



Q&A with Dianne Ochiltree Author of *IT'S A SEASHELL DAY*

Q: Tell us about your childhood and why you became a children's author.

A: I think I was born to be one! Because as long as I can remember, I've been listening to the stories my family loved to tell, reading all sorts of books, drawing pictures and writing, writing, writing. My first books were written on the backs of old reports, illustrated in crayon, and stapled together by my mom. My parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters, baby brother and pets listened to my stories and poems with a lot of enthusiasm...and patience. I loved the sight and sound of words. I write for kids because I want to share that love.

Q: Please share a little about your writing process.

A: I write something every day: a journal entry, a stanza of a poem, paragraphs of a story...whatever I can fit into the time I have for writing each day. My first drafts are written very 'big' so that I have a lot of images, action and language to choose from as I revise. My writing process involves a lot of revision. Most of my picture books have been through a dozen revisions before they were ready to submit to a publisher.

Q: What do you find are the unique challenges of writing for children?

A: The biggest challenge in writing for young readers is to see the world from their point of view. I start by deciding how old my target reader is for each story. What about my topic would be of most interest to a child that age? What language is appropriate? And so on. Although I may draw on my own childhood memories to spark a story, I need to make sure the experiences and emotions are going to resonate with today's kids. As with all writing, the great challenge is to come to familiar experiences in a fresh way, using vivid, specific language to describe it.

Q: Do you have children read over your writing before you submit it?

A: No, I don't read manuscripts to kids before sending them out to editors for possible publication. However, I'm fortunate to have several willing 'first readers' in my network of children's author colleagues. This is incredibly helpful in finding the "blind spots"—those shaky transitions, characterization cracks and other narrative 'no-no's I'm not likely to see on my own. But I do love asking kids, "What are you reading right now?"

Q: What do you enjoy doing when you're not writing?

A: Every day, I walk our family dog and really enjoy being out in nature. I am often found in the yoga studio taking a class or teaching a class. I like to travel with my husband to other countries and learning everything about their 'corner of the world'. Wherever I am, of course, I've got a book that I'm in the middle of reading.

Q: What are you working on now?

A: I always have about three projects going at one time: one in revision, one in the midst of the actual writing process, and one in the research/plotting stages. Right now, it's a picture book story about a president; a step-into-reading story about Thanksgiving; and a young adult novel.

IT'S A SEASHELL DAY  Blue Apple Books  July 2015  Ages 3-7

\$12.99-Hardcover  ISBN 978-160905530-1

DianneOchiltree.com