



Avi

Poppy and Ereth
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Series books are family books. Ever since the nineteenth century, young readers have embraced them, from *Little Women* to *Little House*, *Oz* to *Harry Potter*. Series books create literary families. They gather well-loved characters and give them life like a cycle of fun-filled family reunions. Young readers find comfort in knowing how a character will act, even while enjoying the surprise of that same character's new antics, in plots of surprising turns. Comfortable suspense, one might say.

The *Poppy Stories*—*Ragweed*, *Poppy*, *Poppy and Rye*, *Ereth's Birthday*, *Poppy's Return*, and now *Poppy and Ereth*—have enjoyed this kind of readership and devotion. Many a teacher has told me of using the books for year-long read-aloud journeys—book one forward—tracing the busy, evolving life of Poppy, her family, and her friends. Kids love the moments of hilarity—often centering on cantankerous (but loving) Ereth the porcupine, the high adventures of the eponymous Poppy, and the tragedy and sadness of the short but bold life of the audacious Ragweed. Teachers and parents tell me that young readers make connections among the books and embrace characters as friends, often choosing to emulate, say, Ereth's inventive language or Ragweed's empowering credo: "A mouse has to do what a mouse has to do." Because the *Poppy* plots are always embedded in the context of family, children see and enjoy them as an extension of their own families. I am told that as kids follow the books they offer tales of their own families by way of contrast and comparison. The *Poppy* books and characters become a part of their own lives. No writer could ask for more. Avi