

TEN QUESTIONS FOR JANE PORTER by Lynne Marshall

I am always amazed by fellow authors and their generosity of time. From the following Jane Porter interview, you'll realize how busy the **Presents**™ and Modern Lit author is, yet she consented, on short notice, to answer my ten questions.

Classic Romance, Modern Lit. Isn't that a great tag line? On one hand, Jane is the master of the alpha male with her Sheik books for Mills & Boon **Presents**™, and on the other, she writes smart and sexy modern women for her mass market books such as **Flirting with Forty**, **Odd Mom Out**, and **She's Gone Country**.

I realize prolific authors have limited time, so I came up with my "Just the Facts" list of questions a few years back. When given the opportunity I want to know about an author and her writing, not which is her favorite ice cream or color, so you'll find a no frills approach here, but lots of great, basic information. I found Jane's answers to be thoughtful, encouraging, enlightening, and helpful, and I hope you will, too.

1. How long were you writing before you got published and how many manuscripts had you completed?

I've been writing since I was a young girl but only got serious about it when I was in college. It took me fifteen years to sell my first book. I had over thirteen rejected manuscripts before I finally sold my first book in January 2000. I actually write for two publishers—very different stuff—and since January 2000 I have written and sold 35 novels. It's been a lot of work but I'm living my dream.

2. Where do you get your ideas?

From life...the environment around me...magazines. I subscribe to over a dozen magazines and I read voraciously current events, celebrity magazines, lifestyle magazines and newspapers as well, and then I listen to the women around me talk. I'm surrounded by strong, independent women and they inspire me, giving me those "ah a" moments that help gel a story or conflict. As my readers know, I love writing women about the things we think and talk and worry about. I like the complexity of the female mind, of being a mother, daughter, sister and how very complex our lives are, as well as the demands placed on us.

3. Do you plot and make character studies before you start or do you fly by the seat of your pants?

I don't plot in detail but I do try to have a good idea of who the characters are, what the story is, and how it's going to progress. There have been some books where I only knew the beginning and the end when I sat down to start, while other books just flow immediately, where the conflict grows out of the characters and the stories seem to write themselves.

I don't use charts and forms for characters, but I do make visual boards and use colors and textures and images to help create and firm up the character in my mind. Getting a

character right is really important and the brainstorming part of writing is probably my favorite.

4. What about writing makes you anxious?

The time I spend away from my boys. Sometimes when the writing is especially tough, I have to slip away to somewhere really quiet so I can get the chapters done, putting in ten, twelve, fourteen hour days back to back. It's how I get the bulk of my writing done. It's not easy being away from my family for hours and hours. There's only so long I can sit in one place alone, writing and writing, but I don't handle interruptions well when writing. So now when I write, I write, and when I mother, I mother and I'm trying to keep the two separate more than I used to.

5. How long does it take you to complete a manuscript and how many books do you write in a year?

In a good year, I can write three books a year. One single title and two shorter ones for Harlequin. However, the last two years have been a bit slow on the writing front as I had a new baby boy and had to adjust my writing schedule accordingly. Generally though, it takes me about 2 months to write a Harlequin and around 5 to six months to write the longer single titles.

6. Of all the books you've written, which is your favorite, and are there any you wish you'd never written?

I don't have a favorite book in that sense, but certain books do hold a special place in my heart due to the character or conflict. I've always loved Lazaro from Lazaro's Revenge. It was my 4th Harlequin and something about him really touched me. I also loved Marta from Odd Mom Out---she was such a strong woman, such a fiercely independent mother, and yet her daughter was her Achille's Heel. Nothing hurt Marta more than her daughter being lonely and ostracized from other little girl groups. And I've never wished I hadn't written something. If I didn't want to write something, I wouldn't. I'm an emotional writer and couldn't write if it was a story I didn't feel passionate about.

7. Are you involved in a critique group, plotting group, any kind of writer's group?

I've tried critique groups but I'm not a fan. I was a part of two different ones but they weren't helpful to me. I don't belong to a plot group as such but I do sometimes brainstorm with close author friends. That goes a long way for me when the writing is slow. I also belong to several RWA chapters but honestly, I spend so much speaking at other chapters and conferences that its hard to attend meetings when I'm home!

8. How do you see the romance genre evolving in the next ten years?

I see more of the same— don't think anything drastic will be happening anytime soon other than the fact that more and more of our readers will be reading e-books...my 12 year old only reads novels on his iPad now and I've stunned myself by falling in love with my Kindle. I never expected it to happen but its been awesome having it for travel and my purse. I read more now than I ever did before because its so slim and light and holds so many books. I'm never out of reading material now!

9. Which writers do you admire?

I read across the genres but I especially love historical and paranormal romances. Some of my favorite authors include *Georgette Heyer*, *JR Ward*, *Loretta Chase*, *Mary Balogh*, *Caludia Dain*, *Kresley Cole*, and *Anna Campbell*.

10. Any advice to aspiring authors?

Don't give up. Don't accept defeat. Keep writing and keep learning the craft. Apply it to what you're writing. Writing is a muscle and the more you use it, the better you'll get. It takes time to learn to write well so don't be discouraged easily. Writing is really not for the faint of heart. You've got to have patience and perseverance and at times, a thick skin. But if you hang in there, you'll achieve your dreams one day. Anything is possible if we keep trying.

I love Jane's optimism, don't you? She isn't an overnight success, and she didn't sell her very first manuscript, she stuck to her dream, kept working toward it, caught her break, and worked harder... all the way to success. It couldn't happen to a nicer person!

Thank you, Jane, for consenting to answer these questions, and for once again reminding us that the key to success is perseverance!

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