

• Meet the Author •

Margie Palatini

Interview conducted by Toni Buzzeo, career media specialist and author (visit www.tonibuzzeo.com).



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Margie Palatini is the author of over three dozen popular and award-winning books for children. Since her picture book debut with the now perennial favorite and bestselling, *Piggie Pie!*, she has garnered over one hundred awards, honors and recognition for her books and distinctive voice that gets kids of all ages giggling.

A graduate of Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia, Margie lives in New Jersey with her husband and their son—her best creative collaboration.

Your dedication reads: *To my sister and all her perfect pets. Can you tell us about the whole gang?*

MP: My sister Barbara has LOTS of pets: I *think* (and I say *think* because I lose track of the exact count) she has about ten or eleven cats, two dogs—Molly, a Springer spaniel, and Wolfie,

a huskie, a flop-eared bunny, several turtles, and many fish in her Koi pond.

What was the inspiration for *The Perfect Pet*? Does it go all the way back to your sister or was there a more recent inciting incident?

MP: When we were growing up, Barbara really, really, really wanted a pet. My mother told us we couldn't because we had a baby brother. (I actually believed that explanation, too.) So, Barbie would pretend to be a dog or cat. We finally got a parakeet, which she named Tweetie, who was never in its cage because Barbie was always holding it, kissing it, hugging it. (That's right. A bird. Not easy.) Barbara was definitely the inspiration for Elizabeth.

Do you have pets in your life currently? Of all the pets you've enjoyed in your life, which was your favorite and why?

MP: We had two wonderful cats who were brothers—PG and JB.

They were the most darling, funny, and fabulous pets. We loved them very much. The dog that my sister, brother, and I had when we were growing up—a beautiful beagle named Pudgie—was the best dog EVER.

One thing that makes *The Perfect Pet* so much fun is the way that Elizabeth approaches her parents in a variety of ways to convince them that she really, really, really needs a pet. Did you have other ideas Elizabeth might have tried—and other pets she might have longed for—that didn't make the final cut?

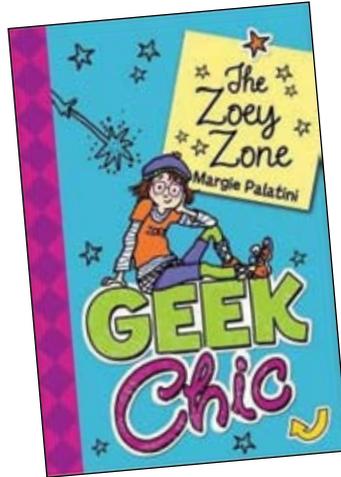


MP: The original cover design by Bruce Whatley had all sorts of jungle animals that I actually thought about incorporating into the text, but as you know, a picture book is short and the story just couldn't accommodate the other animal choices. But jungle or circus animals would have made for some very funny illustrations.

The banners, or "chapter headers," which are assigned to the Announcer in the reader's theater script, are innovative in a picture book. Can you tell us about

your decision to structure the book in this way? Did you try other structures first?

MP: I'm glad you took notice of that. Yes, the 'headers' were meant to structure the story using a different approach than usually done for a picture book. I'm glad my editor was on board with that direction. I like to experiment with structure, although sometimes it's difficult to get my editors to agree. One of my personal favorite books, *Three French Hens*, was structured in what illustrator Richard Egelski and I felt was a cinematic approach.



How can readers learn more about you and your books?

MP: My website, www.margiepalatini.com, has details on all my books and lots of fun related materials to go with them. Readers in grades 3–5

can check out my illustrated novel GEEK CHIC: 'The Zoey Zone', by visiting www.geek-chicthezoeyzone.com. Right now I'm working on writing and illustrating a new picture book which will be published by Simon & Schuster in 2011—and I am very excited about that!



Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is an author as well as a career library media specialist. She is the author of ten picture books, most recently *The Great Dewey Hunt* (UpstartBooks, 2009) and many professional books and articles. Visit www.tonibuzzeo.com or e-mail Toni at tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com.

