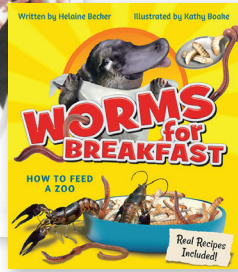


# The Petit Proust Questionnaire

from Owlkids Books

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## Meet author Helaine Becker

**HELAINÉ BECKER** is an award-winning writer of books for children. She has written over 60 books, including the best selling picture book *A Porcupine in a Pine Tree*; popular nonfiction, including Junior Library Guild selection *Zoobots*; and novels. She also writes for children's magazines and for kids' television. She has written four seasons of *Dr. Greenie's Mad Lab* (a segment on *Planet Echo*, an environmental science show airing on APTN), and is hard at work on several other TV projects. Helaine lives in Toronto, Ontario. Visit her website at [helainebecker.com](http://helainebecker.com) and find her on Twitter as @helainebecker.

*Worms for Breakfast* answers questions like: What do different animals eat? How much food do they need to stay healthy? And: For which creature is a blood cupcake a special treat? (Yuck!) A cookbook-style primer packed with facts from experts at zoos and aquariums, the book is bound to appeal to picky readers.

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

Climb trees. Examine stuff—the yuckier the better—under a microscope. Play kickball. Go to the beach and jump in the waves. Eat pizza. And read. Read, read, read—but you probably could figure that part out already.

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

I hated going to school, even though I did well academically. I hated being told what to do and was terrible at following directions! I was always in trouble for talking in class.

### As a child, where did you dream of living?

I grew up in New York, and it is a given that all New Yorkers think the only place worth living is New York. It never entered my mind that I would live anywhere else. But then I discovered that there are some really excellent places to live outside of New York! I love my current home city (Toronto), even though there is no ocean and the pizza isn't as good as real New York pizza. The butter tarts are a good tradeoff. If you don't know what a butter tart is, well, come visit Toronto.

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

I was always an Olympic-caliber reader. I loved learning strange facts—the grosser the better! And making up stories. So it is probably no surprise to any of my grade school classmates that I grew up to become a bookworm/writer. Wait—I'll go ask them (\*types madly into Facebook\*). Yup—it's no surprise to any of them.

Continued on next page ►



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

Kindness matters most, but I don't think I always knew that as a kid. Sometimes I'd become best friends with someone for a while because we both liked doing Mad Libs or something. My closest friends were the ones that were my nearest neighbors—the girls across the street and the boy down the block. We spent so much time together! Sometimes we got along, sometimes we fought. But mostly, we just played and had fun.

## What did you want to be when you grew up?

A writer. Or a marine biologist. I am crazy about coral reef animals, especially tubeworms. In my next life, I want to be a tubeworm—they live somewhere gorgeous, look gorgeous themselves, and just sit there looking pretty while food drifts by their mouths. Sweet.

## What was your favorite book as a child?

You can't expect me to pick just one, can you? I liked fantasy/adventure stories, like *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* or *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I liked anything funny, like *The Silly Book* or *MAD Magazine*. And I also gravitated toward nonfiction—especially books that had weird, gross facts in them.

## What is your favorite pastime now?

I like to do all the same things I liked as a kid, plus a few more. I still love the ocean and eating pizza. I don't play much kickball anymore, but I do love to run, swim, cycle, and ice skate. And I read, read, read, read, read. It's why I am so smart ;) ...and also why I know more weird gross facts than most people I know. For example—did you know there is a village in Ethiopia where they build their houses really tall, because termites eat them and they gradually get shorter and shorter and shorter? When their house gets too short to stand up in, it's time to build a new house!

## What do you find an absolute chore?

Housework. Ugh, ugh, ugh.

## If you could live anywhere, where would you go?

I live in Toronto, and I think it is the perfect place for me now! I like to travel and visit other places, but this city is A1 for calling home. (Psst, fellow bookworms—it has one of the best library systems in the world!)

## What is the one talent you wish you had?

On a practical level, being able to add numbers quickly in my head. On a more fantasy level, I'd love to be able to belt out a tune like Adele. If only I could sing, I would have made a most excellent diva.

## What makes a good friend?

Kindness. Sense of humor. That's it. All else follows from those two traits.

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

School librarian. My favorite place in school was always the library, and I still love it! Whenever I visit one

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(and I visit lots because I do school presentations frequently), I get that cozy feeling and wish I could curl up in the corner with a stack of crisp books and never leave.

## What children's books have caught your attention lately?

I adore *Kyle Goes Alone* by Jan Thornhill and *The Wolf-Birds* by Willow Dawson. For middle-grade novel readers, I loved *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* by Jacqueline Kelly and *A Snicker of Magic* by Natalie Lloyd.

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

On the serious side, it would be: "You only truly fail when you say, 'I quit.'" My greatest strength has been persistence—never giving up on my dream, even when it seemed impossible. But then again, my motto could be: "Burp!"

