

## WHAT'S YOUR STORY, CYNTHIA?



I was born in the middle of a snowstorm one New Year's Eve in Kansas City.

When I was your age, I still lived there. Sure, my mama and daddy took me to Oklahoma sometimes to visit family and to Colorado on vacation. But most of the time, I was in the heartland of the USA with a book, my best friend Kathy, and a little dog named "Tramp."

I didn't have any brothers or sisters. But I did have many cousins, and I loved them very much. My cousin Stacy was a reader and writer like me, and she grew up to be a teacher.

When I didn't have my nose stuck in a book, I played in a big woodsy field behind my back yard. A creek ran through it. The land was home to crawdads, turtles, rabbits, and little green garden snakes. I even saw a deer or two. I loved playing make-believe games among the trees with my friends from the neighborhood.

I still play make-believe, only now I write the characters and their stories in books.

- **What kind of student were you?**

*I was a hard-working student. I loved school, and I learned to read at a very early age. I remember standing in front of my kindergarten class and reciting rhyming words like: bunch, crunch, lunch, munch....*



*I also loved to write. When I was in second grade I wrote a story about going crawdad fishing, and it was read over the intercom to everyone in the whole school!*

- **What were your favorite things to do when you were young?**

*My favorite thing to do was go out to dinner with my Grandpa and Grandma Smith. We would meet up to celebrate birthdays and other family holidays. My favorite places to go were The Olive Garden, The Red Lobster, a local Chinese restaurant, and any of the great barbecue places in Martin City, Missouri.*

*I also loved to visit to the local strip mall and visit my Grandma Melba, who sold ladies dresses at J.C. Penney.*



*And almost every Saturday, my mama took me to the public library. I won the summer reading contest for kids from kindergarten to sixth grade when I was going into third grade.*

- **Did you have a nickname and if so what was it? Is there a story behind your nickname?**

*I used to be called “Cindy” or “Cindy Lou,” which was kind of confusing because I have a cousin name “Wendy Sue” who’s just a little bit younger than me. We look alike, too.*

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

*A magician or a superhero. My favorite superheroes were Isis, who was an Egyptian goddess, and Wonder Woman.*

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

*I would still like to be a magician or superhero.*

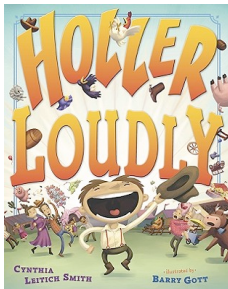
- **What advice do you have for aspiring young readers and writers?**

*Read, read, read. Write, write, write. And then find other people who love reading and writing and spend a lot of time with them. You can cheer each other on!*



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

*I have a big blue denim chair in my reading room, and I like to write there on my laptop with a glass of iced tea at my side and a tabby cat on the armrest.*



- **How long does it take you to write your books?**

*It depends on the book. It took me six years to get HOLLER LOUDLY just right. Along the way, I also wrote other stories.*



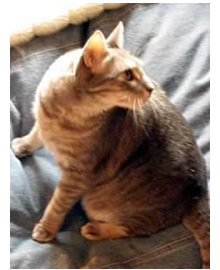
- **Do you have any children or pets and have you ever used them in a book?**



*I have four cats—Mercury, Bashi, Blizzard, and Leo. They're all tabbies, except for Leo who is snow white. Bashi was*



*the model for a cat character in one of my books, and I also named a character in another book after him.*



## Quick Picks

- **P & J or Mac and Cheese?**

*Mac and Cheese*

- **Dog, Cat, Bird, or Fish?**

*Cat*

- **Sourdough, whole wheat, white or rye?**

*Whole wheat*

- **Love revision or hate it?**

*Love it!*

- **Early Bird Writer or Night Owl?**

*Night Owl.*

