



Ms. O'Brien's 4th grade class listens to author Lauren Tarshis. PHOTO BY MARYANNE SAXON

# Best-Selling Author Lauren Tarshis 'Survives' Visit with Thomas Jefferson Students

"Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying,' she said. 'One can't believe impossible things.'"—Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

BY MARYANNE SAXON

Alice from Wonderland would have believed in impossible things if she had been at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School in Morristown last month, when the TJ Titans welcomed Lauren Tarshis, author of the best-selling *I Survived* series.

The series introduces readers to amazing characters who embody strength and resilience during the most

impossible times: The destruction of Pompeii, the Chicago Fire, brutal shark attacks.

TJ 5th graders Luke Bashant, Walter Zawacki and Eddie Badolato, from Mr. Babula's class, with books from the 'I Survived' series. Photo by Maryanne Saxon

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Tarshis' heroes manage to defy the odds, while inspiring and engaging young readers.

The author began the morning by sharing some of her unusual and effective research methods.

For the *I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic* novel, for example, Tarshis sat in a bathtub of ice so she could accurately describe the frigid waters on that terrible night in 1912.

To take her Titanic research to even greater realistic depths, Tarshis plunged herself into the frigid Atlantic during a blustery winter day.

Tarshis told students her wish as a writer is to use language that best allows students to step into her stories. She wants readers to feel, smell, and taste all that surrounds the characters.

To weave young readers into the literary worlds she creates, Tarshis chooses her information and her



**Tj 5th graders Luke Bashant, Walter Zawacki and Eddie Badolato, from Mr. Babula's class, with books from the 'I Survived' series.** PHOTO BY MARYANNE SAXON

words very carefully — even if it means taking a polar bear plunge.

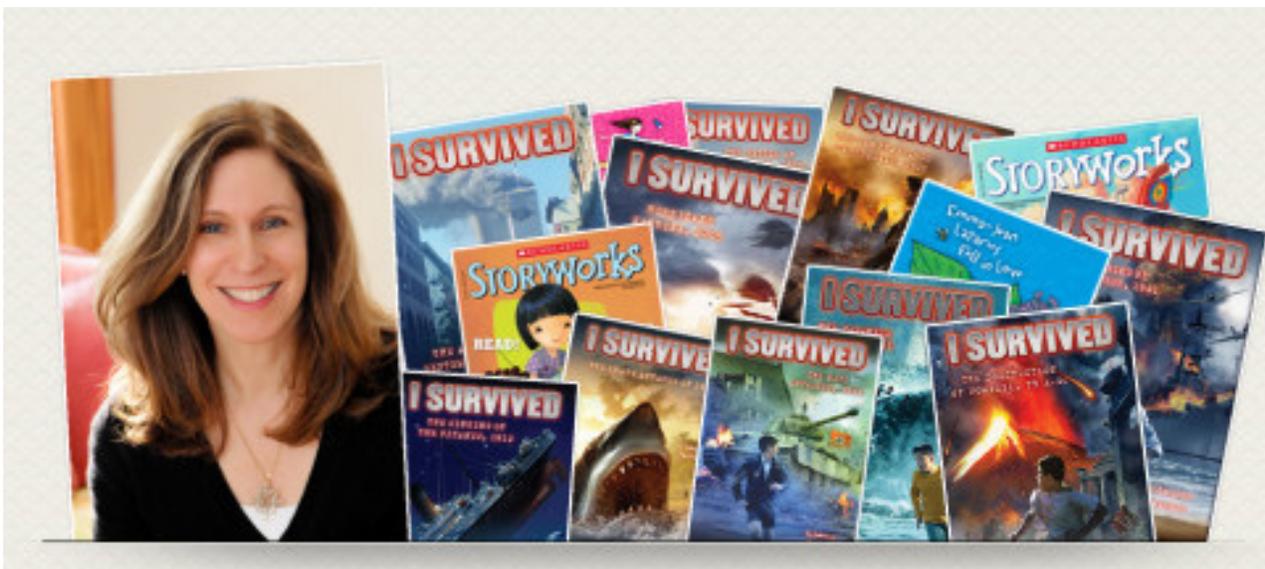
Her journey to become an author is as inspiring as her passion for research and the heroic tales she tells.

Speaking candidly and with humility, the New Mexico native confessed to the students that she had doubts and misgivings at first. In fact, she never read books as a child and thought writing was impossible.

TJ Students left the auditorium clutching signed copies of the writer's marvelous tales. Tarshis inspired everyone to believe what seems impossible is indeed achievable. She even

encouraged students to email her, and to visit her Scholastic office in Soho.

The Thomas Jefferson Cultural Arts Committee arranged this special day, which was subsidized by the school's Parent Teacher Organization.



**Lauren Tarshis, author of the 'I Survived' series, spoke at the Thomas Jefferson School in Morristown.**

IMAGE: LAURENTARSHIS.COM