

Why I wrote *Summer Sanctuary*—Laurie Gray

I've always loved reading and writing. I remember writing silly poems and alternative words to songs as I was growing up. In high school, I wrote for our literary publication called "The Aeneid" (particularly appropriate because my last name was Virgil back then...my grandfather's name was Homer Horace Virgil!). I attended a creative writer's workshop at Goshen College and ultimately chose to attend there because they sent me a brochure that looked like a passport. I became a high school language teacher and later went to law school, still loving to read and write.

After my daughter was born and I was no longer working full-time, I found more opportunities for creative writing. I enrolled in the Children's Institute of Literature and really discovered my local library. My daughter and I spent many hours there. In fact, my daughter took her first steps at the library during a story time as she was reaching out to the pictures in the book read by Mr. Nate, one of our local librarians.

I did a lot of people watching at the library. There were people like Matthew seeking freedom and the vicarious experience available through books, but there were also people like Dinah who seemed to be seeking a place of shelter and safety. The idea for *Summer Sanctuary* grew from there. I wanted my characters, two people from very different worlds, to form a genuine friendship that shows we're all connected to each other. And I want to help my readers appreciate and value their own experience as well as the diverse experiences of others.