



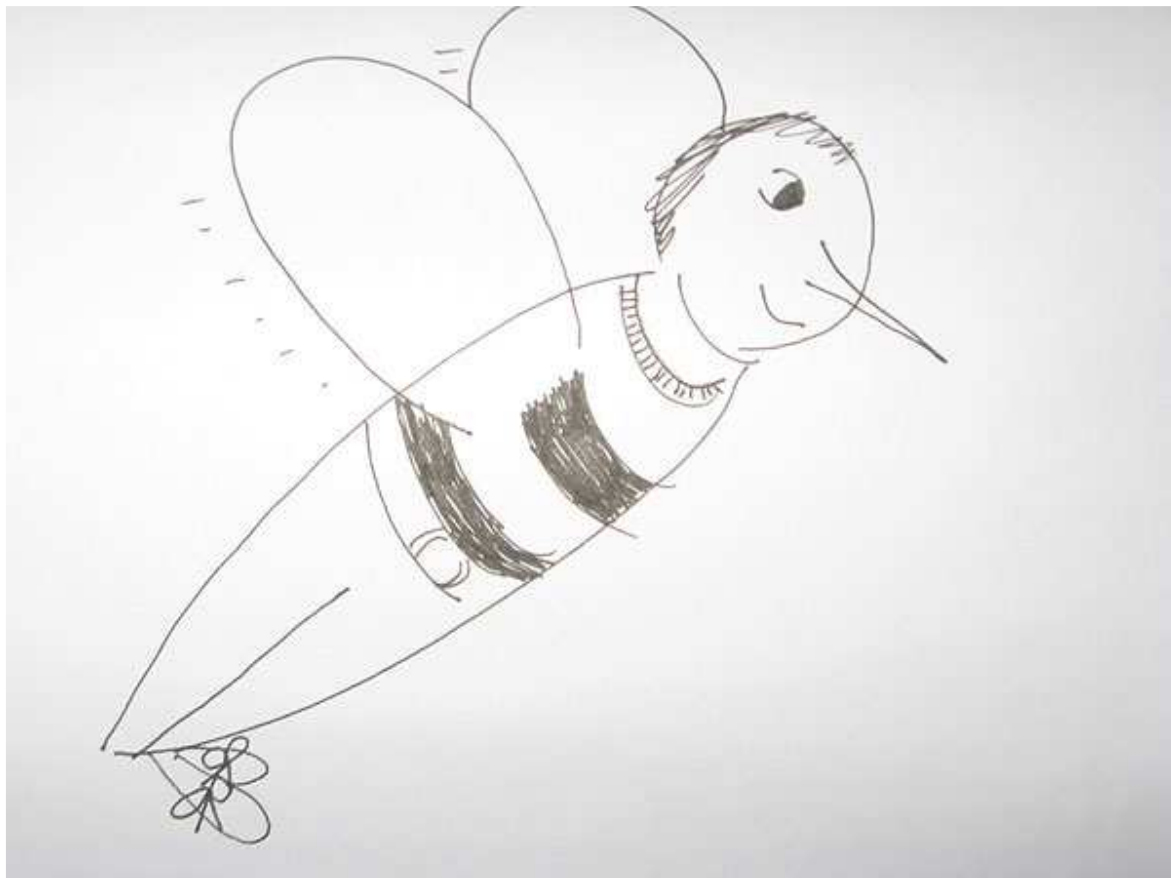
## Frequently Asked Questions for Author/Poet Laura Purdie Salas

**Q. Do you have any pets?**

A. Yes. I love animals, and we have a beagle named Jack (short for Captain Jack Sparrow). He's the cutest dog ever, even if he is sort of bug-eyed. You can see a video of Jack singing here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97UvFjgZHU8>

**Q. Do you take the photos or paint the pictures in your books?**

A. No! And you should be thankful for that! Here's an example of my drawing skill as I try to sketch a kid who resembles a bumblebee. Now, aren't you glad I don't do the art for my books?





Laura PURDIE SALAS

The editor for each book chooses the illustrator, who takes my words and adds another layer to them through art.

