity. Lewis begins to understand the process of change and friendship. This story, presented in both English and Spanish, follows the first Solomon Raven story; A Home for Pearl Squirrel and both are highly recommended." **—LANE EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT**

"...Winter won't seem so bad after all! Another story about the forest animals that does a really nice job of introducing what animals do in the winter. Written in both English and Spanish, the text is simple, but the illustrations are gorgeous." **—Fort Worth I.S.D. Book Reviews, TX**

"Robb Mommaerts' wonderful artwork in the Solomon Raven Series is very friendly and inviting; he has captured childlike fun with his unique and refreshing style." **—Aaron Moriarity, Illustrator**

"The Solomon Raven Series is a fun way to learn the lessons of life and the engaging artwork gives the animals personalities of their own." **—Green Bay Press-Gazette**

"Young children will easily learn about nature and animal habitats when you read to them the beautifully written books in Amy Crane Johnson's Solomon Raven Series. Robb Mommaert's illustrations are as velvety warm as Pearl Squirrel's nest. These are books to be enjoyed with your child." **—Shirley VerBruggen, Community Relations Manager, Barnes & Noble**



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About the Series

The Solomon Raven Series/ La serie del cuervo Salomón



Welcome to the world of Solomon Raven. Written by Amy Crane Johnson and illustrated by Robb Mommaerts *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón* is comprised of four seasonally themed books that deal with issues surrounding the turning of the year in the north woods. In addition to subjects such as hibernation, migration, and habitat each book in the series explores the human themes of friendship, fear, and change.

The books in *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón* include *A Home for Pearl Squirrel / Una casa para la ardilla Perla* (Fall), *Lewis Cardinal's First Winter / El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal* (Winter), *Cinnamon & the April Shower / Canela y el aguacero de abril* (Spring), and *Mason Moves Away / Mason se muda* (Summer). Each story stands alone, but the relationships between the recurring characters are the true joy of this series.

The intimacy of the illustrations and the touching relationships that grow from the first book in the series through the last creates a welcoming community your children can enter time and time again through each story. Recurring characters move through the series and through the seasons creating a comfortable familiarity and repetition that children love. Done in pencil and colored in Adobe® PhotoShop, the illustrations capture the essence of each season, and the fun that children deserve to have everyday.

The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón introduces children to the various ways animals inhabit their world. It helps them gain an appreciation for the diversity of nature and our place in it. They are guaranteed to quickly become your children's favorite stories. Pick up a copy of each book in *The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón* today.

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Tip Sheet for

The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón

The Solomon Raven Series / La serie del cuervo Salomón
Written by Amy Crane Johnson Illustrated by Robb Mommaerts
32 pg. / Hardcover / Jacketed / 1st Edition / Trade Cloth
Children's Bilingual (English/Spanish full text translations in both languages)
Retail Price $16.95 USD Ages 4-8 Accelerated Reader® Quizzed 9 x 11

Description: Recurring characters move through the seasons in this series of four books.

Selling Points: • Series books • One story per seasons • Lively, charming artwork

Selling Sentences:
In A Home for Pearl Squirrel, trusty Solomon explains woodland animal habitats.
Lewis Cardinal's First Winter features a hibernation and migration theme.
Cinnamon & the April Shower —A spring shower frightens and enlightens the friends.
Mason Moves Away explores the challenges of moving and change.



A Home for Pearl Squirrel/Una casa para la ardilla Perla
ISBN 0-9724973-4-X HC ISBN—0-9741992-0-6 PB Reading Level 2.7
Lewis Cardinal's First Winter/El primer invierno de Luis, el cardenal
ISBN 0-9724973-5-8 HC ISBN—0-9741992-1-4 PB Reading Level 3.4
Cinnamon & the April Shower/Canela y el aguacero de abril
ISBN 0-9720192-2-7 HC ISBN—0-9741992-2-2 PB Reading Level 3.6
Mason Moves Away/Mason se muda
ISBN 0-9720192-3-5 HC ISBN—0-9741992-3-0 PB Reading Level 3.1

Author Bio: Amy Crane Johnson holds a Degree in English Literature from the University of Wisconsin—Green Bay and is a member of SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators) and WFOP (Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets).

Illustrator Bio: Robb Mommaerts earned a BFA in graphic design and illustration from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. He works for a design studio in Green Bay, WI. Robb loves utilizing various mediums and also uses the computer in his illustration work.

Advertising & Promotion Plans:
• Direct marketing to booksellers, schools and libraries • Electronic advertising to e-lists
• Introduction at local, national and international trade shows including BEA and ALA
• Catalog and galley mailings to all major book reviewers

Pre-Publication Comments and Special Sales:
• National reviews

Subrights: All subrights currently available

Market Niche: zoos, animal conservation societies, wildlife preserves, nature centers

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