

A Child's-Eye View of Tulipomania

It was a time when one tulip bulb might be worth a hundred times its weight in gold. A time when a single coveted *Semper Augustus* tulip — with its elegant crimson-flamed markings, later found to be caused by a virus — fetched a sum that could feed, clothe, and house an entire Dutch family for half a lifetime. During one brief stretch of time in seventeenth-century Holland, what began as a connoisseurs' delight in the exotic beauty of a Turkish flower would flare into a frenzy of buying and selling that was fueled by sheer greed. And like a flower caught in a sudden frost, this most fascinating of futures markets would collapse on itself as spectacularly as it had bloomed.

A phenomenon that feels familiar

For Deborah Noyes, author of the splendidly illustrated *Hana in the Time of the Tulips*, this period of the Dutch golden age known as tulipomania — a subject that has been capturing attention in best-selling novels and popular films — proved the perfect setting for a story about a preoccupied father and a doting daughter that would speak to today's adults and children alike.

"Tulipomania feels familiar to us in an age of real estate and technology stock booms, and



modern in its absurdity," she observes. "But how apt that it happened when it did, in a place that was nurturing artists like Rembrandt! Apt, too, that this love affair should be not with gold

or pork bellies but with beauty, with an exquisite temporal 'commodity' like the tulip. How romantic is that? Tulipomania makes up in splendor what it lacks in logic. It intrigues us because it speaks to love, beauty, and obsession."

The blooming of a picture book

Deborah Noyes first came across references to tulipomania while researching an adult novel that was set in the

seventeenth century. "Around the same time, Tracy Chevalier's novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring*

"I hope the book encourages families to pause more, to value each other and their time together, which is — like the tulip — fleeting and precious."

— Deborah Noyes,
author of *Hana in the Time of the Tulips*



and Deborah Maggach's *Tulip Fever* came out, so I was immersed in the fictional possibilities," she recalls. "But then I began to wonder what the phenomenon would look like from a child's-eye view. Children have always witnessed history in the making, even if they aren't often invited to comment on it."

Helping to capture the story from the perspective of a child — and sure to hold the rapt attention of young readers — are sumptuous paintings by the virtuoso Bagram Ibatoulline (*Animal Hedge, The Nightingale, Crossing*), whose illustrations for *Hana in the Time of the Tulips*, much to the author's delight, echo the style of a Dutch master. "Here you have a story with Rembrandt in it, a story in which art or the idea of art acts as a sort of 'cure,'" she notes. "What a burden for an illustrator! But Bagram carried the day, and I salute him."

Taking time to smell the tulips

Ultimately, it's the story of Hana herself, as she longs to reconnect with her profit-hungry father, that will resonate most deeply with young readers. "At its heart it's a story about wanting your due, about longing for a distracted loved one to come back to you, body and soul," the author says. "It's easy for parents to get swept up in the dramas of workaday life — not to mention high-stress or devastating situations like the one facing Hana's father — and to neglect or forget the little things,



the games, jokes, and bedtime rituals that seal our bonds with our children.

"Kids today, many of whom are almost as over-scheduled as adults, understand this. I liked the idea of a child taking matters into her own hands and saying, without petulance: 'Whoa, slow down a minute and see me! I love you.' I hope the book encourages families to pause more, to value each other and their time together, which is — like the tulip — fleeting and precious."

Hana in the Time of the Tulips
Deborah Noyes/Bagram Ibatoulline
ISBN: 0-7636-1875-6 • \$16.99 (\$23.99 CAN) • Ages 6-10



CANDLEWICK PRESS