

7 Days Article

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Name: **Sabah Naim Saab**
Nationality: **Lebanese/Australian**
Occupation: **Children's Picture Book Author**

1. Did you enjoy reading storybooks as a kid? What was your favourite story and why?

I've loved reading picture storybooks since I was a child. Not only that--I equally loved poring over the illustrations and imagining the story's events through them. There is an important partnership between the words and the illustrations. They both play the same tune, on different instruments, to create a beautiful melody.

My favorite books growing up were classical and fairytale stories such as Cinderella, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, The Ugly Duckling, Little Red Riding Hood, and many more. All of these books entertained me and enriched my imagination, and they still do.

2. How did you get into writing?

I wrote my first story when I took Creative Writing as an elective at university 27 years ago. I wrote two more stories at that time but put them away. The challenges of life, work, and raising three beautiful kids took up all my time. Two years ago, I found these early stories among old belongings and the whole journey began again. These first three stories are unpublished and I will be returning to them soon.

On rediscovering writing, I worked on brand new stories. So far I've self-published 'How Much Do You Love Me?' (the book, and an accompanying postcards box), and 'Little Mouse Missy--Best Friends Party'.

3. What inspired you to write these stories and have them published?

My first book 'How Much Do You Love Me?' was born two years ago when I was longing to see my children who all lived abroad. The idea came to me to write down these messages of love that I used to say when they were small, and to create a picture book dedicated to them. I wanted to express the depth of my love for them. I created the book and published it so every parent and child, no matter what age, can enjoy it as well.

4. Can you tell us more about the books you already self-published?

I self-published 'How Much Do You Love Me?'. As I mentioned, it contains simple, beautiful messages of love. These messages are accompanied by captivating illustrations. The same messages and illustrations are also offered in an A4-sized postcards box format. Individual messages can be mailed to loved ones or simply framed to decorate a child's room.

I also self-published my second book 'Little Mouse Missy--Best Friends Party'. This is a tale about friendship and how friends overcome the odds to keep each other happy. For this story, I created six wonderful characters; Little Mouse Missy, Bunny, Teddy, Birdy, Bee Barry, and Reindeer Peter.

Self-publishing my own books was an incredible learning experience. It was not easy, but has been a happy journey nonetheless.

5. What or who inspired your characters? Are they based on someone you know?

They are not based on anyone specific--but maybe they are little personas reflecting my inner self and my feelings at the time when I wrote the books.

6. Your books and postcard box talked about a mother's love and friendship, what will be the title and theme of your third book? What's the inspiration behind book #3?

The theme of the third book is the wisdom of letting go of things you love. It is ready to go, and I am currently looking for a publisher. I am interested in trying to find a publisher for my third book and doing it the traditional way!

7. How did you choose the illustrators for your books? Did you also have a creative input in the artworks?

I imagine the characters, illustrations, and scenes while writing the book. Then I look for an illustrator that can translate my ideas into drawings and colors.

I can't draw-- I simply give some input to the illustrators on style and colors, and leave the rest to them.

8. How important is books, reading and storytelling to children especially in this modern age?

It is very important to read books and tell stories to children. I can name some

benefits:

1. It creates a stronger bond between you and your child. Reading to children is a nurturing activity that brings you closer to your child. It allows you both to live the story, experience the art of the illustrations, and share intimate, fun moments that children carry with them all their lives.
2. It builds better communication skills. That contact between you and your child, and the way the characters of the story interact with each other, help children become better communicators.
3. It reinforces basic speech and reading skills. Reading to your child helps them learn the basic sounds of a language and later helps them learn basic reading skills by recognizing the words repeated in a book.
4. It stimulates imagination, curiosity, and discussion. When you read to your children you allow them to discuss and ask you questions. Also this helps them reflect and learn to think logically.

9. Do you have kids of your own? What do they think about your stories?

I have three beautiful grown up children. They support and encourage me. They are the first people who see my work and give me their feedback. I cherish these moments I share with them.

10. What lessons and messages do you want to impart in your books?

I want children to experience love, friendship, wisdom, imagination, and most importantly, fun, when they read my books.

11. Are you a full-time writer or do you have another full-time job?

I have lifelong experience in teaching, business training, and organizational development consulting. Writing, publishing, and marketing my books is a new career that I enjoy immensely. I try to fit both careers into my schedule.

12. What are your tips and advice for aspiring children's book authors?

1. Believe in yourself, follow your dream, and be real.
2. Read, read, and read--both old and new children's books!
3. Take courses and read about writing children's books.
4. Join SCBWI, the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. It is a

bank of information for children's book authors.

5. Love what you are doing because writing for children can change your life and the life of your little readers.

13. Where can we purchase your books? Do you have any book-signing coming up?

In the UAE:

A. You can find 'How Much Do You Love Me?' at:

1. Kinokuniya. Dubai Mall (Dubai).
2. Virgin Megastore. Deira City Centre, Mercato Mall, Mall of the Emirates, Dubai Mall (Dubai), Yas Mall (Abu Dhabi).
3. Jashanmal Bookshop. Mall of Emirates (Dubai).
4. The Toy Store. Dubai Mall and Mall of Emirates (Dubai).
5. Magrudy's. Jumeirah (Dubai). AL Wahda Mall (Abu Dhabi). Bawadi Mall (Al Ain) and World Trade Centre (Abu Dhabi).

B. You can find 'Little Mouse Missy--Best Friends Party' at:

1. Kinokuniya. Dubai Mall (Dubai).
2. Virgin Megastore. Deira City Centre, Mercato Mall, Mall of the Emirates, Dubai Mall (Dubai) and Yas Mall (Abu Dhabi).
3. Jashanmal Bookshop. Mall of Emirates (Dubai).
4. The Toy Store. Dubai Mall and Mall of Emirates (Dubai).
5. Amazon

In Lebanon:

You can find 'How Much Do You Love Me?' at:

Librairie Antoine. In all their branches across Beirut and Tripoli Branch in the north.

Or to order online, you can contact me on:

sabahnsaab@gmail.com

Drop by my website and Facebook page for information about new events, book signing, and new books:

www.sabahsaab.com

<https://www.facebook.com/sabahsaabchildrenbooks>