Meet the Author / Illustrator

Dennis Rockhill



Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dennis Rockhill is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay with a BA in Art and Graphic Design. He also attended Drake University and studied at MIAD (Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design). He lives in Green Bay with his wife and two daughters and works as a graphic artist and illustrator.

Growing up in Northeastern Wisconsin, Dennis has grown fond of watching the snow fall and sweep across the ground. When winter blows in Dennis smiles because he knows it's time to build another front yard snow bear. Every year he builds a snow bear (even if he has to borrow snow from a neighbor's yard) much like the one that takes the young girl of *Polar Slumber / Sueño polar* for a ride in the Arctic landscape.

Polar Slumber / Sueño polar (2004) is a Book Sense '76 Pick, a "Read On Wisconsin" recommended book and a finalist for ForeWord Magazine's Children's Book of the Year Award. It is filled with the same lively, colorful illustrations that adorn his other Raven Tree Press titles, *Ocean Whisper / Sururro del océano* (2005) and *Meadow Dance / Danza de la prader* (2007).

Ocean Whisper / Sururro del océano was inspired by Dennis's trip to Hawaii. While snorkeling Dennis could hear the whales talking to each other. Fascinated by this underwater world, he researched whales and the various plant and animal life that is depicted in this dreamy 'under the sea' wordless book.

A summer project of watching a caterpillar turn into a butterfly (right in a jar on the kitchen windowsill) became the driving force for *Meadow Dance / Danza de la prader*. Dennis's whole family enjoyed seeing the metamorphosis and he chronicled the experience with photos to use as reference for the black-and-white iconic art that will accompany this third book for Raven Tree Press.

All three Rockhill titles have hints of Dennis's daughters in the illustrations, such as the curly hair. His children amaze him with their unsurpassed powers of imagination. In fact, his family is so important to his creative endeavors that his basement studio opens up to his family room. That way he is never far from the hubbub of daily life.

Contact Dennis Rockhill through the publisher at raven@raventreepress.com.

Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano, © 2005, ISBN 0-9741992-4-9
Polar Slumber/ Sueño polar, ©2004, ISBN 0-9724973-1-5
Meadow Dance / Danza de la pradera, ©2007, ISBN 0-9741992-5-7
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Phone: 920-438-1605 Fax: 920-438-1607 www.raventreepress.com raven@raventreepress.com

Questions for the Author / Illustrator

Dennis Rockhill



1. Who or what inspires you to write or draw?
Since their birth, Dennis has been inspired by his two young daughters. Whatever holds their interest holds his. Highly observant, and in tune with his surroundings Dennis is just as amazed by the majesty of the world around him as his children.

2. What is your favorite writing / illustration environment? Describe your workspace.
Dennis's studio is in his basement. It's a cozy room with a large desk, his computer, and all of his art supplies. There is a large closet where he hides the stuff he doesn't need often. But, with a large window in the wall that opens to the family room his studio is not a hiding space. Close to his biggest inspiration, his family, this is the only place he draws.

3. Are there any special supplies you use for writing / illustrating?
Dennis uses, almost exclusively, Prismacolor® colored pencils. Along with those, he has an electric sharpener, erasers, pencil extenders and a large paint brush to wipe away pencil shavings. His computer stands dutifully at attention in the event Dennis needs to do some research, layout, and because once in a great while he needs to fix "mistakes" in his drawings.

4. Describe your creative process? What is a 'must have' when you are in the creative process?
Dennis does most of his drawing in the morning. Working as a graphic designer during the day, the morning is the best time for him to work. Dennis likes to start his day with a cup of coffee, his ipod® playing, and a fresh sheet of drawing paper.

5. Who are your favorite authors / illustrators? What influence have they had on your work?
Taking after David Weisner's illustrative story, *Tuesday*, Dennis looks to Jan Brett's level of detail and texture, and Chris VanAllsburg's approach to page layout and point of view.

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?
Dennis hopes that all of his books inspire people to use their imaginations and enjoy their surroundings, wherever they may be.

Questions for the Author / Illustrator (continued)

Dennis Rockhill



7. Do you have any interesting hobbies that other may be interested in?
Though Dennis has very little extra time for other hobbies his curiosity keeps him interested in all sorts of things. At this point in life, however, he mostly just explores things like the dessert or ocean through reading.

