

Dava Sobel



Dava Sobel, a former *New York Times* science reporter, is the author of *Longitude* (Walker 1995 and 2005, Penguin 1996), *Galileo's Daughter* (Walker 1999, Penguin 2000) and *The Planets* (Viking, 2005). In her thirty years as a science journalist she has written for many magazines, including *Audubon*, *Discover*, *Life* and *The New Yorker*, served as a contributing editor to *Harvard Magazine* and *Omni*, and co-authored five books, including *Is Anyone Out There?* with astronomer Frank Drake.

Ms. Sobel received the 2001 Individual Public Service Award from the National Science Board “for fostering awareness of science and technology among broad segments of the general public.” Also in 2001, the Boston Museum of Science gave her its prestigious Bradford Washburn Award for her “outstanding contribution toward public understanding of science, appreciation of its fascination, and the vital role it plays in all our lives.” In October 2004, in London, Ms. Sobel received the Harrison Medal from the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, in recognition of her contribution to increasing awareness of the science of horology by the general public, through her writing and lecturing.

From January through March 2006, Ms. Sobel served as the Robert Vare Nonfiction Writer in Residence at the University of Chicago, where she taught a seminar in science writing while pursuing research on her new project—a stage play about sixteenth-century astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus.

Longitude went through twenty-nine hardcover printings before being re-issued in October 2005 in a special tenth-anniversary edition with a foreword by astronaut Neil Armstrong. Soon after its original publication in 1995, the book was translated into two dozen foreign languages and became a national and international bestseller, much to Ms. Sobel's surprise. It won several literary prizes, including the Harold D. Vursell Memorial Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and "Book of the Year" in England. Together with William J. H. Andrewes, who introduced her to the subject of longitude, Ms. Sobel co-authored *The Illustrated Longitude* (Walker 1998 and 2003).

She based her book *Galileo's Daughter* on 124 surviving letters to Galileo from his eldest child. Ms. Sobel translated the letters from the original Italian and used them to elucidate Galileo's life work. *Galileo's Daughter* won the 1999 *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for science and technology, a 2000 Christopher Award, and was a finalist for the 2000 Pulitzer Prize in biography. The paperback edition enjoyed five consecutive weeks as the #1 *New York Times* nonfiction bestseller. A sequel, *Letters to Father*, containing the full

text of Galileo's daughter's correspondence in both English and Italian, was published by Walker in 2001. An English-only edition, a Penguin "Classic," followed in 2003.

The PBS science program "NOVA" produced a television documentary called "Lost At Sea -- The Search for Longitude," which was based on Ms. Sobel's book. Granada Films of England created a dramatic version of the story, "Longitude," starring Jeremy Irons and Michael Gambon, which aired on A&E as a four-hour made-for-TV movie. A two-hour "NOVA" documentary based on *Galileo's Daughter*, called "Galileo's Battle for the Heavens," first aired on public television in October 2002, and won an Emmy in the category of historical programming. A "NOVA" adaptation of *The Planets* is currently in production.

Lecture engagements have taken Ms. Sobel to speak at The Smithsonian Institution, The Explorers' Club, NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, The Folger Shakespeare Library, The New York Public Library, The Hayden Planetarium, and The Royal Geographical Society (London). She has been a frequent guest on National Public Radio programs, including "All Things Considered," "Fresh Air," "The Connection" with Christopher Lydon, and "The Diane Rheem Show." Her television appearances include C-SPAN's "Booknotes" and "TODAY" on NBC.

A 1964 graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, Ms. Sobel attended Antioch College and the City College of New York before receiving her bachelor of arts degree from the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1969. She holds honorary doctor of letters degrees from the University of Bath, in England, and Middlebury College, Vermont, both awarded in 2002.

A play based on *Galileo's Daughter*, written by Timberlake Wertenbaker and directed by Sir Peter Hall, premiered in Bath, England, in July 2004. In October 2005, a play by Arnold Wesker, based on *Longitude*, directed by Fiona Laird, enjoyed a successful limited engagement at the Greenwich Theatre near London.

Ms. Sobel is the editor of the collection *Best American Science Writing 2004*, published by Ecco Press.