

INTERVIEW WITH CAROL LYNCH WILLIAMS

Many of your books are written with teens in mind. What issues or discussions do you think are especially pertinent to teen readers?

I actually write for kids because I have a kid voice in my head. And nearly any issue, any storyline, is good for teens. Anything they might love or hate or go through or experience. Can you think of one thing they might not understand? My daughters have experienced loss, death, divorce, anger, bullying, being left out, being popular, being afraid, sorrow, joy, true love, true heart break--and that's in a short amount of time and with a protective parent! Our teens need anything that, in the very end, offers a glimmer of hope.

What makes a good story?

As I writer, I have to be interested in my character. Since I spend a lot of time in the book, I want to love who I'm working with. So character is important to me. I also have to care emotionally about whatever my character is going through. When I wrote *The Chosen One*, I was really invested in the polygamy troubles some of the groups were having (in marrying under-aged girls--children). The idea infuriated me. There you are--a compelling reason to write!

How do you know when an idea for a story is good enough to follow?

I think if I am connected with the story in some way, I am willing to stick through the ups and downs of writing. For me, writing is hard. I do a lot of whining and crying and complaining in the Icky Middle. Getting ready to start that whining now on a book I am working on and want to finish in the next few days. But if I, as a writer, care about and love my character, I

will go on the journey where ever it leads. Complaining most of the way.

Have you always been a writer? When did you first start writing?
Always. And before I could write I told stories. When you are raised on words as I was, you have stories in your head, I think. I wrote a little short story that I starred in and produced and acted out for my grandmother. Yup, there was even music and singing (my sister did that). I wrote plays my cousins and I acted out. Sure--one could say I was ahead of my time--writing in crayon the way I did. But I think lots of writers (not all, not all start early.

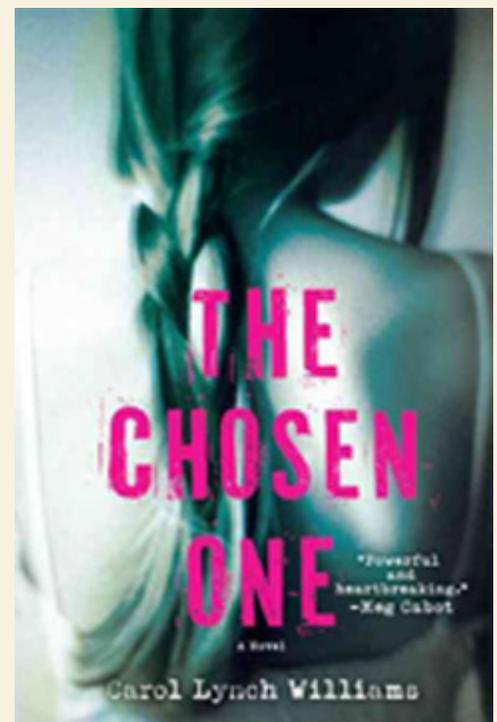
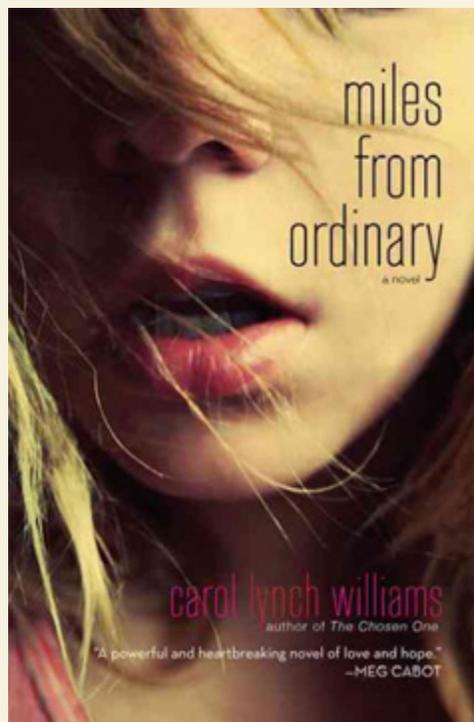
What books and writers inspired you to be a writer?

As a young girl, I was reading Mark Twain, John Steinbeck, Flannery

O'Connor, Eudora Welty, William Faulkner. My mom taught English in a Florida high school. She wanted to write. I think the possibility of being a writer came from her. I was her first reader, too. Went through stacks of her writing, reading and making comments. While she never published a novel, all that reading taught me what good work is.

What's the relationship between reading and writing? Can you be a good writer without being a reader?

There you have it. The word GOOD. A good writer. Without reading. I don't think so. I remember once hearing of a woman who was writing romances and getting them published. "I don't read," she said. I was so surprised. That's the first rule of writing as far as I am concerned. READ! But, when I skimmed through her stories, I saw they were shallow, unorigi-



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nal and poorly written. Books can inspire, can teach, can break your heart, can take you new places, can heal, can excite, motivate--the list goes on and on. Why not read just for those reasons? However, you must read to write well. That's what I think.

What advice for aspiring writers do you wish you had gotten when you started writing?

Don't be afraid. Listen.

Do you have a favorite book that you've written? Which and why?

Not really. I usually like the book I am working on and once that book is printed I never really look at it again. Just move on!



Carol Lynch Williams has published more than 25 books, and they appear in more than 10 languages around the world. She is the proud mother of five daughters, and one beagle puppy named Olive.