8. How long have you been at work on this book? Why did you want to illustrate it? Where did your ideas come from?
It is hard for Dennis to say how long each book takes as he usually begins pulling ideas together well in advance of the actual production. He spent about two years getting ready for *Meadow Dance / Danza de la pradera*, the next book in the Wordless Wonderland Set, and estimates that the actual production of each book takes about one year. His ideas come from the things that fascinate his girls. *Meadow Dance / Danza de la pradera* is a celebration of summer, sunshine, colors and childhood. The idea was sparked by his girls' fascination with butterflies and their interest in the plants around their house.

9. Did the book involve special research? Please include.
Dennis spends a lot of time looking at pictures of his subject matter. He wants to get to know it well enough that he can put the actual pictures aside and draw solely from his imagination. This way they are realistic, but not real.

10. Detail any fun things that have happened/or are happening because of the publication of this book.
Dennis uses either his daughters or a friend's son (*Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano*) as the model for his main characters. He thinks it's great to be able to include family and friends in the process. He also gets a kick out of how they react to the final product, and hopes they enjoy reading his books as much as he enjoys creating them.

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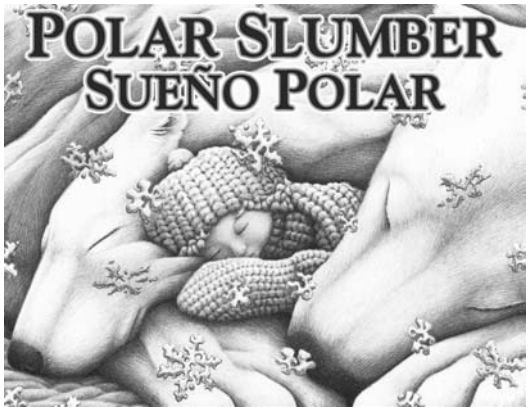
About the Book

Polar Slumber / Sueño polar



A Book Sense 76 Pick, Dennis Rockhill's *Polar Slumber* is a heart-warming story on even the snowiest night. Using the accompanying lyrical poem to launch the story, the reader is sure to find their imagination quickly snowballing into its own majestic realms of possibility.

Join the heroine of *Polar Slumber / Sueño polar*, modeled after Dennis's daughter, on her polar journey through a winter dreamscape. Rolling and stacking snowballs, forming them into a kindly polar bear, our little girl spends all day working on her new winter friend. Tuckered out from the day's activities she lies down with her snowy white teddy and drifts slowly off to sleep. Out the window, and beneath her arm, her polar friends magically come to life. Transforming into a bear cub, she joins them on their winter adventure. When she wakes to find only footprints where her snow bear stood, the veil between dream and reality thins.

Author / illustrator, Dennis Rockhill, is a master of his medium. Dennis begins by thoroughly researching each of his subjects, memorizing their form and color so that when he later translates his research into drawing he can put aside the picture and draw strictly from memory. This produces a realistic yet highly imaginative rendering of each of his subjects.

Using rough pencil sketches on tracing paper to plot the scenes for his children's picture books, Dennis later transfers these onto high quality drawing paper. He then uses Prismacolor® colored pencils in multiple layers to achieve the desired color, depth, and texture. Each of Dennis's drawings spans the breadth of both pages and is complemented by black and white iconic illustrations to further enhance the story. *Polar Slumber / Sueño polar* illustrations have been noted as museum quality.

This book is a wordless picture book. Wordless picture books and picture books with limited words are both beautiful and educational. They help children develop language, creative thinking and enhance future reading and writing skills. We include some bilingual instruction notes for using wordless picture books and in the case of our author/illustrator Dennis Rockhill's books, a lyrical bilingual English/Spanish poem is also featured.

Polar Slumber / Sueño polar helps a child gain an appreciation of art and literature, another culture/language, the diversity of Arctic animals, and demonstrates the power of their own imaginations.



