



Author Spotlight with

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Where did you grow up?

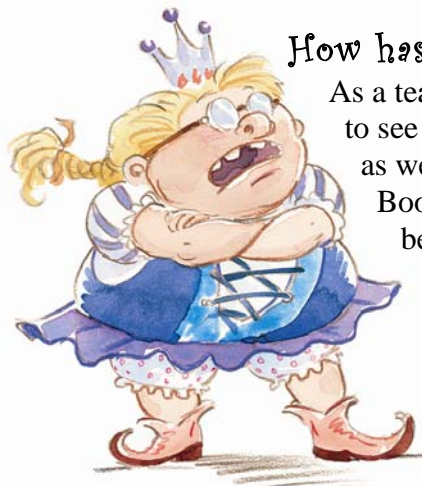
I was born in Chicago, but most of my childhood was spent in Southern California. I grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles close enough to the beach to walk. My friends and I spent entire summers bodysurfing.

Did you enjoy reading as a kid? What were your favorite books?

I LOVED it. It was one of my favorite things. In third grade, my favorite story was *The Little Mermaid*. In fourth grade, it was *A Wrinkle in Time*. In fifth grade, it was *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Even though I've grown up, I still love to read children's books, and I've discovered that writing them is even more fun.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I could never figure out what I wanted to be. Not even after I grew up! As a kid, I wanted to be an artist of some sort—only I didn't think it was possible, or something real people could grow up and do. When I grew up, I tried so many things trying to figure it out: a restaurant pianist, a teacher, a nurse, a secretary, a waitress, and even a tree planter. The whole time I was trying all these things, I kept writing. It's the only career I didn't quit. Most of the time, just about when I was becoming pretty good at one of my jobs, I'd start to feel bored and want to quit. Writing never bores me, and I still have so much to learn.



How has your teaching experience influenced your writing?

As a teacher, my favorite thing to do was to read stories aloud. I was able to see firsthand how stories enchanted, entertained, and informed children, as well as encouraged them to create their own artwork and stories.

Books gave me so much as a child, and continue to do so, that it has been my dream to give the gift of stories back to other people.

Were you excited when you heard *Princess Justina Albertina* was going to be published?

Excited is an understatement. I spent the evening jumping up and down around the living room, shrieking with joy until my family finally asked me if I could calm down a bit.



What was the inspiration for *Princess Justina Albertina*?

My two daughters absolutely *love* animals and over the years asked for all sorts of pets. They begged and begged, and we ended up with one pet after another. We've had bunnies, hamsters, chickens, dogs, cats, guinea pigs, rats, a horse, a fish, and several birds. All were very well cared for, but it drove me crazy!

I wrote *Princess Justina Albertina* partly to get back at my daughters. Not that they are anything like the horrible brat princess—they are wonderful to their pets. If the story was really about them, then Princess Justina Albertina would ask her nanny to build a penthouse suite for the monkey and a deluxe stable for the unicorn. Maybe that's another story.

Did you have a pet growing up?

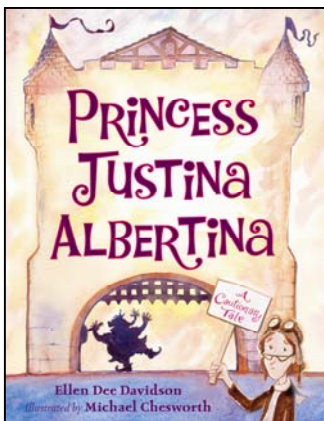
When I was four, my family had a cocker spaniel named Eclipse, because it was entirely black. I was in the backyard and a rattlesnake was coiled, ready to strike me. Eclipse pounced on the snake, saving my life. We also had a Siamese cat named Sapphire. She was beautiful. I used to love petting her until she purred.

Is there a little bit of *Princess Justina Albertina* in all of us?

I can't speak for everyone. I know that sometimes I can want my own way and cause a bit of a ruckus when I don't get it. Lucky for me, I haven't seen any gryphons around lately.

What do you hope to accomplish as a writer?

I would like to write something of enduring value—something that entertains, enlightens, inspires, and gives a hopeful vision. I think that we are all very mysterious, even to ourselves. If I keep working, learning, and growing in the craft, then who knows what I might be able to offer? Maybe I have a *Wizard of Oz* or a *Green Eggs and Ham* in me. It's entirely possible that I do not, but I figure I will never find out if I don't give it my best shot. We can't possibly know what we have to offer to the world until we really try.



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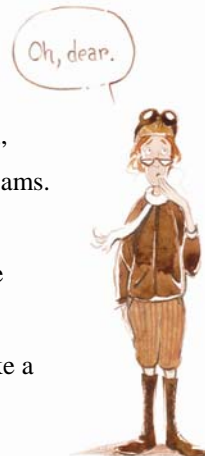
Princess Justina Albertina liked to have her own way. When she didn't get it, she got a funny look in her big green eyes and caused a ruckus and a rumpus and a horrible hubbub.

When Princess Justina Albertina declares, "I WANT A PET!" her nanny has to search far and wide to find the pet of her dreams. Can any animal please this horrid brat?

Perhaps Princess Justina Albertina should be careful what she wishes for. . .

"[A] deliciously satisfying tale about the dangers of acting like a spoiled princess."

—*School Library Journal*



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