

Anita: You are a published poet, you write books for children, and for adults. Which came first for you? Do you enjoy one more than another?

Gail: I guess writing short stories came first for me, writing for adults. I feel very lucky to be writing, to be published and to be read at all. YA audiences are the best to read to, though. Absolutely!

Anita: What, if any, are the challenges in switching genres? Do you find one genre or age group more difficult to write for than another?

Gail: I try never to talk down to kids. I respect young readers immensely. That they open a book at all is to me a delightful thing. So I don't think there are challenges in switching between age groups. I do for young readers as I do for adults: try to tell a good story. I will say there are challenges in each genre. Switching to short fiction after a novel is sometimes difficult. Moving from a modern setting into a biblical setting is tough, as is moving to a fantasy world with old-fashioned language and customs and magic. I do like crossing genres and my day job has made it necessary to do so, so I guess I've kept up the practice of "genre-jumping."

Anita: Some writers do not read when they are working on a book for fear of picking up another writer's "voice." Others read with abandon. Of which school of thought are you, and if you do read while writing, what do you read?

Gail: I'm always reading, usually two or three

books at a time. I also love the news, so I read two newspapers and check out the alternative presses as often as possible. I get many ideas for writing from the news. However, when I am writing a fantasy, I shy away from reading fantasies. I recently wrote a book about a young gay teenager, so I avoided similar sorts of books.

Anita: Can you think of a book that was most meaningful to you as a younger reader? Why?

Gail: Fairy tales in the original versions because they are spooky and psychologically sophisticated (although as a kid I just liked the stories and the triumphs of the underdogs). Dr. Seuss, especially *Green Eggs and Ham*, because I was always a fan of poetry and rhyme. After about six, I remember reading everything. Books were given as rewards in my family, and were part of many, many shopping excursions. I guess that I'd have to say that Shakespeare captivated me in high school because of an exceptional teacher. I know that Shakespeare is a huge influence in my life.

Anita: You are also an educator. How do you balance your teaching life with your writing life?

Gail: Barely! And many times I don't. Something has to suffer, and it's usually the writing that gets shelved first.

Anita: How does your writing life enrich your teaching life?

Gail: Writing is a very important part of the courses I teach. I also teach young people in a