

Tricia Goyer Sample Interview Questions

1. When did you first realize you wanted to be a writer?

I first thought about writing in 1993. A friend from church, Cindy Martinusen told me about her aspirations to become a novelist. My first thought was . . . *Real people do that?* She invited me to attend Mount Hermon Christian Writer's Conference with her. I was new as new can be. I was also 22-years-old and pregnant with my first child, but I learned enough at that conference to start off on the right track. And I've been actively working at my writing ever since.

2. What drew you to write historical fiction revolving around WWII?

I never planned on writing historical fiction. I wanted to write contemporary romances. Then in 2000, I was with Cindy and another writer friend, Anne de Graaf in Austria. They were researching books, and I was along for the ride. BUT I was the one who got a novel idea, after talking to an Austrian historian. The historian's true stories about the liberation of Gusen and Mauthausen concentration camps sparked my novel idea. The idea led to attending two WWII reunions and interviewing veterans. The veterans' stories led to more novels. The rest, as they say, is history!

3. Many of your novels have no doubt required a lot of research. Ever had any unusual or embarrassing moments while performing research?

Yes! When I first started researching for my WWII novels, I knew NOTHING about World War II. (I wasn't planning on writing about history, remember?) Anyway, I remember attending the first WWII reunion only months after I first got the idea. So, when I first met the veterans I had very dumb questions. Either that, or I just nodded my head when they rattled off their stories and took notes of words/phrases/events I needed to look up! The veterans were very kind to me. I usually have a few of them read through my complete manuscript to check all my facts and history. Many of them tell me, "It's like being back there again." So, actually these embarrassing moments have forced me to research in-depth, and I think that comes through in my stories.

4. I hear WWII veterans are some of your biggest fans, and you've been able to share the Lord with many of them through your books. Could you share a story (maybe one you haven't shared before) about how someone's life was impacted from reading your books?

I get many, many notes, letters, and emails with veterans. Some of them are not believers. Others are of the Jewish faith. Yet all of them love the stories.

I remember one of the first emails I got from a veteran. He went on and on for pages about all the minor details I got right in the manuscript. He was full of praises. Then, near the end, he asked, "Now, can you tell me more about the faith element of your story?"

I was able to share the good news of Jesus with him. He's since passed away, and I don't know if my words had any impact. I hope to find out they did . . . in eternity!

That's the cool thing about historical fiction. Veterans and their families read the stories because it's about THEM or their family members. People who would never step into a church or listen to Christian radio read these books which point to hope in Christ.

5. And you have a website featuring more WWII veteran's stories, right?

Yes, the website is: www.triciagoyer.com/ww2stories

I update it regularly, and more stories will be posted in the coming weeks. Researching for these novels has provided me with SO MANY amazing stories--far more than I could fit into the pages of the novel. This is simply my way of honoring the wonderful men who served our country.

6. Christian fiction has grown by leaps and bounds in the past few years. What are your thoughts on the future of Christian fiction?

Good question. Actually, I'm very excited about the growth. There are wonderful novels for every taste. Personally, I feel that many more novels will "cross-over" and find big success as the Left Behind Series has done. We live in a world where people are searching and are interested in spiritual themes—just look at the movies and television programs on the airwaves. People will continue search for answers, and hopefully they'll turn to Christian fiction as one of the ways to "safely" explore these topics. They don't have to step into a church or read a non-fiction book and feel as if they're getting preach at. Instead they can pick up a fictional story and explore areas of faith that perhaps they never considered before.

7. You've thrust your characters into many harrowing experiences. Where do you draw the line in portraying violence/adult situations in your novels?

Wow, you've hit upon one of my hardest challenges! My characters do face horrific things, I mean being a prisoner of the Japanese or Nazis is no cake walk. Instead of writing graphic details, I usually hint at what's happening, then I leave it up to the reader's imagination to take it from there. When I'm writing a scene I try to consider the sweet, elderly bookstore owners or the teens that pick up my book. Can I hand them a copy of one of my novels and not offend them by being too graphic? Yet, can they also understand the heartache and trauma of the war? If I can answer yes to both of these questions then I know I've done my job well.

8. Do you ever struggle with sharing your faith in your stories?

Yes! Mainly because I KNOW who some of my readers are—non-Christians, Jews, etc. The struggle doesn't come from not wanting to share my faith, but because I want to share it well. I want the spiritual elements of the story to be as compelling as the historical aspects or the characters themselves. I don't want to provide "easy" answers, because they can be *easily* dismissed. Instead, I want the faith elements to be integrated and real . . . and doing that is a struggle at times.

9. Of all your characters, who's your favorite, and why?

Heek! That's like asking who is a favorite child! But since you asked, I can think of two that top the list: Jakub from *Night Song* and Mary from *Arms of Deliverance*.

My son, Cory, was the same age of Jakub when I was writing *Night Song*. I cried and cried over that character. He was real to me because I tried to imagine my son living through the same experiences.

