

Author Interview With Terri Sabol by Itsy Bitsy Book Bits

For those new to your work, please tell us a bit about yourself, your books and your genre/s

- I am a children's book author, known for my heartwarming and entertaining stories featuring the real-life adventures of my two beloved rescue kittens, Oscar and Emmy. Born and raised in Texas, I developed a love of writing and storytelling at a young age, and I always dreamed of one day becoming an author. Thinking that was out of reach, I focused on my other dream... teaching.
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- After graduating from college with a Masters degree in education, I worked as an early childhood teacher, and it was during this time that my passion for picture books truly blossomed. I was inspired by the joy and wonder that children experienced when reading and listening to stories, and it was this love for inspiring young minds that led me to create my own series of children's books.
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- My debut book, "Oscar and Emmy Get Rescued", was published in 2016, and it told the heartwarming story of how I came to adopt my two kittens from the animal shelter where I volunteered. The book was an instant hit with children and parents alike, and it quickly became clear that there was a demand for more stories featuring Oscar and Emmy and to help educate children on the importance of being involved in pet care. Over the years, I have continued to write new books in the series, each one capturing the unique personalities and quirks of my two adventurous cats. My books not only entertain children, but also promote the values of compassion and kindness towards animals, as well as the importance of rescue and adoption.
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- In addition to my Oscar and Emmy series, I have also written several other books showing off my writing skills, including "Green With Envy" and "Kneading a Winning Idea". My literary works have garnered critical acclaim, further cementing my status as a respected and beloved children's book author.
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- When I'm not writing, I can often be found spending time with my two rescue kitties, Oscar and Emmy. I also love traveling and exploring new places and visiting old favorites, all the while taking inspiration for my next book. Through my stories, I hope to inspire children to explore the world around them, to embrace their imaginations, and to always be kind and compassionate towards others, especially animals.
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What lessons have you learned as a writer?

- I learned that with being a picture book author, you aren't spending the majority of your time writing. Most people don't realize that publishing a book is so much more than having

an idea and writing the book. There are so many layers of revision and editing (including by peers and paid editors), researching and hiring an illustrator, graphic design, formatting, book sizes, knowing printing options, website design and upkeep, social media content and engagement, newsletters, blogs, author visits to schools, in-person events, digital author visits, keeping up with inventory, tracking royalties, ads, sales taxes, IRS taxes, etc. Plus, I like to aim to read 10 new picture books a week.

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- For some people, writing a book may just be a passion project. For others, they want a career of being an author and must learn the business side of it. In the beginning, it might be a lot of trial and error. If this is what you really want, do the research, surround yourself with a great team, and don't give up.
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In your everyday life how do you give back to the world?

- I've always volunteered a lot, whether in animal shelters, women's shelters, or church. I love the feeling of giving back to the community. Since writing books, my focus has been on spreading awareness to as many people as I can about helping animals. By myself, I can only personally help so much or adopt so many cats, but I hope to inspire many people to do what they can. Also, on my social media, I post a positive and uplifting quote twice a week. I also include funny cat-related memes and comics too.

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

- Interesting question. This song choice would have changed multiple times over the past couple of years through my many transitions of life. Currently, I think "Life is a Highway" by Tom Cochrane is a perfect fit.
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- This song embodies a sense of freedom, adventure, and taking life's journey head-on. The lyrics talk about the ups and downs of life, which I've had a lot of, but it also emphasizes the need to keep moving forward and exploring new horizons.
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- Also, the upbeat and lively melody of "Life is a Highway" captures the determination and optimism required to face life's obstacles. It serves as a reminder to enjoy the ride and make the most out of each opportunity that comes your way.
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Name two authors you wish more people knew about

- Stacy McAnulty and Tara Lazar are among my top picks for children's literature authors. With over 30 books to her name, Stacy's writing spans across various genres, but her solar system series is my personal favorite, as it is incredibly clever. On the other hand, Tara is a master of wit, and her Private I series is an absolute delight.

What are some of your hobbies?

- Traveling is my favorite thing to do... whether solo, with friends, or with family. And by ship, plane, car, or foot. I love cruise ships, long airplane rides, road trips cross country, and hikes (including the Camino de Santiago. I have also recently started cooking and baking. I love watching movies or binging tv shows. I also enjoy working out, when I'm in a place long enough to establish a routine to workout.

