

## WHAT'S YOUR STORY, BARBARA O'CONNOR?



I grew up in the South, so my strongest childhood memories revolve around the rich details unique to the people and places of that part of the country. Boiled peanuts. Moonpies. Kudzu vines that grow so thick and fast they gobble up telephone poles and even barns. Steamy summers with asphalt roads that melt and stick to the bottom of your feet. Wild blackberries and Queen Ann's lace lining the red dirt roads in the countryside.

My favorite family times were picnics in the Smoky Mountains. I loved the winding roads, the lush

woods, the flowing mountain streams with boulders to jump onto to get to the other side. I went to summer camp every year in those mountains. The Smoky Mountains will always be my heart's home. (I have written two books that are set there.)

I was an independent child, riding my bicycle to neighborhood stores for penny candy. I loved exploring the woods and playing in creeks, catching tadpoles and salamanders and frogs.

I loved to read. Sometimes my friends and I would act out the stories we read, trotting around the backyard on invisible ponies and solving mysteries in a pretend haunted attic. And I loved to write. I wrote poems and stories and books.

- What were your favorite things to do when you were young?
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*When I wasn't catching salamanders or playing paper dolls, I was writing. The first book I ever wrote was about a girl who loved to ride horses:*



## Did you ever get into trouble at home or school?

*I talked too much in school. One of my teachers reprimanded me in front of the class by calling me "loquacious." When I asked her what that word meant, she told me to look it up in the dictionary. Do you know what it means?*

- What did you want to be when you grew up?

*A teacher or a ballerina*

- **What one thing can you tell readers that nobody knows?**

*I have no sense of smell. I've never smelled a flower or new mown grass or bread baking in the oven. But I've also never smelled a rotten egg or spoiled milk or a dirty diaper.*

- **If you weren't a writer, what would you like to be?**

*I would love to be a children's librarian. I love kids. I love books. And I'm very organized.*

- **What advice do you have for aspiring young readers and writers?**

*Read. Read. Read. Also, never be afraid to write something that you think is not very good. You can always make it better. But you can't fix what you haven't written.*

- **Do you have a special place where you write your books?**



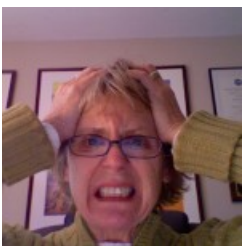
*In the winter, I work in an office in my house. My cat, Charlie, likes to help me.*

*When the weather gets warmer, I move out to my porch.*



*In the summer, I love to work in my yard with my dogs, Matty and Ruby, around me.*

*But sometimes, I get distracted by the dogs and birds and flowers, so I go to the library, where there are no distractions.*



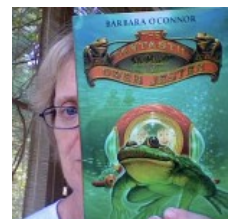
- **How many times do you have to revise? Do you love revision or hate it?**

*I revise many, many times.  
Sometimes, I hate revision. It can be very frustrating.*

*But other times, I love revision. The story starts to get better and better and then one day it becomes a book!*

**What is your favorite book that you wrote?**

[GREETINGS FROM NOWHERE](#). *I enjoyed writing four different stories and then weaving them together.*





### QUICK PICKS:

- **Soup or salad?** *Soup, as long as it doesn't have peas in it.*
- **P & J or Mac and Cheese?** *Mac and cheese*
- **Dog, Cat, Bird, or Fish?** *Dog*
- **Favorite or most hated subject?** *My favorite subject was grammar and spelling.*
- **Longhand or computer?** *Longhand first; then computer.*