

The Petit Proust Questionnaire

from Owlkids Books

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Meet author Jan Thornhill

JAN THORNHILL's science, nature, and animal books have received multiple honors, including the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction and the Children's Literature Roundtable Information Book Award. Jan lives in Havelock, Ontario. Visit her website at www.JanThornhill.com.



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Kyle Goes Alone is a book about a young sloth who has to go. But he's never made the journey from the rainforest canopy down to the forest floor by himself before. With the encouragement of his mom and friendly neighbors camouflaged in the canopy, Kyle achieves his goal in this sweet, gently humorous story about newfound independence.

When you were a kid, what was your favorite thing to do?

If I was stuck in the house, all I wanted to do was draw and paint and make stuff, and look at books. Outdoors, I spent all my time exploring the natural world, collecting caterpillars to see what kind of butterfly or moth they'd turn into, looking for fossils, bird feathers and empty nests, skulls and bones — you name it, I collected it.

What did you most dislike doing when you were a child?

Waiting. For anything. Especially if there was nothing to do while waiting. When I was around eight or nine, my mum told me to wait in the car while she popped into a friend's house for "a minute." Within five minutes, I was dying of boredom. Somehow I realized it was a problem only I could solve. I looked for something to do, found a pencil and a piece of paper in the glove compartment, got out of the car, and happily traced daffodil shadows until my mum finally came out. I understood then that boredom was my problem and my problem alone, and I've never been bored since.

As a child, where did you dream of living?

In a tropical rainforest in a castle filled with candy.

What did you think you were good at when you were a kid?

I was good at everything at school, especially science and art. But I was absolutely not good at sports.

When you were a kid in school, what did you look for in a friend?

Someone who was daring and loyal and liked exploring.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

A queen or a scientist.



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What was your favorite book as a child?

When I was really young, *The Cow Who Fell in the Canal*, partly because it was a Dutch book and my mother was from the Netherlands. Also *Cautionary Tales for Children* by Hilaire Belloc, which my dad read to us over and over again. Both of my parents got as much joy from reading to me and my siblings as we got from being read to.

What is your favorite pastime now?

Poking around in the woods looking for rare fungi.

What do you find an absolute chore?

Housecleaning of any kind.

If you could live anywhere, where would you go?

I adore my home in the woods, but I'd really like to live in the high Arctic for at least a couple of years. I'm fascinated with the idea of experiencing 24 hours of daylight in the summer and 24 hours of darkness in the winter.

What is the one talent you wish you had?

I knew a kid in school who could turn his eyelids inside out. I wish I could do that.

What makes a good friend?

Loyalty, empathy, openness, a wicked sense of humor, and a strong grasp of the absurd.

If you weren't an author or illustrator, what job would you have?

A mycologist (a scientist who studies fungi).

What children's books have caught your attention lately?

Mostly I'm looking at picture books and there are a whole lot of illustrators who are blowing me away, among them: Jon Klassen, Isabelle Arsenault, Chiara Carrer, and Oliver Jeffers.

If you had to have a motto, what would it be?

A day without discovery is a day wasted.