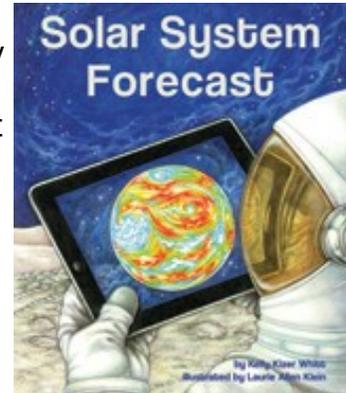




# A Conversation with Kelly Kizer Whitt, author of *Solar System Forecast*

## **What inspired you to write a children's book?**

Ever since my own children were little, I took them to the library every week so that we could learn something new. From getting them ready for a first visit to the dentist to discovering what kind of bug that was on the sidewalk, books answered all our questions. It feels great to contribute to the knowledge being acquired by curious little minds.



## **Do you have a favorite planet/star/constellation?**

Orion would probably have to be my favorite constellation because it's so large and easy to find with its distinctive three-star belt. It also has one of the best nebulas in the sky. Orion's stars have interesting characteristics, such as the red supergiant star Betelgeuse, which will end in a supernova explosion someday, or the blue supergiant Rigel, which marks Orion's left foot. But my favorite star in Orion would have to be Bellatrix, which is the middle name I gave to my daughter.



## **What sparked your interest in outer space?**

I can't ever remember not being interested in space. We would lie out on blankets in the backyard on summer evenings and look for "shooting stars" when I was a kid, and I would always look for the first star to appear in the sky after sunset. When I began to read about the complex and amazing objects that exist in the endless reaches of space, I was hooked.

## **What do you hope children will get out of *Solar System Forecast*?**

I hope that *Solar System Forecast* teaches kids how diverse the planets are and makes them want to find out more about our universe.

**Your book is sure to spark children’s interest in astronomy. Where do you recommend they go to learn more? Is there anything parents can do to help encourage this interest?**

You can teach children about space without any fancy or expensive equipment. Just show them the stars and tell them a story behind one of the constellations. Read books together about space and let them use their imaginations to tell you what they think it would be like to visit space. For help in teaching your child, visit a local planetarium or explore the NASA website, which has lots of information for kids.



**As a writer, what is one of the biggest questions you are asked?**

When people learn that I am a writer, they want to know what subject matter I write about. I tell them I write about astronomy, much of which deals with what you can see when you look up at the sky at night. It’s a great feeling to show people the larger universe, especially people who didn’t even know that some of those starlike objects shining back at them in the sky are actually planets that they can see without any optical aid.

**When did you become interested in writing?**

In the third grade we were learning about occupations, and my teacher went around the classroom and asked each student what they wanted to be when they grew up. The students were all answering teacher, waitress, nurse, and repeating each other’s answers. I said “author” even though I wasn’t really sure yet what I wanted to be; I just knew that I loved to read.

**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 challenging aspect of writing *Solar System Forecast* was making the subject matter accessible to children. I normally write for adults, but even then I am always trying to reach the largest audience I can.



**Your choice. Please think of an interesting question to ask yourself! What planet would you most like to visit?**

Because I have always been fascinated with storms, I would want to visit the stormiest planet. Jupiter would be a great pick, with storms as enormous as a few Earths, but even something as simple as watching a dust devil whirl across Mars’s sandy terrain would be a huge rush. It’s hard to pick just one!

**Want to continue this conversation?** Schedule an interview!

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