

PageOneLit.com: Where did you grow up and was reading and writing a part of your life? Who were your earliest influences and why?

I grew up in rural Suffolk, Virginia and because of that, I'm still a country girl at heart. Surrounded by farms, reading seemed one of the best activities aside from riding bikes. My neighbors had this great hammock and a stockpile of fantastic magazines such as "Time" and "Life". I'd lose myself in the magazines while swinging in the shade.

Writing became part of my life when I hit puberty. I found myself writing poetry and funny classified ads that I wrote with a cousin of mine. I fell in love with words from an early age when my dad read us stories and poems each night. I loved poetry by Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman. Carl Sandburg's fog coming in on cat's feet was like music to my soul. I loved the metaphors. Then as a teen, for short stories, I loved Edgar Allan Poe and O. Henry. Edgar Allan Poe's mystery intrigued me and I loved O. Henry's twist at the end of his stories.

Picture books still fascinate me and I will always love Shel Silverstein's poetry. Of course "The Diary of a Young Girl" by Anne Frank, had an obviously huge impact on my life.

PageOneLit.com: Why do you write?

The ideas keep coming and it's like a dam that will burst if it's not allowed to flow. Writing is so much a part of who I am. I've had times when I've written less and I'd get this sensation of sadness and then finally realize it was the Muse grieving. It sounds crazy but that's the only way to describe it.

PageOneLit.com: Would you describe yourself as a poet or a writer or both? Explain.

I call myself a writer when I'm doing photojournalism, a novel or short stories. When it's a poetry book, I suppose one would call oneself a poet but I usually say writer. That's probably because I am multi-genre. I try to write just about everything- poetry, photojournalism, romance, inspirational, juvenile, suspense, nonfiction- you name it. I'd also like to write plays, songs, screenplays, etc.

PageOneLit.com: Your new book of poetry titled, "Being Frank With Anne" is outstandingly original - Where did the idea come from to write this book? What does Anne Frank represent to you literally? Personally?

The idea to write the poetry book, "Being Frank with Anne," came when I reread the diary as an adult. It spoke to me so deeply that I felt the desire to encapsulate the emotion in the diary as succinctly as possible in words, thus the poetic form. The idea to write the book came one summer after writing a few poems based on her diary. To me personally, Anne Frank represents courage and hope. She also represents justice and the desire to find the best in people and situations. I have always admired her for that. Literally, her book is a reminder for adults to look deeply into young people's hearts and souls and realize that still waters run deep. It is also literally a remembrance of the huge mistake that the world shouldn't make but has been making again with genocide.

PageOneLit.com: In "Being Frank with Anne" you dissect her personal diary "Kitty" with 'poetic interpretations' where you hope to 'bring a deeper understanding' of Anne Frank's world. Explain. What do you hope to achieve with "Being Frank with Anne"? What do you hope readers will take away after reading it?

What I hope to achieve with the book is that through the poetry, the story is told getting right to the meat of it. Perhaps this form of writing trims away at the wording and slices to the core of emotion. Of course, I can only interpret in the way the words move me. I could never begin to imagine living the life she did, knowing the horrors that were happening around her and to those being transported away to concentration camps.

What I hope readers will take away after reading it is a deeper appreciation for freedom, justice and a heightened realization that love for mankind is all important.

PageOneLit.com: Anne Frank was thirteen when she received a diary as a birthday present, she named it "Kitty" -- Do you keep a diary?

When I turned 12, I received a ten year diary. I probably wrote in it six years daily. I rediscovered the diary when I was 28 years old and lost it during a move to another home. I still regret having lost that diary. It was filled with young, tender thoughts. I guess the closest thing I do to keeping a diary now is emailing friends. If I saved all of them, I'd have the equivalent to a diary now.

PageOneLit.com: Do you believe diaries are personal or private or both?

I think that a diary is a deeply personal and private journal, normally something to be hidden from view. In Anne's case, the diary became something of worldwide interest, being translated into so many languages.

PageOneLit.com: What did you learn from writing "Being Frank with Anne"?

Writing this book made me look more deeply into her emotions. I thoroughly pondered every sentence in her book. I'm not Jewish and yet I felt a kinship with Anne. In some ways, while writing the book, it felt as though I was becoming Kitty. Sounds strange, doesn't it? Maybe that hadn't occurred to me until I started answering these interview questions. Maybe in a way, it was Kitty talking back to Anne, being frank with her.

PageOneLit.com: What's next?

I've been busy writing magazine and newspaper articles. I've also written a collection of sweet romantic short stories with a fellow writer. Another poet and I are writing spiritual poems together for an anthology. I have a young adult suspense novel titled "Inkblot" in need of marketing that Penguin has shown some interest in but has changed course on. Currently, I've written 120 pages of an inspirational book and I have a number of juvenile pieces/books I also need to market. My first poetry book, "HOT and Bothered By It," a book of midlife humor, published by Community Press, has kept me busy with book signings, too.

I have an idea about writing more poetry books about notable women. I have a few famous women in mind that I'd like to write about. I may write a series of these books. My daughters like that idea.

PageOneLit.com: What was the last book you read?

I'm currently reading "Witness," a book written by Ruth Gruber, a well known photojournalist who documented the exodus of Jews from Europe after the Holocaust. Before that, I was reading "The Classroom," a great book about instructing at school, written by Michael James D'Amato.

PageOneLit.com: Do you have any hobbies? What are they? How do they enhance your writing?

My favorite pastimes include going to art museums, going dancing and I used to enjoy painting but I haven't done that in years. I love music and find it very inspirational. As a girl, I took piano lessons for a while. A piece of music or beautiful art can inspire me to write. I also enjoy romantic comedies. They inspire the Muse to pen short stories. Photography is another one of my favorites. I sell photos with my articles to publications and have snapped many a photo with my Fuji camera.

I belong to numerous writing groups and that takes much of my time. When I get a chance, I also like to act and model. I've modeled for a Days Inn Hotel ad, done an infomercial for Chlorox and acted for The Discovery Channel. I've been in FBI Files, New Detectives, Diagnosis Unknown, Psychic Investigator and Movie of the Week. I've also had a part in an independent film, Sweet Good Fortune. Being on a set, watching other actors, all that helps when writing dialogue for books. I love it.