

unusual experience. Even though an idea may go in the end, it has spurred you on, has started you on a train of thought, or got something started that leads you where you really do want to go."

"Until you're excited by an idea, the whole thing just lies there dead on the page. So you write until something comes and you say 'Yeah!' It may be a day later, or maybe a month, or year later.

"A lot of writing," she says, "is exploring thoughts and ideas. It's the same as if you're out in the country on a drive and you don't particularly like this road, but if you hadn't taken it you never would have found that wonderful one that you really love."

"It's a guess-and-by-gosh. There's no rules for it, and that's the difference between an art and a science."

As a lecturer, as writer-in-residence at the Regina, Sask., Public Library in 1982-83, as a visitor to schools throughout the country, Janet encourages young people to write. Letters arrive steadily, the correspondents looking for advice. Janet replies to them all.

She enjoys writing for children, "an audience you'll never get from other people." Too many adults, she says, have had their thinking cluttered by the influences and prejudices of others. Also, "children read with more intensity than adults."

Her editors occasionally suggest she simplify the language of her books, but Janet says, "I can't write to please everyone." She prefers to write at a level young adults can understand, rather than writing at a child's level. If a word or a phrase is not understood, she believes the child will learn by referring to a dictionary or by seeking the answer elsewhere.

She also conducts writing workshops for adults.

"You can talk about the basic shape of a story, about making language work, and some of the tricks. But you can't make hard-and-fast rules and say 'this is how you must write your story', any more than you can tell someone how they must live their lives.

"It's the same with cooking. You can be given a recipe, but you play with that. So much of art is playing. You play with ideas."

Most children play make-believe games. Some of them are exciting and go on for days. Others are abandoned. "Writing is like that," she says.

"What I often tell children is that a story is an organized daydream. You get caring about the people."

Janet readily tells people that she was "an incredible daydreamer as a kid. People think that you mustn't daydream, but no work of art could be created by people who do not daydream."

"We all live in that fantasy world," she said, and referred to author Virginia Woolf, who wrote in her diaries of living in two worlds and the difficulty she had being two people— herself and a character in one of her novels.

Even with family problems uppermost in her thoughts— her husband has been very ill this year— "I

am partly crossing the wilderness in 1777 with a very frightened little girl," a character for a new book.

She can't explain the shift, doesn't even try. "It's just there all the time. Every once in awhile I'll be driving along and find myself saying, 'I know why that happens', and I won't be consciously thinking of it. I might be listening to the radio."

"If you are a writer, you're with it all the time."

As a child, Janet was exposed to a great deal of history. Civil War veterans marched in parades in communities she lived in, buildings and artifacts survived from before the Revolutionary War of 1776. One of the most memorable stories she heard was her great grandmother's recollections of seeing Abraham Lincoln. The stories gave her a direct link with the past.

Because of that relationship with history, she often dreamed of living a century earlier.

Some people don't react well to history, but "I like that sense of connectiveness, connecting times and places," she says. "I love knowing where I've been and passing it on to the next generation.

"I feel very much a part of a whole. I'm like everybody else, I have plenty of individual ego, but I don't expect it to matter awfully to everybody else.

"I feel in some way, and it's an analogy of course, that we're all like cells in one large body and we come and do our thing and go out, but it doesn't mean the whole body doesn't go on. I don't feel when I'm finished that that should matter terribly.

"I think it matters much more that you do what you're good at doing."

Janet Lunn is happiest when writing.

Her career as children's editor for Clarke Irwin Inc., in Toronto, from 1972 to 1975, was rewarding, but it kept her from writing. Now she does freelance editing, which leaves her time to write and research.

Otherwise, "I'm a very unhappy person. I remember saying to Dick one time, 'I know what's wrong with me. When I'm not writing a book, I'm making a bad novel out of my own life.'"

In the past, she wrote scripts for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, articles for magazines such as *Reader's Digest*, the old *Star Weekly*, *Maclean's* magazine, and worked as a children's book reviewer and critic for *The Globe and Mail*. But she wanted to write books for children.

The market in the early 1970's was sparse, as was the competition. But memories of her childhood remained, as did the pleasure of reading to her five children.

The crunch came when she discovered she had hypoglycemia. Then in her early 40's, she realized that she had had no time from her editing work to write, that the job of raising children had left her with too little time for thinking.

Her first project in 10 years was for *Press Porcepic*, which in 1979 published *Larger Than Life*, a collection of Canadian hero stories. The same year, Methuen published *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*.