



15

[Cynthia Leitich Smith]

THE WRITER'S DREAM" was the last poem in a collection I wrote during sixth grade.

I spent countless hours in my room, on my canopy bed, pecking away at typewriter keys. I bound the pages with white satin ribbon. I made the front and back covers out of cardboard and heart-dotted red calico.

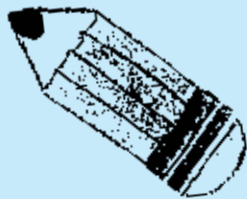
My goal was to finish in time to enter my school district's competition fair in language arts. Enter I did, though I remember being disappointed at receiving a white participation ribbon rather than a first-, second-, or third-place award.

But I turned one poem into a Christmas card for my parents, and, to this day, my mother keeps it on her desk.

Today, what I notice most about "The Writer's Dream"

The Writer's Dream

I hold dreams of writing
Deep inside my heart.
I want to touch people's emotions
Using this expressive art.
I wish to stimulate contemplation
Of the joy which can partner life,
To diffuse the sorrow of others,
And help them through any strife.
This now shall be my purpose
And a crucially important goal.
For I attempt to return happiness to the spirit
And contentment to the soul.



25.

by Cynthia Leitich Smith, age 11

is that it assumes writing lifts up its audience. That's not true of all writing, but it is true of mine. I've written stories of grief but also healing, monsters but also heroes, of day-to-day challenges overcome through humor and a willingness to keep trying.

And that's what I did as a writer. I kept trying, kept writing, and I'm still writing today.

Cynthia Leitich Smith's first published writing was a "Dear Gabby" column in Mr. Rideout's sixth-grade classroom newsletter. She went on to serve as editor of her junior high and high school newspapers.

Today, Cynthia is the *New York Times* bestselling young adult author of the acclaimed Feral series and Tantalize series. She's also the author of several award-winning children's books, including *Jingle Dancer*, *Rain Is Not My Indian Name*, and *Indian Shoes*.

Cynthia is an enrolled tribal member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and was named a Writer of the Year by Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers. She serves on the advisory board of We Need Diverse Books.

Cynthia also is a member of the faculty of the Vermont College of Fine Arts low-residency MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults program. She makes her home in Austin, Texas. She can be found on the Web at cynthialeitichsmith.com.