



Hello Author,

Finding the time to write is often a challenge and publishing your first book just remains a distant dream. We had the chance to talk to someone who has done all of that and then some. A dedicated full-time teacher helping children with learning disabilities, an avid traveler, a student of music and now, soon to be debut author. Meet Wei Teng – Singapore’s very own literary star. Her book, *Murphy, See How You Shine*, is all set to hit bookstores worldwide this month. The book is in line with her vision to improve the lives of her students. She wants to be a constant source of motivation for them by showing them that they too have opportunities and chances in life.

We had a chance to catch up with her and this is what she had to say:

**We have to get this out of the way first. A lot of writers struggle with time management. How do you find time for work, to read, play an instrument and write a wonderful book?**

I must say, being organized helps me manage my time well and allows me to pursue the things I like, on top of having a full-time job. I live by structures in all areas of my life! I find that once there is structure, there is clarity in the thought processes. It frees you up and creativity flows easily. Naturally, I cannot live without my lists, all organized into folders in my Google Drive. Therefore, my commute is very precious as that is when I organize and go through these lists. I always thought I had zero musical cells in my body and would never play any musical instrument this life time. After I learnt how to play the ukulele, it led to me experimenting with bringing sounds and music into my teaching. Hobbies and work then sort of fused together and it didn't feel like I need to balance them.

But I do agree it is a challenge, finding time to write while doing a full-time job. I am very thankful that I get inspired easily by the things around me. Ideas come to me when I am on the move. In fact, the idea for *Murphy* took on a more concrete form while I was on a train and I continued thinking about it when I was jogging along the park connector near my house.

**The theme of *Murphy, See How You Shine* is so different. The book is about a diabetes-sensitive dog, who saves a stranger. What inspired you to write this book?**

This story has been brewing for the past ten years. I knew I wanted to write a story about a dog who has low self-esteem and is looked down upon, but he ultimately saves the day. The dog is a representation of the amazingly smart and different dyslexic children and youth I worked with. I wanted to write a story to champion these young warriors.

I worked at North Light School which is a school for Singaporean children who failed their national exams (the Primary School Leaving Examination), taken at the end of their primary school education. Their stories of resilience are inspiring. It made me want to get their stories out to as many people as I can.

But this may never have happened if I hadn't met my illustrator, Hong Shin. His encouraging

words to me, when I shared my publishing dream with him brought me this far and I am very thankful to him for that.

Also, I chanced upon the story of Ms Stella Chew in our local newspaper earlier this year, where I learnt about how she tapped into the strengths of her dog, Butter, training it to be diabetic alert to help her overcome her health difficulties. The various ideas in my mind connect and the story is borne.

**A lot of first-time authors seem to be struggling with completing their first book. What helped you finish yours?**

Once I get started on something, I cannot leave it half-baked and I need to see it to fruition. But most of all, what helped me complete my book was the support I got from my family and friends. Their willingness to spend time on my manuscript, give their feedback, and knowing that they are rooting for me and that they want the best for me kept me going. My school has also been very supportive of this project as they understood the significance of the theme behind the book.

**Self-Publishing has become the obvious choice for a lot of writers today. What is more exciting to you, is it the hands-on experience you get when you self-publish or is it the freedom to publish your book your way?**

The hands-on experience is undoubtedly a major advantage while self-publishing. Being able to be involved at every stage of the production is so exciting and rewarding. I am learning lots from working with Hong Shin, Thaatcher, my project manager at Notion press, and her team. I absolutely love that I am able to bounce ideas off them. I like how, in self-publishing, it is a lot about building on each other's ideas and coming up with the best fit for the situation at hand.

**You are one of the few writers who knows your target audience. Did you start writing your book with your potential readers in mind? How did this affect your writing process?**

Yes, I am very lucky that I knew whom I wanted to reach out to right from the start.

I knew I want to reach out to children and youth, who have always felt that they are different from their peers. I want them to know that they have precious gifts within them and just like Murphy, they need to accept themselves for who they are and realize that they have the capacity to shine as brightly as they would like to.

I also hope the book can offer an opportunity for adults to start a discussion with children, about disabilities, learning difficulties, being different and how to overcome obstacles.

Regards,  
Bhargava A  
Co-founder