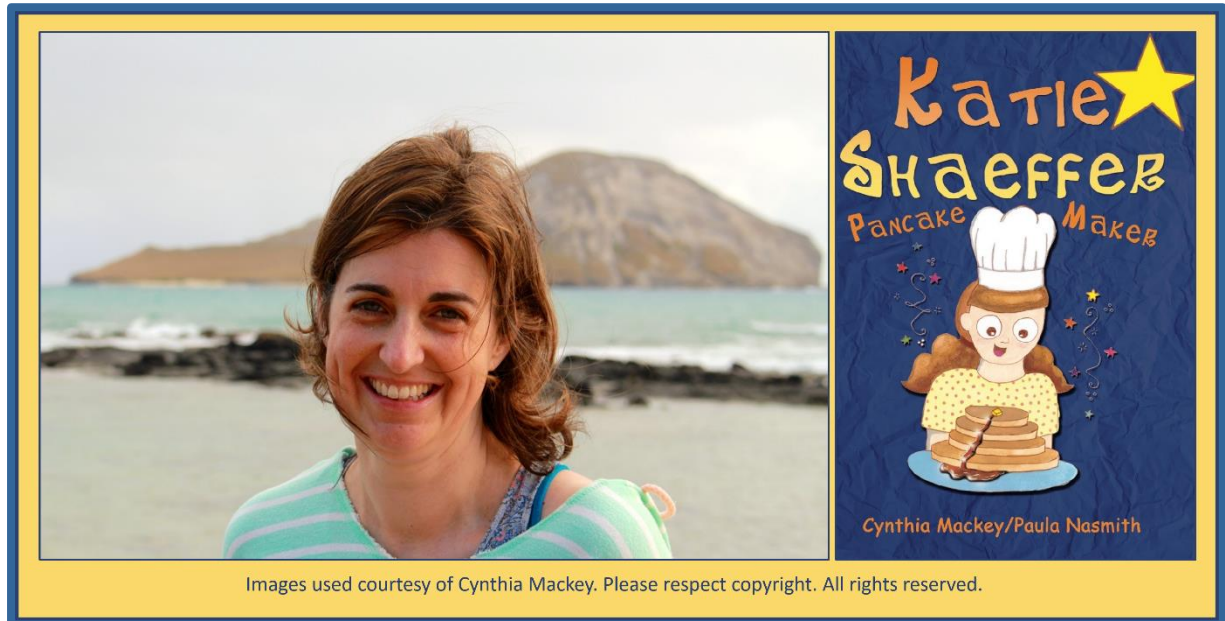




Author Spotlight: Cynthia Mackey



Cynthia Mackey: Author, preschool teacher

Cynthia, when did you know you wanted to be a writer?

I knew I wanted to be a writer when I was a child. Then when I had my own children and I saw how much they loved reading and being read to, I was even more excited about writing.

Where do you write?

I can write almost anywhere. Sometimes I write in my car with a pen and paper while I'm waiting for my daughter at her soccer practice. I use my computer too.

The most important thing for me is to have uninterrupted time to write.

Where do you get your ideas?

I get ideas from all around me. I write about the things I like or the things I know most about. I like to ask the question, "What if..." and that gets me started.

What gave you the idea for Katie Shaeffer Pancake Maker?

I was looking for a good pancake story to read to my preschool class before making pancakes together because cooking is something I really like to do with my pre-schoolers. I couldn't find one that was just right so I thought maybe I could write the book that I wanted to read.

At our house, we make pancakes on Saturdays, and my children wanted them every week even if we felt sick or tired. Some days I didn't feel like making pancakes but my children really looked forward to eating them. I thought... "What if we had a machine that could make pancakes for us every Saturday morning?"

Do you like the illustrations?

Yes! I was very lucky to have Paula Nasmith do the illustrations; she has done a beautiful job.

How did you feel when you wrote Katie Shaeffer Pancake Maker?

At first, I was pretty proud of the story and excited to have written what I thought could become a really fun picture book. Then I realized the story had some parts that didn't make sense. I had to go back and do a lot of editing. I'm really glad now that I spent the time editing my story. Now the story is so much better.

How do you hope readers will feel?

I hope that readers will identify with Katie. I hope that readers will be inspired to make their own collections, to build and create their own projects and to try out a little cooking too. I hope that readers will like participating in the story and joining in with the repeated rhyme. Being part of the story makes it more fun for everyone.

How would you like teachers to present Katie Shaeffer Pancake Maker to children?

I hope that teachers will find the story easy to read aloud and to bring the story to life with activities. I could imagine children bringing in their collections or photographs of collections and doing class presentations about the items they collect. It would be fantastic to see children creating their own imaginary "machines" out of cardboard boxes and other collected items and then writing about how their "machines" work and what they can do. And making pancakes would be a great activity too; measuring, pouring and mixing ingredients, cooking pancakes and eating pancakes is tons of fun.

Do you have any advice for children as writers?

Believe in your ideas. Write about what you know and love. Editing will make a good story great.

What is your favourite book?

When I was a child I loved *The Secret World of Og* by Pierre Berton. It brought me into a whole different imaginary world and I just loved being immersed in something so different from my own life. I loved the illustrations too.

Who is your favourite author?

I have many favourite authors and cannot name just one.

