



Alumni Info

Name: Natalie Harnett
Major: English
Graduation Year: 1993
Company:
Title:
Additional Degree(s):



Since the release of *The Hollow Ground* (St. Martin's Press), a coming-of-age story and murder mystery set in Pennsylvania's ravaged coal country, first-time novelist Natalie Harnett '93 has become a hot literary property. In May, her book won the prestigious John Gardner Fiction Book Award for 2015, putting its author in the company of such previous recipients as Jonathan Franzen and Meg Wolitzer. Four months later, the Appalachian Writers Association named *Hollow Ground* the 2014 Appalachian Book of the Year for fiction. And in November, the title was long-listed for the 2016 International Dublin Literary Awards, alongside works by Martin Amis, Siri Hustvedt, and Haruki Murakami, among others. "I'm totally blown away to be among incredible writers I've admired all my life," says Harnett.

A Queens native who always dreamed of becoming a novelist, she majored in English at QC with a concentration in creative writing; her teachers included Joseph McElroy and Susan Fox. "They were both very supportive of me," recalls Harnett. On the recommendation of McElroy—an award-winning novelist himself—she entered Columbia's MFA program. After graduating, she began teaching, primarily remedial classes and English as a second language. She married a restaurant manager, settled in Long Island, had a daughter, and kept writing despite repeated setbacks. "I dreamed of being published by a major publisher," says Harnett, who completed three novels that remain unsold. "My first agent quit. I had to accept the fact that it might not happen. The joy had to be that I loved writing."

Recalling childhood visits to her grandfather in northeastern Pennsylvania, where she heard about insuppressible mine fires raging underground, she sketched out a multigenerational saga told from the perspective of an 11-year-old girl. "My editor bought the book for its coming-of-age aspect," says Harnett. But the public has been equally captivated by her account of environmental disaster. At readings and book signings, she reports, "People thank me and share experiences more stunning than what I wrote about: A couple, a basement, an entire house disappearing in a sinkhole. I'm not sure what to do with these stories; perhaps I'll use them in nonfiction."

In the meantime, she just submitted her latest manuscript. The plot, inspired by her great-grandmother's experiences, concerns a wealthy Dutch woman who immigrated to New York, her descendants, and the indentured servant who accompanied her. "It's so satisfying to be published," Harnett observes. "I wanted this so very badly, and that need is gone. But success has not removed my desire to write."

Book everyone should read: *Put Me in the Zoo* by Robert Lopshire. "I discovered this late in childhood; now I read it to my daughter."

Favorite music: Classic country, honky-tonk, blues, and bluegrass. "Pennsylvania, my second home, is part of my identity."

Surprising fact: "I like to ride motorcycles. I ride with my husband, on the back of his red Harley."

Past Profiles

Gail Marquis
 Max Roll
 Sharon and Frances Tran
 Cory Tischbein
 Steven Appel
 Frances Rose
 Matt Higgins
 Andrea Shapiro Davis
 Harold Rosenbaum
 Nashwa El-Sayed
 Jin-Xiang "JX" Yu
 Natalie Harnett

Student Profiles

Faculty Profiles

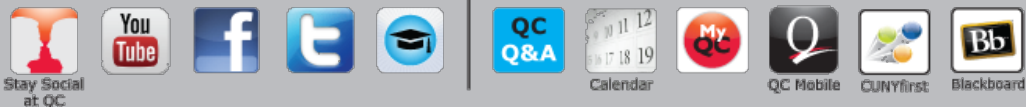
Staff Profiles



It's so satisfying to be published. . . . But success has not removed my desire to write.

Natalie Harnett





Arts & Humanities

American Studies
 Art
 Classical, Middle Eastern & Asian Languages & Cultures
 Comparative Literature
 Drama, Theatre & Dance
 English
 European Languages & Literatures
 Film Studies
 Hispanic Languages & Literatures
 Honors in the Humanities
 Library
 Linguistics & Communication Disorders
 Media Studies
 Music (Aaron Copland School of Music)
 Religious Studies

Education

Educational & Community Programs
 Elementary & Early Childhood Education
 Secondary Education & Youth Services

Math & Natural Sciences

Biology
 Chemistry & Biochemistry
 Computer Science
 Earth & Environmental Sciences
 Family, Nutrition & Exercise Sciences
 Honors in Mathematical & Natural Sciences
 Mathematics
 Neuroscience
 Physics
 Psychology

Social Sciences

Accounting & Information Systems
 Africana Studies
 Anthropology
 Business Administration
 Business & Liberal Arts (BALA)
 Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies
 Economics
 History
 Honors in the Social Sciences
 Interdisciplinary Studies
 Irish Studies
 Jewish Studies
 Journalism
 Labor Studies
 Latin American & Latino Studies
 Library & Information Studies
 Philosophy
 Political Science
 Risk Management
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Adult Collegiate Education

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