

Meet the Author

Vikki VanSickle

Angela Thompson

Vikki VanSickle is the author of the acclaimed Clarissa books, including *Words that Start with B*, *Love Is a Four-Letter Word* and *Days that End in Y*. Vikki's most recent middle grade novel, *Summer Days, Starry Nights*, was a finalist for the Red Maple Fiction Award. When asked whether libraries are "quiet", she responded that a library is a space "where there is generally a low level hum of activity at all times." Read on to find out more about Vikki.



TingL: How did your writing journey start? Is there an event or inspiration that you are able to pinpoint?

VV: I have been writing since I was able to spell out words, and a storyteller long before that. I loved books and stories so much that I wanted to be part of that world. As a child I entered a lot of writing contests and my writing assignments were always much longer than required. I took a brief detour into theatre in high school and university, but it was at UBC that I decided I wanted to write professionally for children. From 2005-2007 I was part of the MA in Children's Literature program and I took a writing for children course and everything just clicked into place. There I discovered that my natural writing voice was much more suited to children, and I've been writing seriously for kids of all ages ever since.

Are there any routines or habits that help you focus on your writing?

Yes, routines are very important to my process. So much of writing (and finishing) a book is setting aside the time and forming a habit. I have a full time job in publishing which limits my writing time, so I get up early to write before work and also set aside a larger block of time to write on weekends.

My process varies a little from book to book, but in the beginning I ruminate on an idea for a long time, making notes by hand in my journal. Eventually I get to the point where I have to start writing, and then I move to the computer, where I write all my drafts. I don't write from an outline and I don't write in order, so my first drafts are extremely messy, ungainly creatures. Once I finish a novel I usually take 3-6 months before I start another one. I need the time to decompress and get out of the voice of the novel before I can move on.

Picture books I can work on—off and on—for years, or in a very short amount of time. I can only work on one novel at a time, but I'm often tinkering away at a picture book or two at the same time.