

# KATE KLISE

on writing

## THREE-RING RASCALS

# POP GOES THE CIRCUS!

### Where did you get the idea for *Pop Goes the Circus*?

One of the perks of my job is having librarian friends all over the country. An especially nice librarian pal in New Jersey sent me an email last year. “Kate,” he wrote, “I know you like Mark Twain. Our Friends of the Library group has a twelve-volume Twain collection for sale for twelve dollars. Would you like it? My treat.” I answered with an emphatic Yes!

A few weeks later, a box arrived at my house containing an almost 100-year-old clothbound collection of Twain classics. (The thoughtful librarian wouldn’t even let me pay for the postage.) I immediately dug in. Halfway through my rereading of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, I began thinking how much fun it would be to send two of my characters, Bert and Flora, on a Twain-inspired odyssey.

I started with the funeral scene and worked backward. I created a pair of robbers to be my version of Injun Joe. I swapped Tom and Huck’s raft for Bert’s circus balloon. I even borrowed Twain’s opening scene of *Tom Sawyer*, where Aunt Polly is looking for the young rascal. (In my version, it’s Bert’s sister, Gert, who’s searching for her rascal of a brother.)



Dawn Shields

**KATE KLISE** is the author of *Three-Ring Rascals #1: The Show Must Go On!*, *Three-Ring Rascals #2: The Greatest Star on Earth*, *Three-Ring Rascals #3: The Circus Goes to Sea*, and *Three-Ring Rascals #4: Pop Goes the Circus!* as well as numerous other middle-grade and picture books illustrated by her sister, M. Sarah Klise. Their recent series, *43 Old Cemetery Road*, has been nominated for reading awards in nearly twenty states and is a Junior Library Guild selection.

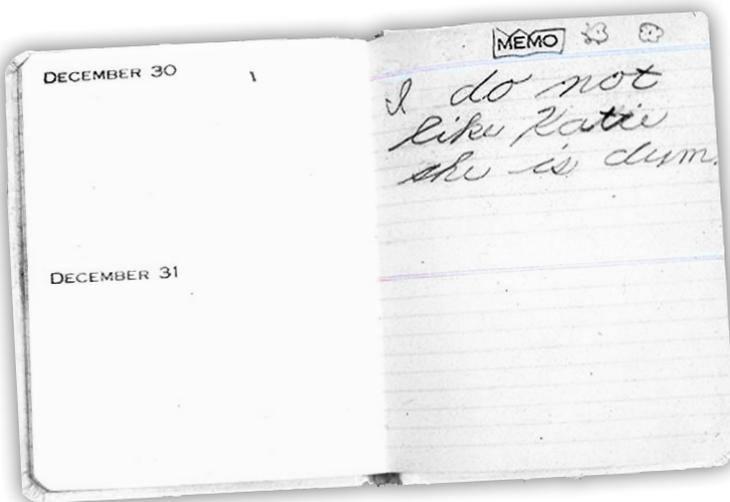


I didn't add the diary element until I reread *The Innocents Abroad* a few months later and came across this classic Twain line: "If you wish to inflict a heartless and malignant punishment upon a young person, pledge him to keep a journal a year." It's the kind of sentence that makes me want to blow an imaginary kiss to Mr. Twain. I gave Bert a diary, knowing he'd hate the idea of keeping one. That is, until he returns home after his great adventure bursting with secrets too scandalous to tell even his sister.

I didn't know how I would connect the dots—a diary, robbers, the funeral—until I started writing. But that's the fun part. All you really need to write a book is a good rascal like Bert (he's my homage to Tom Sawyer), a muse (how can you beat Mark Twain?), and, of course, a thoughtful librarian friend in New Jersey.

## SIDEBAR NOTE:

I suspect the reason Twain's line about the misery of keeping a diary resonates with me is because I was the world's dullest diarist. I remember finding and reading my childhood diary. Most entries went something like this: *Got up. Had breakfast. Went to school. Came home. Did my homework. Ate dinner. Took a bath. Went to bed.* I abandoned the endeavor after only a few days. My sister Sarah, by contrast, kept a diary for years. Her entries were much more interesting because she understood the first rule of diary writing: Write about other people. Here's an excerpt from a page of her diary, circa 1973.



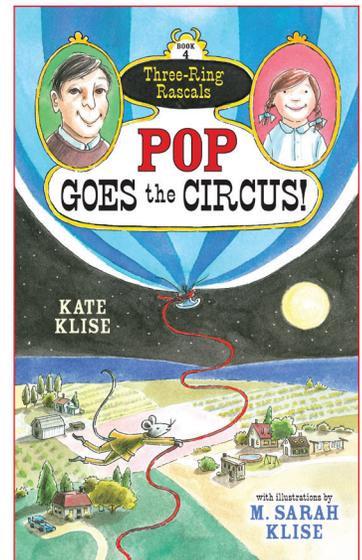
*I do not like Katie she is dum.*

“

If you wish to inflict a heartless and malignant punishment upon a young person, pledge him to keep a journal a year.

”

—Mark Twain



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