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

- The most satisfying aspect of reading a review of my book is realizing that someone not only enjoyed it themselves, but also recommended it to others.

What are you currently working on?

- My 8th book in the Oscar and Emmy series is releasing this fall. I've been enjoying seeing what the illustrator is coming up with for "Oscar and Emmy Foster a Kitten".

What books are currently in your to-read list?

- I have a LOT of picture books on my to-read list. As for grown-up books, my recent Kindle additions include "In the Likely Event" by Rebecca Yarros, "La Vie, According to Rose" by Lauren Parvizi, "A Killer's Game" by Isabella Maldonado, "Where They Lie" by Joe Hart, and "The Relationship Cure" by Dr. John Gottman. As for print books, I have "British History for Dummies" on my short list to read.

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

- The Book Thief stole my heart. The performance of the young actress portraying Liesel completely amazed me. I was able to attend a special screening of the movie with a Q&A with some of the cast and crew.

What is something people would be surprised to know about you?

- In my younger years, I was a devoted cat person, while the mere presence of a dog would make me anxious and uncomfortable. I required my friends to isolate their furry companions when I visited their homes. However, as I spent more time with dogs in my 20s and 30s, I developed a fondness for dogs. I have even noticed that in people's homes, dogs seem to always come to me for petting and belly rubs. It's like these dogs are on a mission to convert me from being a cat lover to a dog enthusiast.

Its Release Day! How do you celebrate?

- Ideally, I would have some kind of launch event... either at a local, indie bookstore or a virtual event. If not, I would definitely have a celebratory lunch or dinner with a couple of my biggest supporters. I will be on social media a lot that day, posting and then engaging with everyone who comments. Plus, I'll send out a newsletter to the fans of my books and make sure they know how much I appreciate them.

What is your writing routine with a new book? Do you outline your stories or do you do what the characters tell you to do as you go along? Mix of both?

- Although picture books have a lot fewer words than novels, I still prefer having an outline. To start, I brainstorm the concept and title for my book and do any necessary research. The Oscar and Emmy Series is inspired by real life with my cats, so the concept is usually easy. Next, I divide the story into three acts. After this, I utilize a story mapping sheet to create a phrase for each double spread of the book. Once I've finished this process, I begin writing.

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

- I love reading my book in front of children. Whether it's in a school, a public library, or a bookstore. Since I was a teacher, I'm very comfortable with that. I love the interaction between the picture book reader (me) and the listener (the children).

If you could sit down with any character in your book, what would you ask them and why?

- If I could just have a casual chat with my two furry kitties, Oscar and Emmy aka the stars of my books, the first thing I would totally ask them is why do they keep puking all over the place? Seriously, why do they have to make a run for the rug every time they feel the urge?

Other than necessities, what is one thing you cannot go a day without?

- I love a good hug. Hugs have a unique ability to make us feel loved, comforted, and connected to others. They release oxytocin, which is known as the "cuddle hormone" and can help reduce stress, anxiety, and even lower blood pressure.
- If I'm in a place where I don't know anyone well enough to hug, then I at least try to get a virtual hug by video calling a loved one. Though a video chat is not physical, it can still convey warmth and affection.

What's your favorite go to sweet treat?

- I have a few favorite desserts... s'mores, chocolate-covered strawberries, cotton candy, Rice Krispie treats, and warm, gooey brownies. But none of those are easy to get in a pinch. So my easy sweet treats are either pink and red Starbursts or Life Savers Gummies Wild Berries flavor.

It's family game night and everyone gets to pick one game to play, what game are you choosing?

- I love The Game of Life. You can't go wrong with a classic board game. Or any number of games that can be played with a deck of cards.

It's movie night, what are you picking to watch?

- I like a rom-com or an action-adventure. Or if I'm going to be traveling, I like to watch a movie that is set in the place I'll be visiting.

Where would be your dream destination for a vacation?

- I've been fortunate to have traveled a lot, but I still have quite a few places on my bucket list. I would love most to go to the Galapagos and Antarctica.

**You are filling out this interview as part of a tour with Itsy Bitsy Book Bits.
What made you choose Itsy Bitsy Book Bits?**

- Kim Ann highly recommended you.