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Hello, Friends!

Tis the season to say goodbye not just to my "Happy" year, but to a decade! And what a decade it has been! From my debut as a children's book author with the release of [LEAVING GEE'S BEND](#) in January of 2010 to the publication of [MEET MISS FANCY](#) earlier this year, it's been my great good fortune to

- welcome
8
books
for
children
into
the
world
- sell
10
more
that
will
make
their
way
to
readers
over
the
next
several
years
- write
swarms
of
poems
and
stories
and
manuscripts
and
blog
posts
and
interviews
and
articles,
some
of

which
you
may
have
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most
of
which
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never
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(because
those
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yet,
or
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better
words!)

My writing life is rich -- I have much to be grateful for and so many people to thank... including YOU. I'm so glad we've found our way into each other's lives. Thank you!

5 Unexpected Things I've Learned

How to be a public speaker. When I first started writing, I had no idea how much of my life would be spent sharing my books with audiences. As a shy person, this took me out of my comfort zone, and quickly: the year *LEAVING GEE'S BEND* was released I gave over 100 presentations! And it remains an fulfilling part of my life.

What other people think isn't really the point. Awards are lovely (SO lovely! Most recent gratitude to [NCTE](#) and [Georgia Center for the Book](#)), and criticism can hurt. It's best not to be too attached to either.

The point is... to write the stories borne of my passions, the ones that evolve out of

whatever is affecting me most at the moment, and especially the ones that have nestled in my heart for a long, long, time, quietly growing their wings.

The most precious resource we have in this life is TIME. It's a limited resource, so I must be ever-mindful about how I spend mine, and with whom I share it.

Connecting with readers is THE MOST AWESOME PART about being an author!

20 Things I'm Thinking About on the Eve of 2020:

The "Roaring Twenties," intersectionality of identity, [Alexander von Humboldt](#), #lakelife, [AfricaTown](#), enrichment for smart dogs, cello bow distribution, the close of my [Butterfly Hours memoir project](#), what my 2020 [One Little Word](#) will be, [Adagio for Strings by Samuel Barber](#), outsider art, white chocolate bread pudding, the Nile River, Apple Pencil, the number 9, [how to have a relationship with the non-living](#), how to describe the scent of cinnamon, whether or not to plant dwarf azaleas in my small backyard garden, writing goals for the next decade, [this poem by Marge Piercy](#)

Ch-ch-changes...

For 2020 I am looking at some changes in how I interact with all of you. I'll be online less, adventuring more. Instead of writing a poem a day during April, I will be spreading my annual [ARTSPEAK!](#) project across the year, and sharing art poems each Poetry Friday. I'll be traveling a lot... and reading, writing, learning... and teaching a [Power Up Poetry!](#) workshop with [Charles Waters](#) at [Highlights Foundation](#). Y'all come! AND I'll be popping into your inbox once per season to celebrate each of my four (!) 2020 releases. Hooray!

We all have busy lives, and there's much out there to compete for our attention. THANK YOU for choosing to share some of your precious time here, with me. Wishing you the happiest of holidays and a bright, peaceful beginning of 2020!

Love,
Irene

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