

Sarah Parke - Sample Q & A

Q: How did you get started writing?

I've been writing for as long as I can remember. I didn't always share my writing with people, but I was doing it every chance I got. My stories usually started in journals or tiny construction paper books, then my parents gave me a boxy old Macintosh desktop, and for a while my stories and poems lived on floppy disks. When I was in high school, I had a fantastic creative writing teacher who encouraged me to write a novel as part of my year-end portfolio. I had never written anything so involved or lengthy before. I was the only one in my class who even attempted. I had to read an excerpt aloud in front of my class and I was terrified. But the snippet of story was well-received by my peers (some of whom asked to read the whole story.) From that point on, I felt that I could write anything as long as I sat in one place for long enough to get the words down. That seems to be the biggest challenge facing me today!

Q: What authors have inspired you to write?

Growing up I read a lot of Laura Ingalls Wilder, the *Anne of Green Gables* series, and the Dear America books. I always enjoyed reading historical fiction, learning about a different place or time period. But as a teenager (and to this day) I read a lot of fantasy. My writing is heavily influenced by a diverse cast of authors, including Charlotte Brontë, Jane Austen, Neil Gaiman, Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis, J.K. Rowling and Joss Whedon (though technically he's a screenwriter).

Q: How would you describe your writing process?

Though I love writing, I often struggle with writing resistance (the compulsion to do any task besides writing). I'm lucky enough to have a dedicated writing space and a husband who understands my need for time alone to work. I'm working on forming a consistent, daily writing habit with the help of setting realistic goals and tracking my progress. With the new novel project in the works, I'm back to the drafting stage, so I try to write (or at least think about what I want to write) every day. Revision counts as writing, too!

Q: Is there a certain type of scene that's harder for you to write than others?

I struggle with high-intensity emotional scenes. Because of my personality, my tendency is to inject humor into scenes where it doesn't belong. Unless your character is a sociopath, try to avoid using humor in scenes that need to be tense and uncomfortable.

Q: Where did you get the idea for your latest project, *The Mourning Ring*?

My initial interest in the Brontë siblings and their earliest writings (often called their juvenilia), started during my senior year of college when I took a seminar on them. I had been to Haworth, West Yorkshire (Brontë country) the previous year, and found the old parsonage (now a museum) where the siblings lived to be fascinating. As part of that course, we read all the novels by the sisters, some of Branwell's and Patrick's poetry, and a selection of the Angria stories written by the siblings when they were preteens. Something about the way the four siblings wrote together within these fictional worlds fascinated me. Perhaps they were the earliest players of RPGs (role-playing games). I started thinking about all the amazing conflicts that could arise from the situation where a group of creative--and lonely--people were a little too obsessed with the fictional worlds and characters they created. Naturally, fairies and magic found their way into the mix, and the concept for *The Mourning Ring* was born.