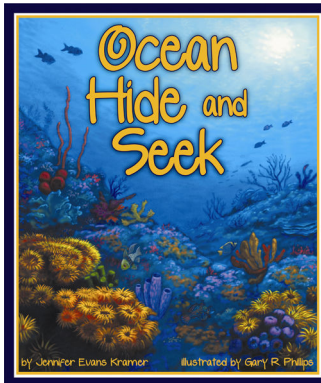


A Conversation with Jennifer Kramer, author of Ocean Hide and Seek



What was your incentive to write this particular book?



My kids love to hunt... whether it is the grasshopper in a field of wildflowers, the little mouse on each page of *Goodnight Moon*, or the stray M&M in my purse. Some of my favorite moments with my children have been walking through the neighborhood, hiking in the woods, climbing trees, and of course, reading books. There is no end to what they will find—with the limited exception of shoes, matching socks, and lost keys, for which they are hunting impaired. Truly though, there is no greater treasure than seeing nature through the eyes of a child.

When did you become interested in writing?

I have always loved to write. I used to write tome-sized notes to my friends during school (try passing one of those covertly across a room), diaries of my pet hamsters, and even a very scary story about waiting outside the orthodontist's office. It was titled, "Beware the Chair!" I thought it was very clever. My orthodontist did not. He kept it in my file the entire time I had braces.

What is the most frequently asked question you encounter as an author, and what is your answer?

The most frequently asked question would probably have to be, "Really. You... write?", followed by an unflattering look of disbelief. I have yet to come up with a clever, sparkling rebuttal or even a plan to make myself look more... literate.

When are you most creative? (Or what sparks your creativity?)

Like the water bottle our poodle tosses into the air, my muse tends to knock me upside the head. Then, like a good friend, she prattles on endlessly until I either start yanking

my hair out clump by clump, or I plant my posterior and start typing. The former was self-limiting, but sometimes less painful!

What is most rewarding and/or challenging about writing children's books?

The most rewarding thing -- that would be all the ice cream. What's that? You mean most writers don't eat their way through writer's block? Seriously though, the feeling you get when a child says they loved your book -- it beats Caramel Coyote by a wide gallon. The most challenging thing? Well, that's easy. Trying to answer questions like these without sounding way less interesting than chalk.

What is your most memorable experience in the ocean? The one you'd most like to forget?

My favorite memory would have to be diving off Maui and seeing a giant manta ray soaring by on these big, silent wings -- it was gone before I remembered to breathe! As for the memory I'd most like to forget... when I was little, my mom and I went out in an inflatable raft and came upon a school of jellyfish. They sparkled in the sunlit water, like tiny pulsing moons! It was magical. So of course we tried to touch a few. You can imagine how we spent the rest of that vacation. Whenever you are at the beach, remember that big or small, these are living creatures, and the ocean is their home.

Do you have any advice for parents?

Advice? Yes... when you're in the ocean, watch out for tiny, pulsing moons! And read with your child. Every day. Let your child explore magic pebbles, tree houses, a land of wild things, or a simple day with a frog and a toad. There's hidden treasures on every page of a good book! My nine year old reads better than I do. I still hear him under the covers giggling when I read a funny picture book, and he can recite the words to most of them by heart.

Want to continue this conversation? Schedule an interview!

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