Also, I love Mary, because she is so much like me—internally. In my opinion, Mary’s biggest struggles didn’t involve a plane crash or outrunning Nazis—although those do happen—but rather her internal conflict of having to deal with an absent father and longing to be loved and respected. I ached inside when I wrote those scenes because they are my experiences too.

10. What about your books? Do you have a favorite? What about it do you love?

Every time I finish a new book I think, “This is my favorite one!” That’s because the story is so fresh to me. Every new book is also a physical example of my connection with God. Sooooo many times during the writing I escape to my bedroom to pray and plead for the right words and right ideas. Even though I plot the major points, God unfolds the story before me as I write, and I feel as if I have an amazing connection with the Divine. Maybe that sounds weird to some people, but I feel closest to God when a deadline is fast approaching, and I don’t have all the answers. I need help, lots of it. I pray lots. And God shows me the story HE had in mind . . . which I’m very happy to scribble down.

11. What would you love to write someday but haven’t yet?

I have a proposal on my hard drive about a granddaughter who is forced into driving her grandfather across Europe to his old battle sites after a veteran’s tour is cancelled. I haven’t shopped it around because I have a number of contracts to keep me busy, but it’s a story I really want to write. My grandfather, also a WWII vet, was one of my favorite people. He lived with us for five months before he died in 1999. I also adore the veterans I interview. In fact, I feel as if God has given me dozens of grandpas. So, yeah, that’s a book I really, really want to write.

12. Were books a big part of your life growing up? If so, what books would you say influenced you most as a child?

I LOVED reading growing up. Around 4th grade we moved to a house near a library, and I was there after school and all summer long. I took home books by the plastic-bag load! I even remember one time I flipped my bike while going down a steep hill. The books on the handlebars were so heavy that the bike flipped me over the top!

The books that influenced me the most were the Little House on the Prairie books and stories of Helen Keller. I read and re-read those.

13. Another passion of yours is teaching and supporting teen moms. How has working with teen moms affected your life and writing?

Well, I lived a pretty content life just writing and taking care of my kids for many years. Unfortunately, nothing I wrote sold! Then, I started working with teen moms, and I think they cracked open my heart. They are so honest and open with their struggles, pain, hurts, and joys. They are teens AND hormonal moms. What a combination! I think they’ve

showed me how to feel at deeper levels. Oh, and working with them also launched by non-fiction career too. *Life Interrupted: The Scoop on Being a Teen Mom* was my first non-fiction parenting book . . . but not my last! My newest parenting book, *Generation NeXt Parenting* hits store shelves this month!

14. What are two things people might be surprised to know about you?

I'm sort of quiet in person. I'm more of a listener than a talker. Maybe it's because I "talk" so much with my fingers all day?

Also, one new thing that may be surprising is that my husband and I are in the process of adopting a baby for China. For so many years I'd tell people, "I can't wait for my kids to be older so I can spend more time writing." Then they got older and John and I realized how much we loved having little kids around, and we felt we had room in our heart for at least one more. So, we're for sure going to adopt one more . . . and we're talking about possibly adopting more after that.

15. When you're not writing, what do you enjoy doing?

DDR! Dance Dance Revolution is a video game I play with my kids. We're addicted and always fight over whose turn it is. It's a fun way to hang out with my kids who are now ages 13, 15, and 18. We dance and laugh and encourage each other to try a new song or harder level. And I'm getting better! I also love going on walks with my husband and mall shopping with my grandma who lives with us. I never want my family to feel neglected because of my writing.

16. Three things always found in your refrigerator:

Yogurt—my favorite snack.

Milk—because I only cook meals for dinner and my kids eat cereal for breakfast.

Lighthouse Salad Dressings—because every dinner needs a salad to be complete!

17. Writing is often a sedentary profession. Is there anything you do to beat stress and keep in shape?

I mentioned dancing with my kids and walking with my husband. I also walk with my dog, but I enjoy my husband more because he can actually carry on a conversation! I also take my youngest son swimming at the health club. We can spend an hour tossing toys to the bottom of the pool and chasing them. Water is relaxing to me, even when I'm only playing around.

18. You're in line at Starbucks. What are you ordering?

Venti, non-fat, sugar-free Vanilla latte with no whip. Mmmmm.

19. What's currently in your iPod?

LOTS of music. (I buy too much.) But my current favorites are anything Superchic[k], Newsboys (especially their worship albums), and Sara Groves. The Newsboys because I met them backstage once and they were as passionate about God in person as in their music. And Superchic[k] and Sara Groves because their lyrics awe me.

22. Anything else you'd like to share?

Yeah . . . more than anything, I'm just awed that God chose me to be a part of this writing thing. I feel as if it's a gift, and He gets the glory for all of it. I'm just thrilled He's chosen me, strengthened me, and gifted me to do this work. What an honor!