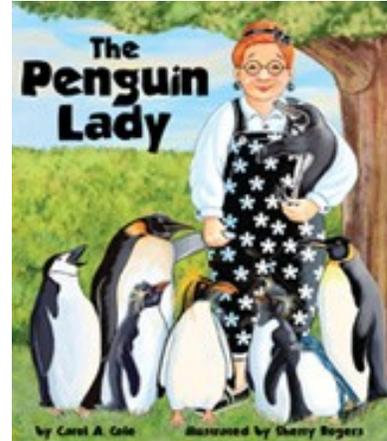




An Interview with Carol A. Cole, Author of *The Penguin Lady*

What was your incentive to write this particular book?

I have worked across the hallway with a special education teacher for many years and she is the original Penguin Lady. Her entire room is filled with all sorts of penguins, from penguin pads, puzzles, posters, stuffed penguins to a four-foot tall inflated penguin. When I thought of a counting book, penguins immediately came to mind.



When did you become interested in writing?

I actually started writing TV scripts for “Man From Uncle” with a friend when I was only ten years old. We filled several notebooks with elaborate stories for this show. I started writing short stories for online ezines as well as four anthologies, but they were all mysteries or romance stories for adults. Another teacher said that since I worked in schools, I should write stories for kids and *The Penguin Lady* was born.

What is the most frequently asked question you encounter as an author and what is your answer?

Since I will be new as a published author, people who know that I write, often ask how long it took to get my first book accepted. I originally started “*The Penguin Lady*” in 2004. It had the same character and first paragraph and then literally listed the ten species of penguins doing different activities around Penelope’s house in ten very short paragraphs. It’s gone through multiple revisions.

When are you most creative? (Or what sparks your creativity?)

I’m definitely a night-owl and write in the late evenings. I’ll often think of a topic for a story and have it sort of rolling around in my head for quite some time until I sit down at my computer and actually start putting words down on paper. I often think of what I enjoyed as a child or what I did – I’m working on another story about a little boy with an imaginary friend (a 10-foot dinosaur). From what my mother told me, I had an imaginary cow as my friend. My mother’s uncle had a 500 acre dairy farm in upstate New York and I guess I wanted my own cow.

Do you have any advice for parents (or other group) about...? (Basically, can you be considered an expert or helpful source for a subject related to your book?)

I don't consider myself an expert at all about penguins. I was just intrigued by my colleague and the story came first. I then wanted to know more about my subject. I would tell parents to help instill curiosity in their children and when they ask about a subject that their parents don't know much about, to show them how to research the subject.

What is most rewarding and/or challenging about writing children's books? (Or, what was most rewarding and/or challenging about writing the book you submitted to Sylvan Dell?)

The most rewarding aspect of writing a children's book is to think of kids turning the pages and be captivated by the illustrations and listening to their parents or other adults reading the words to them. Since I was hospitalized several times for kidney surgeries, my father taught me to read when I was only three, so I would have something to do in the hospital. He and my mother would read to my brother and me when we were young. I can still remember when my son asked me what the words the letters made when I was reading to him.



The most rewarding to me about having Sylvan Dell publish "The Penguin Lady" will be to walk into a library and see the book on the shelf and say to myself, "I wrote that!" The most frustrating aspect of writing "The Penguin Lady" has been coming across many people who thought the main character shouldn't be an adult or wanted too many changes. Another rewarding aspect is that I knew that someone, somewhere would like the character that I came up with and the cute, but ultimately annoying things the penguins did at Penelope's house.

Your choice. Please think of an interesting question to ask yourself!

What book had a lasting impression on you? My father bought and read a copy of "Peter Pan" when I was about eight years old. I embraced the character of Peter and to this day refuse to grow up.

I work with children from two to twenty-two in my job and never get over the joy of watching a child discover something about their world or take their first steps, which in my job may not occur until the child is seven or eight years old.

I hope through my writing that I can offer a parent or grandparent a glimpse of that moment of wonder when their child or grandchild turns the pages of a favorite book.

Want to continue this conversation? Schedule an interview!

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