

A Conversation with Terri Fields

author of Burro's Tortillas



What inspired you to write *Burro's Tortillas*?

The Little Red Hen has always been one of my favorite children's fables. I love its message! I thought it might be fun to update it, give it a Southwestern twist and to add humor by making it "punny."

What are the most frequently asked questions you encounter as an author?

People often ask me which of my books is my favorite. But my books become like my children, and just as parents say that they love all their children the same, that's how I feel about my books. There's something special to me that I love in each one of them.

Children ask if they can be the star of my next book, and I tell them:

You should be the start of your own book! You can tell the story AND make yourself the main character if you want to. Best of all, you can make it end just the way you want.

They also ask me what a pun is, and a fun explanation is:

A pun is using a word or words that have more than one meaning to create humor. Usually, people groan when you create puns. Try some! Here's a hint: Sometimes, the words are homonyms, words that sound the same but are spelled and mean different things. Here are some examples of puns I've seen other than those in *Burro's Tortillas*:

When it's cold, I wear a coat, but my dog just pants.

I didn't take the test because my pencil broke, so it was pointless.

It was a terrible crime! 7, 8 9!

What sparks that kind of creativity?

Everything! I'm a naturally very curious person. In a single day, I can think of hundreds of ideas. For example, if I'm at a stoplight, I begin to wonder, "What if.... or Why?" For example:

What if the car next to me suddenly disappeared?

Why are stoplights red/yellow/green? Who first decided that?

What if it started to rain so hard that I couldn't drive home?

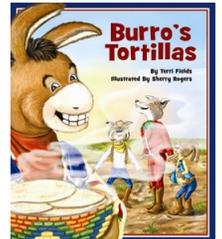
I encourage parents to take advantage of time spent in a car with their children and try asking them "What if...." They might create a story before they even get home!

This book is about the value of hard work. Speaking of that, do you have some tips for getting kids to do their homework without its being such a hassle for parents?

In addition to being an author, I've been a national award-winning educator. As such, I've seen the tension that can be created in families regarding getting children to do their homework.

One of the things I love about Burro's Tortillas is that, in a humorous way, it shows that if a person wants the rewards, he/she must to put forth the effort. Burro demonstrates his hard work, but in the end, he is the one to get the tasty rewards, and he's so proud of himself!

However, in addition to reading Burro's Tortillas and discussing it with your children, here are some tricks to helping homework be less of a hassle:



Just remember: TP WOH !

T—Title: Banish the word homework! Ask kids if they have homework, it's so tempting for them to say "Nope!" and go play. Then come concerned parental questions, "Are you sure? Your teacher said...What about...?" And that's when the battles often begin.

Instead, in your house, no one ever mentions homework; in your house everyone has study time. If the kids have no homework, that's just fine. They can read. However, everyone studies something during study time each day. No TV, no phone calls, no texting. I've watched children's grades improve and family conflicts lessen with this one change in approach.

P—Place: Create a study place: We are all creatures of habit. If all the materials are in a certain place, study time can be spent studying instead of looking for things.

W--When: Give children a chance to help plan when their study time will be. Some kids do much better with playtime until dinner and studying afterwards. Others are too tired and do better with study time shortly after school. Some children are early morning risers who are most ready then.

O—Online activities: Stay aware of the computer. It CAN be very important to doing homework, but it's so tempting to IM and play games instead.

H—Helping: You don't have to have the answers or the know-how to solve every problem. There's a lot of professional help out there. Keep a homework hotline phone number handy. Even if you do know exactly what the answers are, don't ever do your child's homework for him/her. You can ask the child to read the problem to you. You can ask your child to tell you what parts s/he understands. You can try to clarify things. If your child remains confused over a period of several days, email the teacher about your concerns.

Want to continue this conversation? Schedule an interview!

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