

# Cover Artist: Anna Luhrmann Dewdney '83

*Many artists (generally students and recent alums) contribute annually to the creation of Putney's hand-crafted diplomas (under the watchful guidance of Putney's ever-patient art teacher, Sue Brearey), but only one has had a hand in every single one for the past 16 years. Calligrapher and illustrator Anna Luhrmann Dewdney '83 has hand-lettered over 1000 diplomas in that time—an undertaking that makes our hands cramp just thinking about it. So we've asked her to talk a little about why our diplomas are so special.*

*You have a day job, are raising children, have illustrated over 17 books and just scored a contract for writing and illustrating a book of your own. What compels you to take on such a comparatively mundane gig as lettering diplomas?*

Besides the money, right? Actually, there are several reasons I still do the calligraphy on Putney diplomas. First, calligraphy is a nice change . . . it's very meditative. It didn't used to be when I first started with it. I was so anxious about spelling something incorrectly or centering the names that I would literally sweat over the process. Of course, it didn't help that I sometimes was doing the lettering over someone's artwork the morning of graduation. Things like that no longer bother me; I just enjoy making the letterforms. The real reason I still do the calligraphy on Putney's diplomas is that it keeps me connected in some small way to the school; it's fun to remember my graduation and receiving my own diploma. And, of course, reading those "unique," alternative Putney names always keeps me entertained. . . .

*Does one diploma stand out above the others?*

Yes, the diploma that I had to re-letter because a horse ate the first one.

*Have you illustrated any diplomas yourself?*

Oh yes. I did two or three when I was a student. What a responsibility!

*How challenging is it for an artist to represent the essence of a dear friend's Putney career in a single panel?*

Well, to really represent the spirit of the formative years is rather tricky. Most just go for a series of illustrations. It seems to me that the challenging thing is to represent what Putney is to someone else, and not what Putney is to the student illustrating the diploma.

*Do you counsel any of the hand-wringers, or does Sue handle the brunt of that?*

Goodness, no. Sue does all that. I have enough to keep me busy at my own school.

*So does your hand cramp somewhere on the way to completion of 45 to 70 or so diplomas each year?*

Well, yes. But nowhere near as much as it used to when I was drawing 8–10 hours a day.

*What other artistic irons do you currently have in the fire?*

I have this bizarre double-life since my divorce. I now work full-time at The Greenwood School, a boarding school for dyslexic boys situated right across from Lower Farm (my junior year dorm), but I also try to illustrate. Now that I have a "real" job, I no longer need to do every piece of illustration that comes my way. I've been drawing more for the love of the thing than because I need to buy groceries. As one might expect, my work is better (when I get to it). What I want to do now is publish my own picture books—write and illustrate (and perhaps design) everything. I was a little concerned, living in the boarding school bubble, that I'd never get back to books. But I've just gotten an agent, and things seem to be heating up. Some editors were literally jumping up and down with excitement when they were reading one of my manuscripts the other day. They've decided to give it a go. I'm so excited! 🐾



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