

Q&A with Betty Bolté

Ever wish you could interview your favorite author(s)? Well, here's the next best thing to sitting down with Betty in person to learn more about her and her writing. We'll start with a few often-asked questions and then go a little farther afield. Enjoy!

If you'd like to have Betty come to your book club (in person or virtually) please feel free to shoot her an email at betty@bettybolte.com.

1. Where do you get your ideas?

From all around me. I sometimes pick up ideas from historical research, from reading historical fiction, from the local newspaper or national news, or watching movies in most any genre, among many sources. I typically glean concepts rather than specific details, like the idea of a chili cook-off in a movie giving me the idea of a cookery competition in the third book of my Fury Falls Inn series, *Desperate Reflections*.

2. What is your writing process?

I want to preface my answer to this with a word of caution. No two writers use the same exact process to create their work. What works for me may not for you. For me, I start with the overall story idea and then essentially outline the scene beats (brief summaries of what action and revelations will happen in each scene, the characters involved, the emotional changes, and the timeline) for the entire story arc. Then I start writing one or two scenes per day.

3. How many hours a day do you write?

I measure my writing time in scenes more so than hours. But I do block off 8-12 each morning to write. When I finish one or two scenes, I move on to other non-writing tasks I need to manage.

4. How long on average does it take you to write a book?

I hate to say this but it depends on the type of book I'm writing. For my contemporary fantasy or paranormal romance books, on average three months. For my two standalone titles, *Becoming Lady Washington* and *Notes of Love and War*, it took closer to six months each because of the wealth of historic detail in them. That time does not include all of the research required.

5. What is your favorite childhood book?

The first one that comes to mind is *Black Beauty*, but there were many! I read a lot as a girl. Lots of horse stories, Nancy Drew mysteries, Dr. Seuss, Beverly Cleary stories, too.

6. What is the first book that made you cry?

Lad: A Dog had me crying in my 6th grade math class after I'd finish taking a test. My teacher, Ms. Wagner, let me go to the girls' room to pull myself together. But the dog died! I wasn't prepared for that.

7. Did you ever consider writing under a pseudonym?

I do essentially write under a pseudonym since Betty is my nickname not my legal given name. Although most everybody calls me Betty. But I have also thought about a few other pen names but ultimately decided I didn't really need one and having everything I've published under one name makes it easier for readers to find my entire body of work.

8. What does literary success look like to you?

I've half-jokingly always said I'd know when I'd succeeded when my name is the answer to a Jeopardy clue. Then I'd know people were reading my books. But simply receiving a reader's reaction to one of my books tells me that as well.

9. What kind of research do you do, and how long do you spend researching before beginning a book?

I research long enough to get a solid feel for the place and time of the story. That will vary depending on the story, of course. When I started researching to write *Becoming Lady Washington* I spent probably 4-6 months reading everything I could get my hands on related not only to her but George Washington and the general aspects of colonial life. For historicals, I read nonfiction histories of people and places, check census records to know who was living with them if available, look for diaries and journals that might give me day-to-day life details. I also go to historic sites to tour them, experience the sights and sounds and try to imagine living or working in the buildings, etc. I look up related texts for a broader perspective of what life might have been like. For example, research for Martha's story included texts on the dances of the time (my husband and I even went to Colonial Williamsburg and took a dancing lesson), the meaning of clothing, and trying colonial-era recipes at home.

10. Do you want each book to stand on its own, or are you building a body of work with connections between each book?

I'd have to say both because the books in my series need to support each other, if not be closely connected, while the standalones must do their job on their own. I have made a connection between my American Revolution historical romance series, *A More Perfect Union*, and my historical fantasy series, *Fury Falls Inn*, but it's so nuanced only a close read will reveal what it is. The *A More Perfect Union* books are closely coupled while the *Secrets of Roseville* paranormal romance series are more standalone but with the same core cast of characters throughout.

11. As a writer, what would you choose as your mascot/avatar/spirit animal?

This is a tough question! I've always had a cat nearby, so that's my first choice. Calliope, my tortoiseshell cat, would agree with my decision, I'm sure! But I also have a good number of owl objects and jewelry that I adore.

12. Do you read your book reviews? How do you deal with bad or good ones?

Sometimes but not often. I do not respond to any of them whether I agree or not. Each reader is entitled to their opinion.

13. Do you Google yourself?

Upon occasion just to see what shows up when somebody else may search on my name.

14. Does your family support your career as a writer?

Whole-heartedly. My husband and daughter are both some of my early readers, too, to help me hone the story before it's published. My parents and my in-laws all encouraged me to pursue a career in writing and were proud of my achievements.

15. What advice do you have for writers?

I think the best advice I have for other writers is to write the story in your heart. It's not truly possible to write something that *everyone* is going to rave about because like I said earlier every reader has their own opinion. But you need to feel good about what you're putting down.