



Sarah Prineas

The Magic Thief
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1. *The Magic Thief* is your first novel. What inspired you to write it?

I was reading the December 2005 issue of *Cricket* magazine, and in the letters section a girl named Mary A: from Bethesda, Maryland, asked the editors for more fantasy stories. I thought to myself, I could do that, and that very night I started writing a fantasy story for *Cricket*. And then I realized that the story was really the first chapter of a novel, so I kept writing. The other inspiration was my two kids, who love to read. When I was writing the book they would come to the dinner table and demand "more Conn and Nevery!" and I'd tell them what I'd written that day while we ate dinner.

2. What are your favorite authors and books?

One of my favorite authors right now is Megan Whelan Turner, whose books I have read at least three times each because as a writer I want to figure out how she does what she does. Her plots and characters are so tricky and wonderful. Recently I've also enjoyed Maureen Johnson's YA books, especially *Devilish*, Diana Wynne Jones's novels, Joseph Bruchac's *Wabi: A Hero's Tale*, Ysabeau Wilce's *Flora Segunda*, Melissa Marr's *Wicked Lovely*, and Terry Pratchett's *Tiffany Aching* series. I also read a lot of adult science fiction and fantasy. My favorite author of all is J.R.R. Tolkien; I've even taught a college class on his books.

When I was a kid I was a real bookworm. I loved the novels of Frances Hodgson Burnett, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Walter Farley's Black Stallion series, and I read a lot of biographies, Greek myths, and this book of Shakespeare plays that had been turned into stories.

3. What is it about fantasy that attracts you?

I could give a college professor-ish answer to this question, because I've taught classes on fantasy and science fiction to college students, but my real answer is: the dragons! Fantasy itself is like a dragon, now that I think about it. Given its size and its lack of aerodynamics, a dragon shouldn't be able to fly, but, magically, it does! In the same way, fantasy flies off the page and into the imagination, another kind of magic.

4. What sort of research did you do to write this book?

One good thing about this book was that I had to cook a lot of bacon while I was writing it. At first I tried to cook it too fast and it got burnt (which isn't such a bad thing), but then a friend told me to cook it on very low heat in a cast iron pan for a long time. This worked better—it didn't burn—but I got impatient waiting for it to be ready. I also did some rat research for book two by pet sitting a friend's tame rats. Other research was to visit my husband's physics lab; the device at the end of book one is based on that.

5. What kind of preparation do you do when you are writing?

I'm an organic writer, which means that I figure out what's going to happen in the book as I go along, which is a very fun way to write. I don't make any outlines or take many notes. All the preparation I need, then, is a quiet room and my MacBook computer, which is named Sparks and has a dragon sticker on it. Then I sit there and think, Okay, this is the situation...what would Conn do?

Once I'm finished with a novel, I go back and outline the whole thing chapter by chapter on one long roll of paper, just to make sure it all fits together right. The first *Magic Thief* book roll of paper stretched all the way from my front door, through my living room and the kitchen to the back door.

6. What are you working on now?

I'm doing some revisions on the second book, *The Magic Thief: Lost*, and I'm just starting book three, *The Magic Thief: Found*, which I'm extremely psyched to write because it's got dragons in it! I'm also starting to think about a fourth book. Hmmm..