

Interview with M. Z. Thwaite

Do you read your book reviews?

Yes. Every one. I love to see what interests readers.

Did you do anything to celebrate finishing *Tidewater Tempest*?

I had two front porch book signings that were fun and celebratory.

What was the hardest scene to write in *Tidewater Tempest* and why?

The final scene was the most difficult because I wanted to get it right and think I did.

What comes first for you: the plot or the characters? Was *Tidewater Tempest* an exception?

The plot normally comes first in the form of an idea I want to develop, so for *Tempest*, I began to study storms, but this niggling idea about the parallel between nature and life and a dear friend's last days kept interrupting me, so I decided to re-write the final days of my friend in conjunction with the storm.

Given *Tidewater Tempest* revolves around a tropical storm, does weather play an important role in your writing? And do you have a favorite season to write in?

Weather and nature are very important in my writing. I call myself a plein-air writer, a term I pilfered from my husband's painting days, because I like to write outdoors, either on my screened porch or a convenient deck. I love all the seasons, but like the temperate ones the best because cold weather forces me inside.

If you were to write a spin-off about any side character in your *Tidewater* series, which character would you pick and why?

A minor character in an earlier book intrigues me because he was such a huge part of my childhood. Buck would be the title. I have talked to siblings and cousins about our dear old Buck, and I think he would have a great story to tell.

Do you like audiobooks, physical books, or e-books better?

I adore physical books, always have, but I will do an e-book in a pinch, and I love audiobooks when I'm on the road. I have even thought about recording my books, Southern accent and all, because my accent is real and I know how Southern vowels are supposed to sound.

What is the funniest typo/mistake you've ever written?

You would ask. My sister read an Advance Reader Copy of *Tempest* and her only comment was that collards are cool weather crops. I about died. I know that. I'm a gardener. Oh well, every book has a hiccup, and if that's the worst, so be it.

Some writers swear by writing in a certain font to get their creative juices flowing. Do you have a font you stick to?

I like Times New Roman, though I am experimenting with another in the manuscript I am working on now as a way to differentiate between two characters who present in different centuries.

What advice would you give to writers working on their first book?

Don't edit, just write, and a great way to learn to do this is to go on the internet and sign on for NANOWRIMO, National Novel Writing Month, which unfortunately is in November. The goal is 50,000 words in one month, 1,666 words per day, so there is no time to edit. The other advice I have is not to take all the suggestions you get from editors or friends. The original title for my first novel, *Tidewater Rip*, was *Tidewater Witness*. Witness was the better, and my original, choice. Don't let critiquers hijack your idea if you feel your idea is right on.

If you could recommend any author/book to our readers, who/what would it be?

I have to recommend two: *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee because of its beauty and brilliance, and *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles because of its brilliant use of location and intriguing plot.