

Blue Balliett on Writing

Find out from the author why she likes to write and how she does it.

Why do you like to write?

I love playing around with words, and trying to get them in a just-right kind of sentence. It's hard and it can be very frustrating, but when you manage to say something in a way that pleases you, it feels great.

How do you write your ideas down?

I have a writing notebook at home that I can scribble down ideas or quotes in. I also carry a really small notebook and pen so that I can do some writing and thinking — on paper — whenever I want to. Lots of plot ideas have begun in a coffee shop, a plane, or a train. I sometimes get ideas just as I'm falling asleep at night.

Where do you write?

I write in our laundry room at home. When I began *Chasing Vermeer*, I liked working on a spare bed that was always covered with a mound of clean blue jeans and socks (no one in the family likes folding laundry). My back got tired of that, so I now work on a table. I like the coziness of the space, and sometimes I even like the shushing noise of the washing machine.

Do you listen to music when you write?

I like quiet when I'm writing — it's easier for me to hear my thoughts.

What's your favorite time of day to write?

I like to bring my morning coffee to the laundry room and get to work first thing in the morning. When I'm writing, I hardly ever answer the phone.

When you were writing *Chasing Vermeer* did you make a writing schedule for yourself?

No, because for years I just wrote whenever there was a quiet moment. I was still teaching full-time when I wrote the first draft, and because my son is a drummer and my kids had lots of friends in and out of the house, I wrote at funny times. Mostly I worked on the book during school breaks or on weekend mornings.

Who do you contact with questions and how do they help you?

If I have a question I can't find an answer to, sometimes I have called an expert, like a curator in a museum. My experience is that they are usually very helpful once they understand you are writing a book for kids.