

Michele Pam Wright – Q&A

Q: *Where did you grow up?*

A: I was born in Toledo, Ohio, but have lived in Northern Kentucky since I was two years old. Since most of Northern Kentucky is a suburb of Cincinnati, I've always felt I was primarily a Cincinnati than from a specific state. For the last 19 years, I've been fortunate to live in the idyllic town of Ft. Thomas, Kentucky. I can see downtown Cincinnati from my deck, yet every day I see an abundance of wildlife, including deer, foxes, raccoons, and hawks.

Q: *Do you have a unique background different from most other authors?*

A: I pursue many different interests beyond writing. My mother is an artist and from an early age she instilled in me the belief I was an artist too. I spent my childhood drawing, painting, and doing craft projects as well as writing short stories and poems, and playing in the woods. Photography has been a passion since I was about 12, and my husband and daughters have patiently put up with my constant clicking whenever we go on family outings. I love to read of course and I've always believed some of the most profound truths are found in children's literature. I was glad when I became a mother so I had an excuse to read children's books to my daughters. After directing a nature program at my daughter's school, I realized few things made me happier than sharing my love of nature with children since they still have the ability to appreciate the magic that happens in the natural world while many adults are too preoccupied to notice. I've been able to combine all these interests in this four-book series.

Q: *What is your four-book series about?*

A: In general, the books are about the beauty of nature surrounding a particular season, but each one also has an important life lesson that I hope gives children, as well as the person reading to them, something to think about.

The spring book is about being aware of the beauty of nature and living in the moment. The summer book explores the idea of a successful life and what actually gives your life meaning. The autumn book shows the reward of being open to change and what you learn from it. And the winter book deals with loss and how you can get through difficult times in your life by helping others and finding comfort in the natural world.

My goal with this book series was to inspire children to protect nature and I'm hoping the illustrations will play a large part in that. The main characters include a fairy, mermaid, dragon, and phoenix, as well as many animals. They're carefully crafted from natural items I collected such as pine cones, nuts, and feathers, then they're photographed and combined with my nature photos in a high-end graphics program. This results in a totally unique and realistic illustration style. There is a page in the back of each book that tells readers how to make their own nature creatures. Searching for these items is a wonderful way to get children to look closely as they're hiking in the woods or walking on the beach. Once they see how amazing nature truly is, I'm convinced this will result in a lifelong conviction to protect the environment.



Q: *What are the book specs (size, number of pages, etc)?*

A: Each book is 8.5” x 11” and has 24 pages of text. They are paperbacks printed on heavy paper with a protective matte varnish printed throughout and a spot UV glossy varnish on the cover. They will be priced at \$7.95 each or the entire set of four is \$29.95.

Q: *How are your books different from other children's books about nature?*

A: To my knowledge, there aren't any children's books that use a variety of mythological creatures to reinforce the magic of the natural world. I'm also not aware of any children's fiction books that use photography as illustration or characters created from natural elements in combination with nature photography.

There is a subtle Celtic feel throughout the books as well. After all, if there is an enchanted forest where fairies, mermaids, dragons, and a phoenix live, it would definitely be a Celtic forest. All the characters have Celtic names and the titles and headers use a Gaelic font.

Q: *How difficult was it to create the main characters from the dried things found in nature?*

A: Much more difficult than I anticipated since they need to be easily recognizable. It's not too difficult to find objects that resemble certain body parts, but to find the right assortment that are all proportional in size for what you need to create can be a challenge. I remember as a child, being skeptical when someone told me that no snowflake is alike. I can now attest that nothing is alike! Trying to find an exact duplicate of anything for eyes, wings, legs, etc. was impossible so I settled for two things that came close.

There was a wide range of difficulty among the characters. The owl was fairly simple to make once I found two eyes that were similar, but the dragon took over a year to find objects that could be put together to resemble a dragon.

Q: *Did you have any real life experiences that inspired these books?*

A: Each book was a reflection of an important experience or revelation in my life, but the message in the summer book came from a life-changing event for me. There was a brief period in my life when I felt I wasn't successful because other people my age had accomplished more in their careers. Then I went to funeral for a woman who I hadn't seen in years, but had once been my Sunday School teacher and had made a big impression on me. This woman had dedicated her life to her family, her friends, and her church while always lending a sympathetic ear to everyone. The church where her funeral was held was very large and had two major parking lots but you couldn't find a place to park for blocks around. People were seated shoulder to shoulder in the pews and folding chairs were set up in the narthex to deal with the huge amount of mourners. By the time I found a seat, a voice that started as a whisper seemed to be screaming in my head, "This is a successful life!" I've been totally convinced since then that the amount of love and compassion you share with people in your life is the true measure of a successful life.

Q: *Do you have another project in the works? If so, what is it?*

A: I'm working on a book called "The Dragon and Goblin Cave," which is about a dragon that needs to find three priceless treasures in order to win the home he wants. I think it will appeal to a broader audience than my current books. I'm looking forward to creating the goblin and other creatures for the book.



Q: *Why did you decide to self-publish?*

A: It was a difficult decision since I know there is still some prejudice against self-publishing, but after talking to several authors who were disappointed in the lack of support they received from their publishers, I decided it would be to my advantage to self-publish, especially since I have the benefit of either being able to do the work of a publisher myself or have a friend or family member that has the professional expertise to do it for me.

Q: *There is a lot of work involved in successfully self-publishing. How much of it do you do yourself?*

A: As a professional graphic designer, I have a lot of training and experience in marketing, designing printed material, setting up files for printing, and working with professional printing companies. While I can do most of the work writing, illustrating, and designing the books, I'm privileged to have several friends and relatives who were willing to share their talents with me as well. My husband is an amazing website designer as well as a graphic designer and I'm very proud of the website he created for my books, **wrightdesignsbooks.com**. I have two friends who are professional editors who took the time to edit my books as well as a friend who is a professional photographer that took some head shots of me for my marketing materials. Then there are numerous friends and family who have encouraged me, given me advice, or shared their contacts.

Q: *How do you plan to promote your books?*

A: I really enjoy doing presentations for children, so I'll be sending out information to all the schools and libraries in the Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area. I have a variety of props I'll be using for the presentations and even a couple magic tricks! I'll have my books available at these presentations as well as taking pre-orders.

After April 22, 2014, the books will be available at my website, **wrightdesignsbooks.com**, so I will promote that as well. The website encourages readers to keep coming back since it has a fun, interactive activity that allows visitors to design their own nature friends in the computer! There is a choice of backgrounds and a tray full of natural items to choose from so children can reduce, enlarge, or rotate each item until they get exactly what they want. The fall and winter backgrounds are my favorites since you can see falling leaves or snow.

I'll also be promoting them on my Facebook page at **facebook.com/ShaylaAndFriends** and on Twitter at **twitter.com/mpwrightbooks**. I have a detailed marketing plan with many other opportunities I hope to pursue.

Q: *Where can someone buy a copy of your book?*

A: After my launch date of April 22, 2014 (Earth Day), it can be bought through my website, **wrightdesignsbooks.com**, on **Amazon.com**, and at the Barnes & Noble website, **barnesandnoble.com**. I'm currently working toward making it available at some book stores and gift shops.