

# Get Novel Published: Check

**Catherine Geiger started writing books in 5th grade**

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There are some students—English majors, often—who come to UNH aspiring to one day be writers. Maybe, even, to pen the next great American novel.

Catherine Geiger '18 is halfway there.

In June, she was one of three writers to win a publishing deal in a fiction writing contest sponsored by RiverRun Bookstore's Piscataqua Press. Geiger's "The Witch Market" took third place. The book, a science-fiction/futurist novel, is set in Boston where a group called "the Snitches" is struggling to protect the scant remains of a past culture that the majority of the country wants to shed.

Geiger came up with the idea for the novel in 2011 when she was on summer vacation with her family. That week, she wrote 17 pages. Then school started up again and she put it aside. About two years later, she picked it up again.

"I had another book going, too, and decided to work on them both and see which one caught my interest," Geiger says. "The Witch Market" won out.

That was fall 2013. Her last year of high school. Geiger, 18, was taking an advanced writing class and set a goal of finishing the book before the holiday break. After all, she had the beginning, and knew how it was going to end.

"But I still had to write the middle. How does anyone write the middle of anything?" she says. "I just wanted to get through the middle and get it finished. So, I told myself to just do it."

No problem: She'd done it before. Starting in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. That's right, 5<sup>th</sup>. It took her three years but when she was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, she finished a fantasy novel titled "The Powers." One of her teachers read it and suggested Geiger try to get it published. After conducting research at Dimond Library on how to find an agent, the Durham resident sent out a few query letters. One agency asked to see the entire manuscript.

"They sent it back and said they weren't going to take it but that they liked my writing and to keep at it," Geiger says. "I've thought about that—that an agency liked my work when I was 14 years old."

And that helped make the idea of getting the "The Witch Market" published seem possible. Geiger came across the Piscataqua Press publishing contest one day while pursuing RiverRun's website. It was near the deadline, the end of December 2013. Geiger's newly finished book was a month old. It was kismet. She sent the specified 10 pages.

In February, Geiger received an email asking for the rest of the manuscript. A month later—when she had forgotten she'd even entered the contest—she received a phone call saying she'd won third place.

Contest details had specified the first place winner's book would be published for free. The second and third-place winners would get credits toward the total cost. But it was such a difficult decision, Geiger was told, Piscataqua Press decided to publish all three books for free.

“It’s pretty amazing. A year ago, this was a 17-page document on my laptop,” Geiger says, tapping “The Witch Market” cover (which she designed). “And now it’s a book.”

Geiger says she doesn’t see the story as dystopian. “It’s just about people trying to survive and hold onto their culture,” she says. “It’s fantasy with a few magical elements.”

Her introduction to science fiction came at 4 years of age, when her father read her “The Hobbit.” By the time she was 8, she was reading the Harry Potter series on her own.

“That’s what kicked it off,” Geiger says of her love of words. “I read JK Rowling and grew up thinking that it seemed so simple; you just write books.”

That belief was fostered during five summers attending the UNH Writers Academy. This month, Geiger returned to the academy as an intern, helping 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders find their voices, perhaps encouraging the next young author to be published. At the end of August, when she again becomes the student, she will major in English literature with the goal of one day being a teacher.

“I love school; I love learning; I love the environment. It’s where I see myself,” Geiger says. “But I also know I’ll always be writing. I have all these stories that I want to tell.”

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## SUCCESS



University of New Hampshire

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