

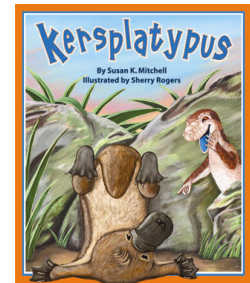
# *A Conversation with Susan K. Mitchell, author of **Kersplatypus** and **The Rainforest Grew All Around***



## **How did you begin writing books for children?**

I rediscovered children's book — like many parents do — when I had children of my own. The stories I read brought me so much enjoyment. My parents had tried to convince me to write children's books for YEARS! I finally agreed to give it a shot. Like many authors, I soon realized writing for children is not as easy as one thinks.

*Kersplatypus* came about like many of my stories ... with a single word. Many times I think up a title far before I come up with the story. A catchy title pops into my head and I have to think up some story to go along with it. With *Kersplatypus*, my youngest daughter fell one day when she was just a toddler. I scooped her up, dried her tears and told her, "Oh baby, did you go kersplatypus?" The proverbial light bulb blinked on over my head and I thought *Hey! That might make an interesting story!* Then I had to come up with a story to put with the weird word I just made up.



## **What gets your creative juices flowing?**

My insane imagination! Having kids was the best thing that ever happened to me because I'm just an overgrown kid myself. Being a parent gives me a license to be silly and weird with a reason. My mind never shuts down. Crazy characters, sentences and story ideas are always popping in there. I like to make my kids and myself laugh.

## **What is the most frequently asked question you encounter as an author?**

The number one question is always about the illustrations. The common misconception is that an author has to find the artist. That is just not the case at all. The editors do it all! After that, I'd say kids most want to know how long it takes. I always emphasize to students that 99% of writing is REWRITING! Coming up with a story idea is the easy part ... getting it written just so is the time consuming part.

## **You're a mother, teacher *and* an author. How do you find time for everything?**

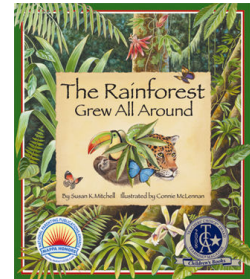
I have NO idea! Like all mothers, I just do. Of course, I might try to perfect cloning or the mastery of the time/space continuum in my spare time if I'm lucky.

**You obviously spend a lot of time with children. Do you have any advice for other parents?**

Of course, reading to your kids is the number one thing any parent can do. Even when they are reading independently, keep reading with them. Furthermore, my advice to any parent is to reach inside and find the kid in you. Don't be afraid to be silly, funny, goofy or whatever. If there is one thing that kids LOVE ... it is something silly.

**Your first picture books — *The Rainforest Grew All Around* and *Stone Pizza* — were released last year (in 2007). How has the past year been for you?**

Unbelievable! It has been busy, and learning how to run my own business (the business of being an author) has been insane. I still can't believe it! I never get tired of reading my books to kids. I am never happier than when I'm on a school visit. Okay, that's not entirely true ... having my OWN kids think their mom is cool pretty much tops anything else. It makes everything worth it!



**Want to continue this conversation?** Schedule an interview!

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