

# WENDELIN VAN DRAANEN

## A Conversation with the Author

### Q: What were your favorite books as a child?

**A:** Page-turners, definitely. Ones that had lots of action and adventure and made me laugh, even if the subject was a serious one. I didn't look for books by author. I didn't care who the author was! I figured they were really old or really dead, so what did it matter? (Of course my view on this has changed considerably!) What I cared about were the characters, and if I found a series with a character I liked, that was a great bonus.

### Q: Which of your characters do you feel closest to?

**A:** The ones who are the worst off! I "live with" my characters. They become such a part of my life that they seem real to me. And the ones who have the biggest obstacles are the ones I root for the hardest. I also particularly like the ones with spunk and determination. Wait. That would be all my protagonists, wouldn't it?

### Q: What is your writing process like?

**A:** Usually I get a thematic idea for a book, and it's usually one I think is relevant in today's society; something that will help my readers through passages in their own lives. Then I stew. I develop a big cauldron of ideas and characters and scenes and even dialogue relevant to the theme. A plot develops. I get to know the characters. A subplot emerges. I get to know the location. I research. I add more to the stew and I stir and simmer it all in my head for weeks. Sometimes months. Sometimes years. And when I finally sit down to write, I go and am obsessed with the story until I reach the end.

### Q: What advice do you have for young people who would like to become authors?

**A:** Start by doing a lot of reading. Read across genres. Read things you wouldn't expect you would like. Reading helps you absorb writing structures. It's like submerging yourself in a language that you want to know how to speak. And then . . . write! Don't worry that your first draft is not perfect—nobody's is. I rewrite my stories dozens of times before I submit them. Plus, don't think some muse is going to do the work for you. Writing is work. Don't be surprised if you find yourself sweating through the process.



### Author Fun Facts

**Birthday:** January 6  
**Home:** California  
**Previous Jobs:** Forklift driver, sports coach, musician, high school computer science teacher  
**Hobbies:** Reading, running, and rock 'n' roll  
**Favorite Foods:** Mexican (spicy!); chocolate (dark!)  
**Favorite Clothes:** Sneakers, shorts, and sweatshirts

## Get to Know Wendelin Van Draanen's Characters!

