

Book Fair Author Spotlight On...



Allison van Diepen

Q What inspires you to write?

A Ever since I was a child, I've been a storyteller. I loved to entertain people, whether it meant making them laugh or scaring the pants off them. I still feel the same way! One of the most wonderful things about writing is that every book takes on a life of its own once it leaves my hands. Every reader gets something different from it. The reader may see him or herself in one of the characters, or be inspired to think about the issues the characters are facing. On the other hand, the reader may want nothing but to be swept up in the story and have an escape from daily life. I love that everyone can appreciate the book in his or her own way.

Q What advice do you have for young writers?

A My advice is to find your voice — the voice that makes your writing different from everyone else's. When you first start out, it's natural to want to emulate your favourite authors. But, eventually, it's important to find your own way. In *The Vampire Stalker*, Amy is an aspiring writer. She is so focused on writing *Otherworld* fan fiction that she doesn't write her own original material. The truth is, she has to find her own voice if she's going to be successful.

Q What was your favourite book when you were growing up?

A *The Spell of the Sorcerer's Skull* by John Bellairs. I devoured all of his spooky teen thrillers. They usually involved an awkward kid, an elderly friend and an ancient curse — with some demonic forces thrown in.



Q What do you like to do when you're not writing?

A I like to socialize, hang out, chat, whatever you want to call it! Writing is a solitary profession and I'm an extrovert, so I really appreciate being able to take a break from the computer and meet up with friends or spend time with family.

Q What has been the biggest achievement of your career so far?

A I often receive letters from young people saying that my books are the first books they've ever finished. Those letters are so gratifying, and it's not just because I'm a teacher.

Q Did any of the inspiration for this story come from your own personal experience as an author?

A Absolutely. The whole idea that book characters are real is a writer's dream! In a way, that's what writing is all about — making believe the story is real. I've always been fascinated by the fact that my readers often write to me as if my characters are actual people. Some claim to be in love with them. Once, during a school visit, a debate broke out over which of my characters was the best looking. That made me want to write a book about characters who we think are fictional, but who are actually real. I thought it would be a lot of fun to write — and it was!



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