

Getting to Know

AMY HEST

CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR



“I grew up with books.”

Amy didn't always live in New York City. She did her growing up on Long Island, in a smallish house on a smallish street called Rugby Road, where she did a lot of reading. “My mother, who was a teacher and who read more books than anyone I know, took me to our town library. Often! I followed her around the grownup section for a while. Then she followed me around the children's section. I was always on the lookout for books about girls my age. Real girls. Regular girls with regular dilemmas. In other words, girls like me! My mother had a knack for pulling just the right ones off the shelf, saying, *Take a look at this one, Amy ... how about this, one, Amy ...* She knew books! She knew me!

“I only wanted to work in the library. I HAD to get that job!”

When she was 16, Amy applied for a job at her library. Every day, right after school, she knocked on the office door of the Library Director. “Please, may I work in the library? I want to be a library page!” Every day, the director responded, “I'm sorry, but I have a tall stack of applications for page positions, and yours is at the bottom.” Amy didn't give up. She came back and came back and came back, day after day. “Finally,” she recalls, “he told me he'd moved my application to the TOP of the stack on the condition that I stop coming to his office everyday to ask for a job!”

Amy got the job and now says, “Not to brag, but I was a fantastic page! I kept that job through high school, college, and Graduate Library School. I loved it!”

“It seemed to me all my friends had a talent. I wanted to be talented, too.”

Amy thought long and hard about what she might BE when she grew up. She tried dancing. “I was a dancer with no talent.” She tried ice skating. “I was a skater with no talent.” She tried quite a few musical instruments. “I was a musician with no talent.” Secretly, of course, she had already decided to be a writer. “I liked stories, and making up stories, and books and libraries and notebooks. I liked to type. Plus, I liked the notion that I would one day be famous. Surely, I thought, all writers are FAMOUS!”

After college, Amy earned a Master's degree in Library Science, and became a librarian in the New York Public Libraries. She eventually moved to children's book publishing, and began to write her own stories (secretly!). Her first book was published in 1982.

“I write the stories I would have wanted to read when I was a child.”

Amy's stories are of everyday things – sleepovers, grandparents, swimming lessons, and best friends who move away. She writes a lot about dogs and the people who own dogs. She writes about families. “My stories take shape,” she says, “when I find myself in a character. Then I know how they feel and how to tell their stories.”

More than 45 books later (and over a million copies sold, with translations in *fifteen* languages!), Amy says, simply, “I love my job!”