

Janet Fox
Children's Author, Teacher

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I was born in New York City, and I grew up in Illinois. My dad was an Episcopal minister, my mother was a homemaker and writer, and I have a younger sister who runs a fabulous inn in North Carolina.

Even when I was little I loved writing stories, but in 3rd grade I discovered that writing was a profession. I could *be* a writer. People would pay me to tell stories! My teacher, Mrs. Weber, secretly sent a poem I wrote to the town newspaper. When my mom showed me the poem – published! With my name in the paper! – I was so excited. I have to say, it was the beginning of my career.

All through high school and college I continued to write. While I was in college I also discovered that I enjoyed geology. I went to graduate school and received a master's degree in science while I studied oceanography, or geology of the sea floor. I went to sea several times on research ships. I even dove to the bottom of the ocean in the submersible ALVIN. But always, in my dreams, I knew that I was born to write.

I wrote and published a few things for adults – short stories, non-fiction, poetry. But after my son Kevin was born I found myself making up stories to tell him. I remembered how much I loved the books I'd grown up with (have you ever read The Lonely Doll? Or The Plant Sitter?)

My favorite childhood reads also included all the Narnia books, and Greek and Roman myths and legends. With that inspiration, once Kevin started school, I left my other jobs and began to write stories for children.

I joined a well-respected international organization for children's writers called the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). I partnered with two other women and shared my work so I could learn my skill. I sold a children's story to *Spider Magazine* ("Why Dragons Don't Have Handkerchiefs", 2003), and an article for children to *Highlights for Children* ("Hot Spot!", 2006).

When Kevin was in third grade he struggled with getting things ready for school. He lost his homework assignments; he forgot his books at school. I knew there had to be lots of

kids like him. I couldn't find many books on organization for younger kids. That's how I came to write my first published children's book, Get Organized Without Losing It (Free Spirit Publishing, 2006).

I also began to teach. I taught a reading program in elementary school, and then worked as a substitute teacher. I graduated to teaching 8th and 9th grade English literature and composition. I've also taught study skills to middle and high school kids.

In the fall of 2006 I went to an SCBWI conference, and submitted my novel for critique. My reviewer was Alyssa Eisner Henkin, an agent with Trident Media Group, who invited me to submit the full novel to her. She loved my novel, Faithful, and signed me as a client in January, 2007, and – after she guided me through months of revision – she sold Faithful and its sequel, Forgiven (May, 2011), to Jen Bonnell at Speak (Penguin Group).

I've was a student at Vermont College of Fine Arts, and graduated in July 2010 with an MFA degree in writing for children and young adults.

I have a favorite hobby that I've shared with kids: I love to garden. I helped to build a school garden at Kevin's elementary school. When I spend time in the garden, all my worries seem to disappear. It gives me time to think, and to observe the natural world; when you read my books, you'll see that I take great pains to describe in detail the landscape around my characters.

My current writing projects include a chapter book series about a boy who loves to invent weird things, a middle grade fantasy, a couple of historical romances, and a novel set in the future when the earth has become uninhabitable... more on all that very soon!

My husband and I live in Montana, where our son is in college, having recently moved from Texas with our elderly Basset hound. We love to garden, hike, ride and fish, and of course, I write all the time because that is what I love to do more than anything: write, and tell stories.