

10 QUESTIONS FOR GRETCHEN BERNABEI



Q. Did you like writing when you were in school?

A. Not usually. I usually dreaded writing compositions or reports, since I didn't really think I was very good at it. But I really loved writing notes to my friends!

Q. Did you ever write anything that got you into trouble?

A. Well, yikes, yes, I did. Once, in middle school, I found myself sitting in the principal's office for a mean note I wrote about my best friend. I hadn't thought about that in a long time! Other than that, though, . . . I've written a couple of letters I thought might upset some people, but so far, I've escaped any serious repercussions!

Q. What do you do when you can't think of anything to write about?

A. I doodle and think about the things I need to tell other people. Something always comes up, because there's always something I wish someone knew!

Q. How do you know when you're finished?

A. I'm never finished. Every time I look at something I've written, I always want to change something about it. So it's a huge relief to me when someone else tells me that my time is up and I have to stop. I love deadlines.

Q. Do you like to write?

A. I like to have things finished way more than I like sitting down and writing them. Is that an answer? Sometimes writing is the best feeling to me in the world, but most of the time it's like exercise—easy to procrastinate and painful to begin.

Q. Before you became a writer, what did you do for a living?

A. I'm a schoolteacher and just love the world of my classroom. Right now I'm taking a few years off from teaching, but I'll go back.

Q. How do you make your writing better? What advice can you give others trying to write better?

A. I've learned to get involved in what my teacher Dan Kirby calls "writerly talk"—talking to other writers about what they do, sharing writing, and trying out ideas. I've found a writing partner, and we read each other's writing. It works out well. If you want to improve your writing, read magazines for writers or join writers' groups, or just get a writing partner, like I did.

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. I teach school for fun, and when I can't teach, I scratch around in the flowerbeds in my back yard.

Q. What's the best book you ever read?

A. *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving. I pouted and grieved for weeks when that book was over. I didn't finish that book. It just about finished me.

Q. Is there anyone who has particularly helped you along the way as a writer?

A. My own mother probably more than anyone. She taught us stories and curiosity and decency and responsiveness. And those four things probably make up the universe of writing. I'll have to think about it, but it could be true.

For more about Gretchen, visit her [Website](#).