

Author Interview With N.L. Holmes by **Itsy Bitsy Book Bits**

How Did You Get Into Writing?

- I've always loved books, but didn't really start writing until I retired. As a teacher of ancient history, I could see so many events that were totally murky in terms of what we know--I figured I'd fill in between the lines with fiction!

What's Your Favorite Genre to Write?

- Historical fiction, because I love history. ALthough I've written in various other formats, I like mysteries because... I like mysteries!

How many published books have you written?

- 6

Who are some of your inspirations?

- In the mystery genre, Louise Penny and Donna Leon. For historicals, people like Mary Renault, Anya Seton, Rosemary Sutcliffe

Do any of your stories have personal experiences in them?

- Not personal experiences (thank heaven I've never been enslaved by the Assyrians!), but emotional resonances from other things that happened to me.

Who are some of your favorite authors to read?

- See my inspirations above. But I adore the nineteenth-century realists, French or English. Lately I've discovered Kate Grenville, Nino Haratashvili, Tim O'Brien.

Do you write one book at a time or do you have several going at a time?

- I have several at one time.

What are some of your hobbies?

- I like to read (lol!), dance, weave, garden, cook, and drive a jogcart. Anything one can do with one's hands.

What has been your most rewarding experience since publishing your work?

- Discovering that my books spoke to others.

When reading reviews, what is something you love to see written?

- That my characters are three-dimensional and lifelike.

If you could spend the day with one of your characters, who would it be and what would you do?

- Lord Hani. He would show me Thebes in its heyday and let me hear ancient Egyptian spoken.

What are you currently working on?

- A fifth Hani novel and a rewrite of an aborted Empire book.

What's your writing routine?

- I get up at 4 am, clear my mailbox, read the paper, and go to. With luck, I can write all day, although doing publicity can take hours and days.

Do you have any superstitions when it comes to writing? If so, what?

- No.

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

- Don't give up. In spite of bad reviews, in spite of poor sales, in spite of not winning the Man Booker prize--don't give up. It's the doing that's the reward.

Where do you find the names for your characters?

- Most of them are real historical characters, so no choice there. I try to give the simplest authentic names possible for others.

What is your favorite book made into a movie/tv show?

- Harry Potter or Game of Thrones--both super books and well translated into film.

Anything else you want your readers to know about you?

- I've been a secretary, an administrative assistant for a foundation, a cloistered nun, an antiques dealer, an artist, and an interior decorator. Now I'm an archaeologist.

If you won the lottery what would you do with the money?

- Give it to animal charities and use it to buy land for conservation.

In your everyday life how do you give back to the world?

- I always thought of teaching as a service, but I like to volunteer at animal shelters. I think trying to be a good person and a good friend are services too--improve the karma in our world.

If you could give your younger self one piece of writing advice, what would it be?

- I used to write running scenes in my head about what I was experiencing--riding in the mountains, for example. But I would tell myself to save the words for later; give yourself up to the emotions of the moment. Engage, or you'll be like the people who take so many photos on their vacation that they never really experience any of it.

What's your favorite genre to read?

- Apart from historical and mysteries, I like literary fiction, women's lit. Quiet "slow" books like Marilyn Robinson, Elizabeth Strout, or Louise Erdrich. I also like fantasy if it's original.

If your life was a song what song would it be and why?

- The Old Oaken Bucket. I feel a very strong connection with the past and how it shapes the present.

Name two authors you wish more people knew about

- Lynda S. Robinson and Lauren Haney. They both wrote Egyptian mysteries a few years back, and they were well done and delightful