

DevotedMommyof3

A housewife and mother of 3 boys (10, 15, 9) writes on daily life, rural living, and being the only girl in a house full of boys. Book reviews, movie reviews, general media reviews, new product reviews. Co-owner of Charisma Media!

Tuesday, November 6, 2012

Q&A with Author Mara Puri, *Where the Heart Lives*



Mara Puri is a talented write who I've recently had the pleasure of interviewing via email. Her works include *Where the Heart Lives* and *When Whales Watch*.



1. Do you draw on real life experiences for your work?

Yes! I've been so fortunate to have many interesting adventures, and enjoy drawing on these when I create my characters and stories. Two examples—in the new novel *Where the Heart Lives*, my characters go backstage at a Doobie Brothers concert. This is based on my long friendship with the band members, and in particular a day and evening I spent backstage with them during a reunion concert at the Hollywood Bowl. That was such an inspiring experience that I asked them, first, if they'd like to appear in my original radio drama, and, more recently, if they'd like to appear as themselves in my novel. They thought it was a cool idea... and I'm bringing them to my audience, which is a lovely way of thanking them for so many years of great music.

The other example is that many years ago I was a member of a Greenpeace voyage to save whales. That literally was a life-changing experience, and in my new short story *When Whales Watch* (which is FREE to your followers during my blog tour!) I draw on this experience and am able to share a reality-based adventure with my readers.

One more experience that might be of interest to your spiritual followers is that several years ago I prayed about a little hummingbird that'd been killed flying into the exterior glass wall in a beautiful garden restaurant. He'd been there on the ground for a while by the time some friends and I arrived to have lunch. I picked him up, excused myself, and went off to a secluded site to pray. After about half an hour, the bird blinked, then started breathing, then flew away. In my church we believe in healing, but I'd never had a first-hand experience like this. My writing is not overtly spiritual—but there's always an underpinning of spiritual choices and progress in my novels and stories. So I wanted to write about this, and what emerged was the short story *When Hummers Dream*. In it, my protagonist Miranda isn't at a point spiritually where she believes in prayer, but she does have a unique ability to tune in to animals, and in this story she believes she can help the little hummer, and she does. The story was published last year as a prequel to my entire series, and became a best-selling e-book, which was exciting.

2. What were your favorite book(s) growing up?

My dad has always loved Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and each holiday season he would perform the part of Scrooge. Sometimes we—my mom, sister and I—would be included in the production. So that's a very favorite book from childhood. Others from childhood are *Little Women*, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, and *Mara, Daughter of the Nile* (for obvious reasons!)

3. Who's your biggest inspiration?

Mary Baker Eddy—a spiritual thinker who was a prolific author, founded a church, a publishing society, and an international newspaper—is my biggest inspiration.

4. If you could have dinner with one famous person living or not who would it be?

This is a tough question, because I have a long list! If I could arrange a small dinner party for four women, I'd choose to invite Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey, and my fabulous step-daughter Amelia Norfleet Dorn. It would be a gathering of mentors and mentees... and we'd all be asking questions and listening closely for the answers. Where should this dinner take place? First, maybe the four of us should be in swanky bathing suits sitting in hot tubs at Esalen Institute overlooking California's north coast, sipping healthful mineral waters with wedges of fresh limes. That would be such a feast of soul, I'm not sure we'd still need to eat dinner!

5. What's your best cure for writers' block?

I've never been convinced there's such a thing as writer's block. There are times a certain segment of a plot, or a character point, might be thorny enough to require rethinking, or even stepping away while you work on something else. There might even be a period when you've finished one project and can't figure out what to do next. But I believe these pauses provide space to breathe, think new thoughts, plunge into a new aspect of research, or even work on a different project for a while. *The Artist's Way* recommends taking yourself on an "artist's date" which I highly recommend—that is, do something nurturing, something that puts delightful images, sounds, textures, tastes into the "image bank" so that you feel full, not depleted. The other technique I've always used for writing is to journal. We can *always* write down what we're thinking, feeling or



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About Me

DevotedMommy

I am a wife & mother of 3 sons ages 10, 15, & 9. I homeschool our youngest. I am a full time stay at home mom. We live very rural and wouldn't have it any other way.

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noticing, and that starts me now.

6. What is the best advice for writing you've ever received?

To keep writing consistently, if you're serious about being a writer, you don't sit down to write only when you're in the mood or feel inspired. You write consistently. Even if you take off a few hours, or a few days, come back to writing. And if you don't know what to write, try a letter, a journal entry, or a simple description of something in front of you. Keep the flow going.

7. In your works, which character is your favorite & why?

My protagonist Miranda Jones is my first favorite. I love her because she's brave enough to listen to her heart, even when it hurts, and even when it causes upheaval in her otherwise orderly life. I love that she's brave to get out there with the wildlife she loves to photograph and paint the creatures she observes. I love that she's overcoming her "good girl" upbringing enough to follow her own true destiny.

My second favorite is Samantha Hugo who's just as brave as Miranda in a different way. She's a brainy beauty in her fifties with a great career in environmental compliance and protection. But her emotional life in shambles because she walked away from her marriage, and because she gave up her son for adoption without telling her ex-husband, and in some ways without really thinking through her decision. This has now come back to haunt her, and rather than running away from this, she has turned to face it. It'll take all her courage to heal the past. I can hardly wait to see how she does it!

8. What is your number 1 pet peeve regarding other author's works?

Violation of POV. Point of view is a key element of good writing, and an important technique for keeping your reader oriented, and in the flow of the story. When you suddenly don't know who's talking or thinking, you're thrown out of the story and are worrying about a technical matter. This is a big no-no.

9. What is lacking in the world of writing today?

My favorite kind of fiction is what I call "mindful fiction." By that, I mean that the story, the writing, the characters are telling a story for a purpose. That purpose isn't just to thrill or frighten, titillate or excite. These are great components //they keep us engaged in the story so we can feel the coursing of the deeper ideas in the story.

Is the most important thing in writing to find a "formula" for selling books? Not if it means you sacrifice integrity and substance. I've done a lot of writing, now, in both non-fiction and fiction. My background as a journalist gave me a solid foundation in research and rigorous accuracy. As I moved into fiction, I brought this practice eye, this hunger for truth, to my novels and stories. Here's what I've learned: non-fiction is about facts; fiction is about *truth*. Fiction is a powerful lens we can train on particular issues in life, and that focus illuminates like nothing else can. What a thrill! That lens—which I feel so strongly about that I asked the artist to include it in the cover art of *Where the Heart Lives*—is a magnificent tool a good fiction writer can place in the hands of his/her reader.


If we're reading fiction that does not contain this elements, we might be spinning our wheels and wasting time.

10. What is 1 thing you wish readers knew about you?

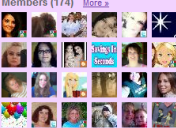
What a great question! Some of my readers *do* know this. But what I wish all my readers to know is that I do all this—the writing, the blogging, the book tours and blog tours, the posts on social media—not to blow my own horn, but rather to create a space of transformation for *them*. We've all had moments when something in literature—a moment, a character, a chapter, a plot point, an act of unselfishness or courage or romance—suddenly touches our *heart*. These are moments that transform our day from ordinary to memorable, and transform our lives from routine to inspired. I've experienced these moments myself and my most fervent desire is to create these moments for others. When I speak in person, I see these moments of "Aha!" sparkling in the eyes of audience members. When I get an e-mail or a post from a reader about moments like this, it reminds me I'm doing what I'm meant to do. That's what matters most to me—speaking heart-to-heart.

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