For my poetry books from Capstone, the editor chose the images first, and then I wrote poems based on those photographs.

I have no say whatsoever in the art, so I could have a book out with art that I absolutely hate. But I don't:>)

**Q. Where do your ideas come from?**

A. I think just about every moment in life could be turned into a poem. But I pay extra attention when I *feel* anything: awe, happiness, grief, loneliness, anger, silliness. I think those moments make the best poems of all.

Here are three examples:

The idea for *BookSpeak! Poems About Books*, came out of love. I was invited to submit poems for an anthology of poems about books. I love, love, love books. The anthology was called *I Am the Book*, and I immediately wanted to write poems as if I really were the actual book! None of my poems was accepted for the anthology, but then my agent sent the book to the editor who had bought one of my other poetry manuscripts, and she loved it and wanted to make it a book! My two favorite things—books and poems—in one project. Yay!

*A Leaf Can Be...* began as part of a poetry book about the rain forest. I found a picture of these adorable Honduran tent bats, little cotton-ball-looking bats who find shelter from the rain and from predators under leaves. The bats just made me smile. Then, a couple of years later, I was looking for a topic for a rhyming nonfiction book. I was paging through my books and came across that poem and picture. I felt amazed at how nature adapts to different situations, and I wondered what other cool things leaves could do besides shelter bats. I did a little reading and knew that I had found a topic I wanted to celebrate.



Laura PURDIE SALAS

*Stampede! Poems About the Wild Side of School* was born in silliness. That idea came when I thought my daughter looked like a walrus. She had just had two teeth pulled and she had two straws sticking out of her mouth like walrus tusks. Sometimes it's all about noticing what's right in front of you.

**Q. How much money do you make?**

A. Not all that much. When you spend, say, \$17 on a hardcover book of mine, I get about 60 cents. It costs a lot of money to make and print a book, and the publisher is the one that spends that money. So when the book sells, the publisher keeps most of the money.

**Q. Do you know lots of famous writers?**

A. Nope—But there aren't that many famous kids' writers. I've never met J.K. Rowling, for instance. Though I did go to Scotland and happened to see at least one café where she supposedly wrote part of one of the Harry Potter books. I get to meet lots of great children's writers, ones that are famous to me and other writers, and maybe you've heard of some of them. Or maybe not. Who are the authors *you'd* most like to meet?

**Q Do you have any kids?**

A. I do! Two daughters. One lives on her own now, and the other is in high school. They've been the inspiration for lots of my stories and poems.

**Q. Did you ever get in trouble when you were a kid?**

A. Of course I did. Doesn't everyone? But mostly I was well-behaved. My parents were very strict and my sisters and I got in big trouble if we didn't follow the rules. I got in trouble sometimes for reading, because I liked to read all the time...even when I was supposed to be doing something else.



Laura PURDIE SALAS

**Q. What animal would you like to be?**

A. If I could be any animal, I think I'd like to be a wild horse. I love big cats, but I don't think I could be a hunter. And I like gazelles and animals like that, but I wouldn't want to be hunted! I love the speed and strength of wild horses, so I think that would be pretty cool.

**Q. How long does it take to write a poem?**

A. I write poems pretty fast. But many of them are awful! With most poems, I write that first draft and never go back to it. And that's OK. Whether you're a piano player or a football player or anything else, you have to practice a lot! I typically spend 10 minutes or an hour on a poem draft. If I write 25 poems, that might be 4-25 hours. And out of that time, I might only have one decent poem that's worth working more on!

**Q. What are your favorite books?**

A. My memory is really bad, and I read so many books as a kid that I can hardly remember any of them. It's hard for me to pick favorites, but some books I really love are *God Bless the Gargoyles* (Dav Pilkey), *Swing Around the Sun* (Barbara Juster Esbensen), *Hotel Deep* (Kurt Cyrus)...uh oh. I never should've started this! Some of my very favorite poets are Joyce Sidman, Rebecca Kai Dotlich, J. Patrick Lewis, Lee Bennett Hopkin, Lilian Moore...boy, and that's only a few! Tammi Sauer and Liz Garton Scanlon and Linda Ashman are just three of my favorite picture book writers.