

Acworth's Ceara Comeau proves she's book smart

By **NICOLE S. COLSON**
Record Staff

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ACWORTH — Her teenaged peers might have listened to a parent's story about a trip to an abandoned hospital with interest.

But Ceara Comeau took it one step further: She created a character based on herself and continued the tale from her point of view.

The result was "Amber Oak and the Mystery in the Asylum," one of five stories in Comeau's most recent book — that's right, book — "Amber Oak Mysteries."

The 15-year-old Acworth resident — a sophomore at Fall Mountain Regional High School — has written two books, the other titled "Adventures of the Young and Curious," and she's just getting warmed up.

Comeau read her first Nancy Drew mystery when she was 9.

"I fell in love immediately," she said. Another favorite is R.L. Stine, author of the well-known young reader mystery series "Goosebumps," who started writing at age 9.

Comeau started writing following a friend's suggestion, and with further encouragement from her family, but she didn't start out writing mysteries. Her first short story was about a blue jay who flew south for the winter and realized where his true home was. "Something inside me told me I could do something more," she said.

"Amber Oak and the Mystery in the Asylum" is based on a visit her father, John Comeau, made as a boy to a closed-down tuberculosis center. In one room, he told his daughter, it looked as though the doctor's tools were laid out as if they'd be right back, as if they only stepped out for coffee.

"I wondered, 'What if something drove them away?'" she said. "I always ask myself, 'What if?'"



Amber Oak, her book's main character, is an outcast at school. At first, she has to be persuaded by a friend but, when she realizes she possesses mystery-solving skills, she continues.

"She's a new-age Nancy Drew in a way," Comeau said. "Only she has more spice — she's more modern."

The book, which also contains stories titled "Amber Oak and the Ghost Possessed Boy" and "Amber Oak and the Skeleton's Secret," is aimed at readers age 13 and up.

Not only is her dad an inspiration for Comeau's writing — he's also her editor. Her mother, Charlotte Comeau, serves as her publisher. She uses lulu.com, a self-publishing Web site, and there's a link to buy books there from Comeau's own site, phantomave.com. Her site is also a place where readers can really see Comeau's love of mystery — it includes a page of photos of haunted places around the world.

Since copies of the Amber Oak mysteries and Comeau's first book, "Adventures of the Young and Curious," have been printed, Comeau has done a couple of book signings in Acworth and hopes to do many more in the area.

Another supporter of hers has been a cousin who set up "mysteries" for Comeau to solve to fuel her writing and who created a film of one of her stories, starring some of Comeau's friends. "Fifty people came and watched it in a theater," Comeau said.

When Comeau runs out of ideas, she uses her friends as inspiration for her characters, and they return the favor.

"My family and friends are really helpful with advertising," she said, noting some are helping her create a cover for her next book.

Comeau is combining short stories for the second volume of Amber Oak mysteries, which is almost complete. She estimates it will be published in the spring.

This time around, the 16-year-old detective is solving more dangerous mysteries because her abilities have sharpened.

"It's intense," Comeau said. "It will keep the reader on the edge of his or her seat." Comeau already has ideas for a third volume. "I don't think Amber Oak will ever stop solving mysteries," she said.

While her peers may have several hobbies, Comeau said writing is her thing. When she's not writing mysteries, she contributes to her town newsletter. Whether or not she becomes the next R.L. Stine, she will continue. "It's my own little world," she said of writing. "Nothing can destroy that."

The fact that she's a published author is her encouragement, and her hope is to encourage others. "I'm an example to all dreamers that dreams can come true if you work for it," she said.

Ceara Comeau's book, "Amber Oak Mysteries," can be purchased on the Web at amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com; or both of her books can be purchased at her Web site, phantomave.com.