

## Author Sara Watterson - Q&A / Tip Sheet

### When did you first know you wanted to be a writer?

I'm not sure there was ever a specific moment. I know for many writers, it was when they were a kid. That's not the case for me. I didn't become an avid reader until I was in college. Even after I had several story ideas floating around in my head, it took until my late thirties for me to feel like I could do it. And it wasn't until I finished my first draft of *This Dreamer* that I thought, wow, I want to write another one! My blog, Book Series Recaps, was already gaining followers by that time, so I already had a built-in audience!



### How long did it take to write your debut novel?

I'm embarrassed to say it took six years and four months from when I first decided to plan and write *This Dreamer* (January 2016) to its publication day (May 3, 2022). Even worse, I have voice memos on my phone from when I first started pitching the idea to myself, dating back to 2011. I would go for a walk in my neighborhood, push my daughter in her stroller, and dictate my thoughts onto my phone. That little girl is a teenager now! The primary reasons the process took so long are 1) as my kids get bigger, our lives are much busier, and 2) I didn't know what I was doing. I spent hours and hours reading books and blog posts about writing to teach myself how to best structure a YA fantasy novel.

### Where do you get your ideas?

My ideas mostly springboard from other books. When I read something I enjoy, I think, I love how this makes me feel. How can I write something that brings back

the same feeling? This happened after I read *The Lunar Chronicles* by Marissa Meyer. She took several beloved fairy tale characters and wrote a sci-fi fantasy story tying them together. Why couldn't I do the same with a few favorite Bible Characters? *This Dreamer* is a retelling of Joseph and the coat of many colors, and book two will be a retelling of Queen Esther.

### **How did BookSeriesRecaps.com get its start?**

I initially came up with the idea when I read the first book in a popular fantasy series and realized I would have to wait a whole year before the second one became available! I jotted down a quick summary so that, in a year, I could read it if there wasn't time for a reread. But then I thought, I bet other people would find this helpful. It turns out I was right! I posted that recap to my blog, asked my good friend Stacy to join the endeavor, and kept writing recaps. Many book-lovers now submit recaps to us, and BookSeriesRecaps.com averages around 60,000 unique visitors a month!

Another unexpected boost in visitors came when we started maintaining a list of clean books for teens on our website. We are both moms and wanted to have a list for our kids. We found that many readers and parents are looking for clean books for their teens and tweens. That page of our site hosts around 1000 visitors a month, and the mailing list has grown larger than our general BSR mailing list.

### **What is a clean book?**

There can be differing opinions on this, but to my blogging partner and me, it's a book that has little to no language and no sexual situations.

### **Who are your favorite clean writers?**

There are several, but I recommend Brandon Sanderson (especially his YA books for teens), Kiera Cass, Kasie West, Sara Ella, and Nadine Brandes.

## How can a reader find clean books?

Finding clean books can be difficult. I know of authors who have written books that might be considered clean while also writing others that are not. Some popular authors have written a somewhat tame YA series but then later jump into the NA (new adult) genre, taking all their teen readers with them into their character's bedrooms. You cannot assume a writer will always write clean books unless they tell you they will and that it's something to which they are committed. I'm committed to helping readers find clean books and writing clean fiction. And that brings me to my top five list...

### Five ways a reader can find clean books:

- 1) First, check out my list of clean reads at [bookseriesrecaps.com](http://bookseriesrecaps.com). These are books that either myself or trusted contributors have read.
- 2) Next, read the comments at the bottom of that page. And check out our [reader-recommended page](#). We can't vouch for these books, but you may find some great ones!
- 3) Search on Google and find other blogs written by people who share your values. There are many great lists out there. Keep in mind that the books listed under "shopping" on Google are paid ads, and the search engine may be presenting you with options using only part of your search phrase. ("Fantasy Romance" instead of "Clean Fantasy Romance")
- 4) Search on Instagram using hashtags like #cleanbooks, #cleanya, #cleanromance, or #cleanfantasy.
- 5) And finally, Amazon has a shopping category that looks like this: [Books > Teen & Young Adult > Romance > Clean & Wholesome](#)  
Few books are automatically placed into this category. Most books listed here are there because the author requested that Amazon put their book in it. Keep in mind you are trusting the author here.