

DIANNE WHITE

picture book author, lover of poetry, teacher

When I was growing up, I never thought I'd become a writer. My middle sister was the storyteller in our family and that was just fine with me. Except for my semi-famous-at-the-time "skunk in a bunk" poem, the only writing I did was for school and on that count, I managed to be perfectly average. In fact, for years I didn't enjoy writing at all.



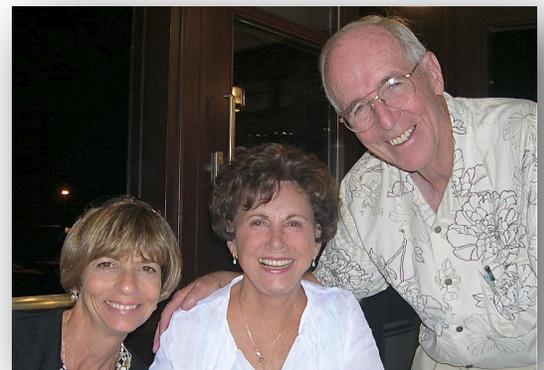
But you know what? Sometimes the things we come to enjoy best sneak up on us. Years later, we're able to recognize who or what was responsible for initiating the tiny sparks of interest that grew into something bigger.



My 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Clark, was one such spark. Mrs. Clark was known for loving poetry. She recited poems to our class daily and the one thing she did that stuck in some tiny, important crevice of my heart was to make us memorize poems ourselves. To this day, I can't read or hear John Masefield's "[Sea Fever](#)" without picturing Mrs. Clark standing beside my desk reciting "I must go down to the seas again," clearly loving each and every word.

In 6th grade, another spark was lit. Once a week, Mademoiselle Green, our French teacher, would drive over from the high school and teach us a new dialogue. I can still recite nearly every word of the first lesson, "*Voilà Monsieur Thibaut. Voilà Madame Thibaut...*"

What did French class have to do with becoming a writer? Well, for me, it was the beginning of a life-long love of foreign languages and a special appreciation for the sounds of words and the rhythms of speech. Just two years after that first foray into French, our family moved to the other side of the world where we were surrounded, once again, by new languages, sounds, and experiences. I graduated from junior high in the Philippines and high school in Hong Kong.



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Jump ahead ten years, and all those rich experiences led to a college degree in French and Spanish. Ten years after that, I went back to school to earn a teaching credential.

As a classroom teacher, I rediscovered the joy of children's poetry and books. I returned to some of the stories my grandmother had read to my sisters and me in childhood, as well as the [mother goose poems we listened to incessantly](#) the week we spent in our parents' bed, all three of us sick with the mumps.

That love of teaching and language, poetry and children's books led to more schooling – a master's degree in Language and Literacy and an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Along the way, I married, raised 3 boys, and taught for 25 years with the most dedicated group of teachers I know.

Today, I'm lucky enough to write full-time. And on the days when I'm not at my desk, I'm probably taking a class (I'll never stop being a student!), grabbing a bite with friends, or enjoying the sunny goodness of Arizona.