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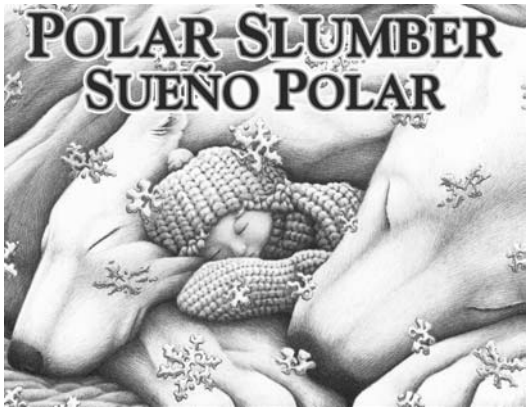
Rave Reviews

Polar Slumber / Sueño polar



"...The colored-pencil illustrations in white, gray, and ice blue are spellbinding, rendering changes in an almost Escherlike manner. The sense of volume, form, and texture is beautifully wrought... Small black-and-white drawings in that margin propel the action forward... artistic excellence of the production and the clear child appeal..." **—School Library Journal**

"...creative design to tell one wordless story as if it were two. ...Most interesting is the juxtaposition of large color pictures and the tiny black-and-whites: Rockhill avoids a facile formula (he could easily have taken the fantasy vs. reality route) and lets the content of the two complement without repeating each other..." **—Kirkus**

"...The artwork is of museum quality and the imaginative and magical story is utterly charming. *Polar Slumber / Sueño polar* is very highly recommended..." **—Midwest Book Review**

"This wordless picture book...portrays a child's dreamy nighttime romp through the snowy wilderness, and the intricately detailed illustrations evoke an appropriate surrealism..." **—Horn Book Guide**

"... a very interesting interactive picture book–interactive between the child and the adult reader. The child's imagination is brought into play and his interpretations of the pictures are discussed...We rated this book four hearts." **—Heartland Reviews**

"...The illustrations are so good; they should be on someone's walls! Children and adults will like this book. Highly Recommended." **—Betsie's Literary Page**

"...Reminiscent of Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman*, this wordless picture book uses soft illustrations to depict the story. Highly recommended." **—Fort Worth I. S. D. Book Review, Library Media Services**

- Children's BookSense '76 Pick
- ForeWord Magazine's Book of the Year Finalist
- A "Read On Wisconsin" Recommended Read



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About the Series

Dennis Rockhill's *Wordless Wonderland Set*, comprised of *Meadow Dance / Danza de la pradera, Ocean Whisper / Susurro del océano, and Polar Slumber / Sueño polar*, is a true joy for parent and child alike. From a winter romp with a family of polar bears to an oceanic swim with the whales to a flight with butterflies, Rockhill unlocks even the rustiest imagination with his stunning, museum quality illustrations. These books give new meaning to the old saying that a picture speaks a thousand words. With the Wordless Wonderland Set there are literally millions of story possibilities because you make them up!

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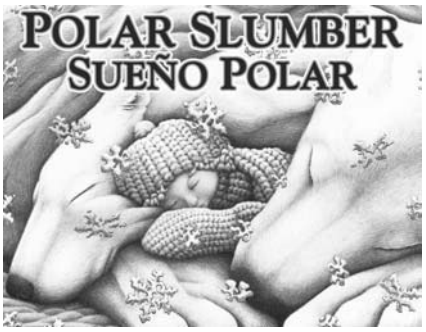
Wordless Wonderland







These books are wordless picture books. Wordless picture books and picture books with limited words are both beautiful and educational. They help children develop language, creative thinking and enhance future reading and writing skills. We include some bilingual instruction notes for using wordless picture books and in the case of our author/illustrator Dennis Rockhill's books, a lyrical bilingual English/Spanish poem is also featured.

The *Wordless Wonderland Set* helps children gain an appreciation of art and literature, another culture/language, and demonstrates the power of their own imaginations.

Wordless Wonderland Set written and illustrated by Dennis Rockhill includes:
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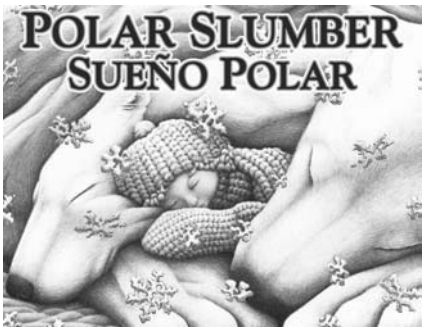



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