

The Petit Proust Questionnaire

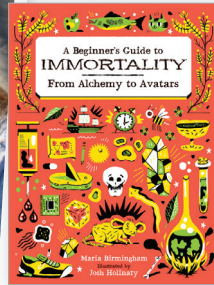
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Meet author Maria Birmingham

MARIA BIRMINGHAM is a longstanding contributor to *OWL* and *chickaDEE* magazines, writing numerous features and recurring sections for both. Maria is also the author of *Weird Zone: Sports and Tastes Like Music*. She lives in Brampton, Ontario. Visit her website at <http://mervv1.wix.com/mariabirmingham> and find her on Twitter as @mkbirmingham.



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Is it possible to live forever? *A Beginner's Guide to Immortality: From Alchemy to Avatars* takes readers on a fast-paced tour of various wacky and wise methods humans have used to try prolonging their lives, from ancient immortality elixirs and quests for a fountain of youth to modern-day research into cryogenics and robotics.

When you were a kid, what was your favorite thing to do?

I absolutely loved to read. I could never get my hands on enough books! And I spent a lot of time outside with my brother. We'd ride bikes around our neighborhood, go to the park, and explore the fields behind our house. We loved to catch frogs in the nearby creek. One day, we actually brought along a bucket and carried over 50 frogs back home. Our window well was not the best habitat for those poor little guys (I still feel guilty about the way that ended!).

What did you most dislike doing when you were a child?

Swimming lessons. I was terrified of the water and would make up every excuse in the book just to stay out of the pool. To this day, I can't swim.

As a child, where did you dream of living?

To be honest, I don't think I ever wanted to live anywhere that wasn't near my family.

What did you think you were good at when you were a kid?

I thought I was the best speller around.

When you were a kid in school, what did you look for in a friend?

I liked kids who were quiet and weren't in with a big group. And I appreciated kids who were kind and had a great sense of humor. I guess I was pretty good with my choices because my two best friends today are the same ones I had 35 years ago.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be an elementary school teacher.



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What was your favorite book as a child?

I read and enjoyed a lot of books. My absolute favourite picture book was *Who's Got the Apple?* by Jan Lööf, and when I got older I really liked the Macdonald Hall series by Gordon Korman. I actually saw him at a book event last year but didn't have the nerve to speak to him!

What is your favorite pastime now?

I still love to read, especially autobiographies. And sometimes I like to just sit back and watch the clouds roll by.

What do you find an absolute chore?

Any kind of housework. I Hate it — with a capital “H.” And cooking is high on the list too.

If you could live anywhere, where would you go?

I haven't changed much. I still prefer to live near my family. But a long vacation by the ocean wouldn't be too shabby!

What is the one talent you wish you had?

I wish I could sing. Well, I guess I can sing, but I'd like to sing *well*.

What makes a good friend?

Someone who is loyal, kind, and accepts you for who you are.

If you weren't an author or illustrator, what job would you have?

I'd probably be a teacher.

What children's books have caught your attention lately?

There are SO MANY great books out there! In non-fiction, I really enjoyed *Feathers: Not Just for Flying* by Melissa Stewart, *A Nest Is Noisy* by Dianna Hutts Aston, Cece Bell's *El Deafo*, and *Why'd They Wear That?* by Sarah Albee. When it comes to fiction, *Bog* by Karen Krossing and *Counting by 7s* by Holly Goldberg Sloan are excellent reads. And I've been reading a lot of picture books lately. I especially like *I Wish You More* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal, *Yard Sale* by Eve Bunting, *Snoozefest* by Samantha Berger, and Scott Campbell's *Hug Machine*.

If you had to have a motto, what would it be?

Do it scared (sometimes you have to do something that scares you in spite of your fear).

