

Q&A with
ROBIN JONES GUNN
author of the Christy Miller and Sierra Jensen series

What inspired you to write?

When I first started writing my inspiration came in two parts. First, I was writing children's books when my kids were babies. That was probably to satisfy my storytelling instinct. Then I became motivated to write novels when I was spending a lot of time with teenagers. We were on a camping trip, when I found these 13-year-old girls sitting in their tent reading books rather than going out to the beach with everybody else. I asked if I could read three of their books -- their favorites -- and they showed me a stack of probably 20 books they'd brought from the library. When I read their three favorite books, it concerned me because the content wasn't really appropriate for thirteen year-olds. I encouraged them to read something else, and they challenged me and said, "Why don't you write a book for us?" "Oh no," I told them. "I just write picture books." They kept at me and said, "You can write a novel! How hard could it be? As a matter of fact, we'll tell you what to write! We want a love story with teenagers at the beach." And they told me what to write. It took two years and they brutally critiqued every word. That first novel for teens was *Summer Promise*, book one in the Christy Miller series, and it came out 1988. After the Christy Miller series I wrote the Sierra Jensen series, then Christy & Todd: The College Years followed by the Katie Weldon series. Who knows what will be next? These Forever Friends just seem to keep on going!

Have you heard back from a lot of readers on how these books have impacted their lives?

Yes! Daily I hear from readers all over the world. I continually hear from girls who say that they gave their life to Christ after reading *Summer Promise*. They say they were just like Christy in that they thought they were a Christian because they went to church, but when Christy realized that she needed to surrender her life to Christ, it made them realize they had not yet taken that step, either. Hundreds of girls have written to say that when Christy got on her knees beside her bed and surrendered to Christ, they did the same thing, and they mark that moment as the true beginning of their life as a Believer. Or as the character in the books say, they became a true "God-Lover."

Are you going to write any more about Christy and Todd?

Maybe. I'll continue to pray about what to write next. We'll just have to wait to see what awesome things God has in mind. I did just finish writing the new Katie Weldon series. The first book in the series, *Peculiar Treasures*, picks up at Christy and Todd's wedding reception and they play a significant role in her life throughout the three-book series.

Have you ever considered making movies of the Christy Miller or Sierra Jensen series?

Yes! I would love to eventually have movies or a TV series created from these books. We've had some interest from production companies through the years, but nothing has come of it yet. I will



continue to pray about it because I believe that these stories could have a big impact on teens in video format. Please feel free to pray with me!

What happens to Sierra Jensen?

Sierra appears in Christy & Todd: The College Years and is mentioned in the Katie Weldon series. I haven't written more specifically about her, but I'm always praying about what to write next.

In what order should your teen books be read?

It's not a big deal if you read the stories out of order, but the chronological order is this: Christy Miller Series Volumes 1,2,3,4; Sierra Jensen Series Volumes 1,2,3,4; Christy & Todd: The College Years Volume (Until Tomorrow, As You Wish, I Promise); Katie Weldon Series: Peculiar Treasures, On a Whim, Coming Attractions.

At what age is it appropriate for my daughter to read your Christy Miller books?

Since every young woman is different, I don't know that there is a specific age I can give to you. The books are categorized as teen fiction. Some girls start reading them when they're nine, others aren't ready until they're thirteen. I suggest you check out the first book at your local library and read it to see if it's appropriate for your daughter. Another option is to read the books with your daughter so you can discuss them together. This is also a great way to build the bond between the two of you!

How do you come up with your characters?

I cut pictures out of magazines and do up these detailed notebooks before I write, so I know these characters very well before they appear on the page. I write a bio for each character, so I know when they were born, what they like and don't like, what they're afraid of, how many brothers and sisters they have - I know them well before I write about them. My kids tease me about talking to my imaginary friends. My husband, who is a professional counselor, says he won't be worried until I start saying that I can hear my imaginary friends talking back to me. (Of course they already do talk back to me, but I won't admit that to anyone.)

Did you always want to be an author?

No. I never set out that direction, and it still surprises me. I mean, I thought about it as a whimsical little dream, similar to thinking it would be fun to sail around the world someday. But it seemed like so much work. I always liked to sit around and tell stories, but I never thought I would have the patience to write an entire book. Now I just finished writing my 71st book! That's astounding to me. I guess you could say, like Christy's best friend, Katie, always says, "It's a God-thing."

Where can your readers contact you or find out more about your books?

My website, www.RobinGunn.com! Also, on Twitter ([@robingunn](https://twitter.com/@robingunn)), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/robingunn), You Tube (youtube.com/robinjonesgunn), or email me at Robinsnest@robingunn.com.