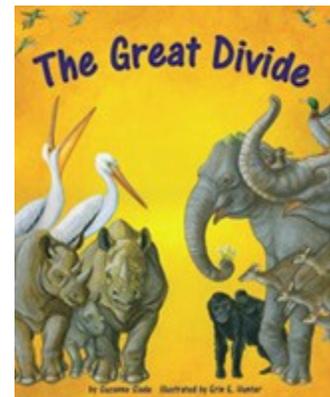




A Conversation with Suzanne Slade

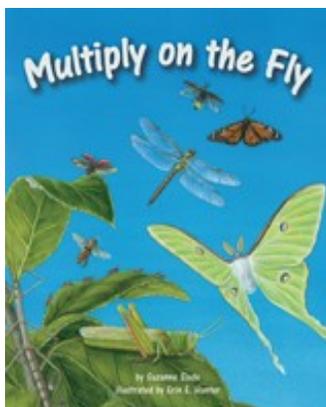
What is the most rewarding part of writing children's books?

There are actually several things I love about writing children's book. First, I enjoy discovering cool facts that fascinate me. I get a great feeling of satisfaction when I finally complete a book manuscript. And it is very rewarding when a child tells me that they like one of my books.



What is a typical writing day like for you?

My writing day begins when my children leave for school. I usually first catch up on emails, then get back to writing whatever book I'm working on. This almost always involves lots of reading and research. I might read my story out loud to see how it sounds, or send it to a writing friend to get their suggestions on how I could make my story better. Many of my writing days include a quick trip to the library and perhaps a virtual author visit via Skype. Oh, and I also do lots of snacking when I work. A tasty bowl of cereal can really help me keep going!

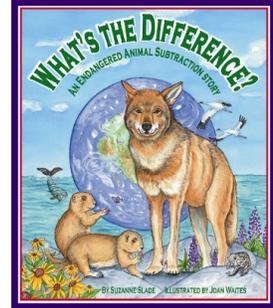


When starting a new project, how do you determine the style of writing you would like to use? (rhyming, prose, etc.)

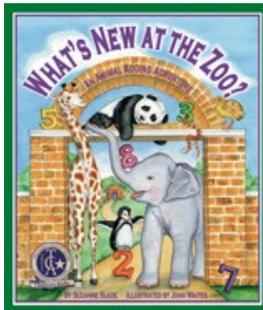
When I begin a new book I carefully consider the age group I'm writing for and the topic of my story. These two factors help me decide how I want to write the story. For example, if I'm writing for a younger audience, I often choose rhyme. Prose is usually a better choice if my book is geared for older children, or it's a topic that has lots of cool, detailed facts I'd like to share.

Is it true you used to work on rockets?

Strange, but true. I have a mechanical engineering degree and worked for McDonnell Douglas in California in the 1980's. As a test engineer there, I worked on Delta IV rockets that NASA used to send weather and communications satellites into orbit.



How did you go from engineering to writing children's stories?



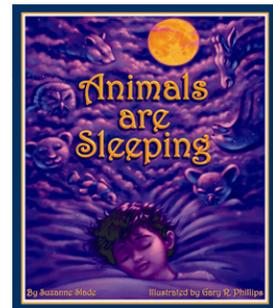
When I was a teenager I was interested in writing children's stories, but my love of math and science determined my studies in college. Later after I became a mom and was reading picture books to my children every day, I began to think about writing again. My path to publication, like many authors, was a rather long journey. I had a great deal to learn about writing, editing, submitting, and children's stories in general. I took several writing classes, joined critique groups, learned from the many resources available from SCBWI (Society of Children's Writers and Illustrators), and just kept practicing writing.

What advice do you have for girls wanting to pursue a career in a math or science related field?

I tell girls who love math and science to study hard and pursue whatever career they are most excited about. I think there are as many opportunities for girls in the field of math and science, as there are for boys.

What do you hope readers get out of your books?

I hope young readers simply have fun and enjoy reading my books. Of course, if they learn something cool or interesting about animals or insects along the way, that's great too!



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

I'm often asked what I enjoy most about writing children's books, and to be honest, it's hard to think of anything I *don't* like about writing children's books! I love the excitement of getting a fresh, new idea. I love digging in and doing research for a new book. I am very curious and enjoy learning new things when I write a story. I really enjoy the challenge of putting my ideas for a fiction story together. To me it's like putting the pieces of a puzzle together. I usually know all the parts of my "story-in-progress", and it's just a matter of figuring out how they fit together.

I also like to play with fun-sounding words. When I read, I often write down interesting or unusual words I find in case I want to use them later. It's also exciting to discover words that sound really cool together. Like hop poppin', wicky wacky words! Another part of writing I enjoy is working with editors. They are always very helpful and smart. Editors have great ideas to make my writing better. And of course, one of my favorite parts of writing books is sharing them with children. Most children are very curious like me, and they have great imaginations. It's great to see them enjoy one of my books.

***The Great Divide* is the latest clever title in your four-book math series. What inspired you to write (and keep writing) a math series like this?**

I really enjoy writing books about math because math was my favorite subject in school. I also love learning about all the fascinating animals and insects in our world, so I have fun including cool facts about them in my books.

Many of your books feature animals. What's your favorite animal and why?

Well, my most favorite animal of all is my little 7-pound dog, Corduroy. As far as wild animals, I a big fan of penguins. They are so adorable, yet all dressed up!

What gets your creative juices flowing?

I get new ideas for books all the time - usually when I'm not thinking about writing at all. The funny things my kids say have also been a source for many new manuscripts. News stories often get me thinking of an idea for a book, particularly an amazing science discovery or stories about animals.

Want to continue this conversation? Schedule an interview!

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