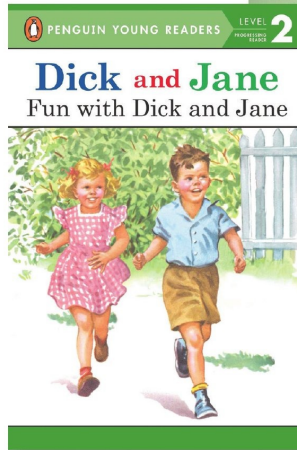
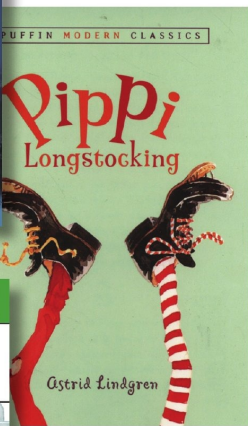


# All things books: Our new columnist introduces herself



BY JANET REYNOLDS

I can still conjure the joy in my heart when I recall the day I first realized I could read. I ran home for lunch and knocked excitedly on the back kitchen door. My mother, curious why I didn't just burst in as usual, came to the door, dish towel in hand.

Before she could even say a word, I yelled, "I can READ!!! I can READ!!!" And then I pulled out my Dick and Jane reader and began to read her the book right there. "See Spot run. Run Spot run."

It was the beginning of my life-long love affair with words in all their forms, but particularly and especially with books.

My obsession with books and reading was a bit of an anomaly in my house. While we had a few picture books and my father would often tell my sister and me stories lying in bed on a Saturday morning, I literally never saw my parents read a book the entire time I lived with them. True, we did have the entire Nancy Drew series (thank you Aunt Dorothy) and the Encyclopedia Britannica, but I never

saw my parents read anything but newspapers.

And, yet, like my driving passion to play a musical instrument—another anomaly and a story for another time—I jumped into reading like it was my job. The afternoon each week when our class went to the library was one of my happiest weekly moments, only frustrated by the fact that I could only take out two books. Laura Ingalls Wilder? *Pippi Longstocking*? *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*? I read them all and then some. By the time I was in sixth grade, I had basically read all the books the school library had to offer.

When our small town library was moving to a larger, new building across town, the librarians brilliantly told students early in the

summer that they could take out as many books as they wanted with this caveat: they had to return them to the new building. Voila! Instant mini (free) movers! I can still picture myself walking to the car weighed down with a stack all the way up to my nose. I was thrilled.

I read on the bus. I read while walking home from school. In my high school years, when life in our family began to unravel, books helped get me through. I regularly propped up a book in front of my plate rather than engage with what was going on around me.

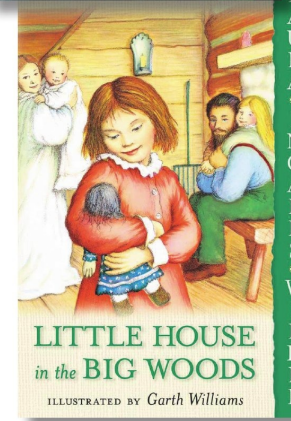
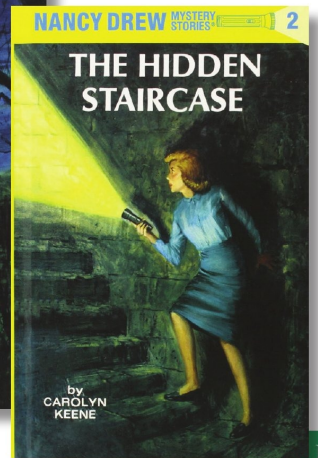
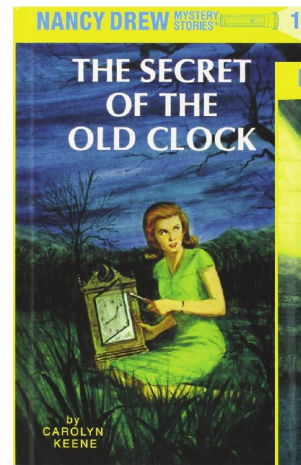
Later, as a working mother of three, reading in bed before sleep quickly became one of my favorite parts of the day. Finally, I was doing something for me and me alone.

Not surprisingly, I have worked in words all my life. An award-winning journalist in print and online, I am also a teacher. I taught high-school English for six years early in my career and today, I teach writing to young adults with mental health issues. Oh, and I also have a master's in English literature from Trinity College, a degree I got simply because I wanted to do more reading and writing.

Today, as a freelance magazine editor and writer, I work in words all day and read all kinds of books as part of that work. I've also been a fandom blogger/editor (*Outlander* and the *All Souls* series by Deborah Harkness, and, yes, you will be hearing about them at some point). I also work at Barnes & Noble a couple of days a week solely because I like being around books and talking about them with other people.

I mention that last bit because I think it's important for people to know why a columnist is someone they should take seriously. So many people pontificate without any credibility about all kinds of topics these days. I want you to know that I know books and that I take books seriously.

I'm so looking forward to sharing books and ideas about books with you all here. Like all good conversations, I'm hoping it won't be one-sided. I would love to hear what you're reading or your responses to thoughts I put here on the page. You can reach me via the contact page on my website, [janetfreynolds.com](http://janetfreynolds.com). I look forward to hearing your thoughts and sharing our love of all things books. ☎



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