

INTERVIEW WITH JESSICA DAY GEORGE

Question: Tuesdays at the Castle is your seventh novel. How has the experience of writing changed over time? Was this one easier to write than your earlier novels?

Answer: Before I was published, I used to just sort of noodle around with a manuscript, sometimes for years. Now I have a schedule! And a deadline! So I know: I need to write x amount of words by this date. It really helps me to organize and keep on track. Also, I have a better sense of where I want each book to go, rather than just seeing what happens. Tuesdays was easier to write because it is for younger readers than I've written for before, so it was more of a vacation. I just got to play in the magic castle!

Question: The research you do for your novels adds a lot of depth to your stories. What kind of research do you do before you start writing?

Answer: It depends. If I'm retelling a fairy tale, I will look up different versions of that story, see what all the common elements are, and whether or not I want to use them. And if it's based on a real-world setting (my princess books are based on 19th century Germany), I'll look up things I'm not sure about, like what color reindeer cheese is, and whether they would have used rifles or muskets. But I tend to cheat by using places and times that I'm already familiar with. I studied German and Norwegian history in college, so I mostly just use info that's already just packed away in my brain. I did drag my husband all over Romania last year for a book, but I'm not done yet so we probably shouldn't talk about it . . .

Question: Do you like writing or researching better?

Answer: Oh, writing, definitely! I will skip over areas that need research, just to keep writing.

Question: What role does research play in fantasy? Do you think research for fantasy is different than research for other kinds of fiction?

Answer: I suppose that in fantasy you can change or ignore facts if you don't like them . . . (wait, they DID have the printing press then? Oh, WHO CARES! THIS IS MY WORLD!). But I think it's easier for readers to suspend their disbelief in something like talking dragons if you're otherwise giving them a solid grounding in reality.

Question: Who are some of your favorite characters? Which character would you like to be? Have you ever had a book crush?

Answer: I have had many, many characters I have loved and wanted to spend time with. Big time crushes on Mr. Rochester, Paul Atreides, and Cat from Joan Vinge's *Catspaw*. I have always wanted to have tea with Mayland Long from R. A. MacAvoy's *Tea with the Black Dragon*. When I was a kid I wanted to be Sara Crewe from *A Little Princess*, I wanted to live on Dune, or Pern, and to have a dragon of my own!

Question: Do you have a favorite of your own characters? What about a least favor-

ite? Which of your own characters would you most like to meet?

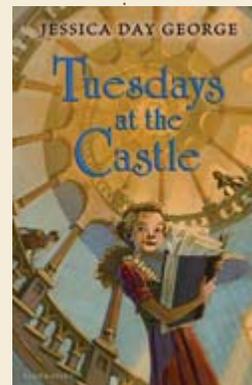
Answer: It is extremely fun to write the character of Feniul, the constantly worried dragon. I don't really dislike any of my characters, if I find that I do, I usually change them. Or kill them off. I would really like to spend some time with Shardas!

Question: Which of your worlds would you most like to visit?

Answer: Oh, I'd go to the Far Isles and hang with the dragons in a heartbeat! But now there's also magic Castle Glower . . .

Question: Have you always wanted to be a writer? Has being a published author been as glamorous as you might have imagined?

Answer: In fifth grade I read Robin McKinley's *The Hero and the Crown* and realized that writing books like that was Robin McKinley's job. I decided immediately that I wanted that job, too! I started writing stories in my *Cabbage Patch Kid* diary. They were mostly about beautiful young girls who had their own horses. Being a published author is nice, because you have your moments of glamour, when you get to dress up and sign



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books or go to fancy dinners, but you also get to do most of your work in your jammies with a cup of hot chocolate in hand (my favorite part).

Question: What is the best part of being a writer? The worst part?

Answer: I enjoy all the different things being an author brings: the mixture of pj-wearing and fancy clothes, getting to hide in my house and write sometimes, and getting to go out and meet interesting people at others. The worst part, though, is that I always hated having to wear name tags back when I had a day job, because they would get in the way, and now when I go to conferences and things, they usually hand me a GIANT name tag on a big lanyard—how is that an attractive accessory?

Question: You've written two series and one stand alone novel. When you started out, did you imagine *Dragon Slippers* as the first in a series? What about *Princess of the Midnight Ball*? Can we expect another book in the *Princess* series?

Answer: *Dragon Slippers* was supposed to be the only one! So was *Princess of the Midnight Ball*! I wrote both *Sun and Moon*, *Ice and Snow*, and *Princess of the Midnight Ball* after *Dragon Slippers*, while my editor kept hinting at wanting a second dragon book, but I told her that I was never going to write a series. Then one day I was hit over the head with an idea for a sequel to *Dragon Slippers*, and once I got into *Dragon Flight* I realized that I would need a third one in order finish it off. While I was editing *Princess of the Midnight Ball*, I was thinking it would be interesting to throw one of the princesses into a situation where she would have to dance just one more time, and once I got into that I thought I might as well make it a nice trilogy. So, yes, there will be one more princess book: *Princess of the*

Silver Wood, which comes out next year!

Question: Why do you think series are so prevalent in young adult literature?

Answer: A series lets you have a bigger story arc than one book will allow, especially since YA books aren't supposed to be 1,000 pages long! It lets you revisit your characters, and send them on new adventures, which is fun for the author as well as the reader.

Question: Have you read anything recently that you could recommend our readers?

Answer: I got to read an advance copy of Sara Zarr's new book, *How to Save a Life* this summer, and it was absolutely amazing! It came out in October, and I cannot recommend it enough! And I recently read *Fallen Grace* by Mary Hooper, which is YA historical fiction set in Victorian London, and has the most fascinating details about funeral traditions at the time. The main character works as a professional mute. She's hired by families to stand around at funerals wearing black, looking sad, and not saying anything! Couldn't put it down!



Jessica Day George, a life-long and devoted reader, is the author of seven novels. Her latest, *Tuesdays at the Castle*, was released on October 25, 2011. Jessica lives in Salt Lake City with her husband and two children.