

Grey Wolfe Publishing Author Interview Questions

1. Do you have any writing rituals? If so, what are they?
I try to write every day. Some days I'm more productive than others, some days I only edit, but overall I try to produce some sequence of words daily.
2. What are the most important attributes to remaining sane as a writer?
Oh, where to start.
 - Tenacity, or in plain English, being too stubborn to quit helps me get through those times of rejection and writers block.
 - The willingness to learn and listen to critique, accepting the advice of writers and readers.
 - Acceptance of ourselves writing mediocre sentences. Nobody is born as a writer. It takes time and effort and writing poorly is just a necessary step in the right direction.
 - Enjoying reading and writing. If you don't like them both, writing well may be impossible.
3. Are there any occupational hazards to being a writer?
Sitting at a desk for hours on end is unhealthy, yet it's tough to get up in the middle of a scene when our protagonist demands to be heard. My eyes get tired.
4. Describe your Muse. How does she/he/it influence your writing process?
She's a fickle thing. She shows up in the unlikeliest moments when I'm nowhere near my laptop or a piece of paper, i.e. in the shower or walking my dog, Mocha.
5. How do you begin a new project? Are you a plotter (outliner) or a pantsier (free-writer)?
Since I write historical fiction, I invest a good deal of time in research. I start with an idea and the loose shape of a protagonist. Once I read about the period I'm interested in, I begin to write. I am a definite pantsier who is often amazed about the predicaments her characters get themselves into.
6. Do you write long-hand with pen/pencil and paper or do you write on a computer?
I use a desktop computer which forces me sit down at the same place every day. On the road I use a laptop. I only use paper/notebooks for additional thoughts or in-between.
7. Do you write every day? What is your writing routine? How do you discipline yourself to keep at it?
I usually start around 8 a.m. When I'm developing a first draft I write something new, even 500 words, every day. To help this creative phase, I think about the next scene while doing other things. I am lucky that I don't consider writing a chore. I love it almost all the time.
8. Have you ever tried writing outside of your "comfort zone"? If so, what were the results?
Yes, sometimes I write during a workshop where prompts are typical. I'm not good at it, but it helps the brain think sideways. In most cases what I write is okay, but I do my best work alone.
9. What are your favorite writing and research tools?
My only writing tools are a rather aged desktop and a laptop. Research includes books, yes, lots of books about the historical period I'm interested in. I'm lucky to have access to Indiana University's huge library, a solid city library and of course, there is always a bookstore nearby. Online resources include websites, data bases, and if I'm lucky eye witnesses/interviewees.

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10. How many drafts does it usually take to bring your manuscript to “The End” and ready to submit to your editor?

It depends. The first novel I started long ago is still unpublished and I’m doing a seventh draft now. Typically, I do at least three solid drafts and then move to several more to do specific edits.

11. Are the names of the characters in your writing important? What about the titles? How do you choose them?

Yes, character names are important because they’re part of me. Names should always be distinguishable from each other, easy to read. Titles are only important if I use historical figures. My protagonists tend to be struggling everyday people who deal with extraordinary circumstances.

12. To what extent is your fiction or poetry autobiographical? Have you ever seen yourself as a character in one of your stories or poems and, has that been a help or a hindrance?

I’m taking bits and pieces from the assorted people I’ve come across in my life. I don’t use myself, though I suppose the stories and characters are in essence part of me.

13. Has a child, the family pet or another animal ever “eaten” your manuscript? If so, please, tell us that story!

Luckily, my children have outgrown the habit of destroying what I produce. And my dog is amazingly well behaved and only interested if the paper were dipped in bacon grease.

14. Who are your favorite authors? Please list a few and their titles, so we can go look for them at our local library!

I have many. About writing I love Donald Maass, *Writing the Breakout Novel* (all of his works are worth reading), Stephen King, *On Writing*, Francine Prose, *Reading Like a Writer*. Fiction writers include Ursula Hegi, *Stones from the River*, all of John Green’s works, J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (never get tired of it), Richard Adams, *Watership Down*. I could go on for a very long time.

15. Which three authors (alive or dead) would you most like invite to a dinner party and what would you like to talk about?

James Alexander Thom, a historical fiction author who lives in Bloomington, John Green and Mr. Tolkien

16. I’m a school teacher. What can you offer to help me prepare 6th graders to appreciate writing, now and for the rest of their lives?

It’s all about story. If the story is good we enjoy hearing and reading it. We could explore what makes a good story, what stories the kids enjoy(ed) and why, do fun writing prompts, etc.

17. How do you react to a negative review of one of your manuscripts?

More than five years in writing groups have taught me a good deal about not only accepting criticism but learning from it. I’d like to approach critical reviews as a learning tool so that I can get better from it.

18. Do you ever write naked?

Most of the year it’s too cold, but really writing is hard enough sitting in a chair for hours. I’d rather wear something nice and comfortable.

19. What was your favorite scene or poem to write, and why was it so enjoyable?

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I love action scenes when the protagonist deals with adversity. I love making him/her uncomfortable and struggle.

20. What's the hardest scene or poem you have ever written and why was it so hard to write?

I'm still struggling with a story that is based on my parents growing up during WWII. In it is a love scene and imagining my parents naked in a tent has been rather difficult.

21. Do you ever use your writing as therapy, to either work out an issue, punish a perpetrator from your real life, or fantasize about what you could have done differently? If so, give us one example of how this manifested in your manuscript.

Writing is therapy. I'm not saying there is some problem in my head, but writing just completes me and keeps me sane.

22. Print books versus e-books; do you have a preference, and why?

I like both. Print books are wonderful to hold in your hands, turning a page is an elemental feeling. E-books are so convenient, especially during travel and in the middle of the night when I don't want to shine a huge light and wake up my husband.

23. Name a topic that you refuse to write about, and tell us, why won't you write about that topic?

I'd go as far as writing a genre. I will not write (or read) horror. It terrifies me.

24. What is your best advice for beginning writers?

Read and write a lot. Join a writers group. Write every day, even if it's only for ten minutes.

25. What's the worst advice you ever received from another writer?

I can't remember any. Sometimes a writer comments and I don't agree with his viewpoint. After a while it becomes clear whether s/he was correct or if I want to stick to my guns.