

F.A.Q

- * **Where were you born?** I was born on an Air force Base in Portugal, giving me dual citizenship which was pretty cool. You should see my birth certificate ... freaky ☺
- * **Where did you grow up?** With my father in the military, we moved around a lot when I was little, but then we settled in a small town in Upstate New York when I was in fourth grade. My father retired from the military to work as a civilian so I was able to put down roots and graduate high school with all my friends from that same small town.
- * **What kind of person were you in school?** I have always made friends easily, even back then. I wasn't always the best student, but I was involved in a lot of activities like sports, cheerleading, band and chorus. And in high school I was vice president of my class.
- * **What subject did you like the most in school and the least?** I always loved English and knew I wanted to do something that involved reading and writing. Social Studies and Science were interesting, but Math sometimes gave me problems.
- * **What was your father's occupation?** My father was an air traffic controller in the Air force and then later for the FAA.
- * **What was your mother's occupation?** My mother was a supervisor of a cafeteria in a hospital.
- * **Where did you go to college?** I went to Jefferson Community College in Upstate NY, then Champlain Community College in Vermont, then SUNY Plattsburgh, then SUNY Albany where I graduated with a bachelors degree. Finally I went to SUNY Oswego for my masters degree.
- * **What did you study?** I started out in Electrical Engineering (don't ask me why...other than I thought engineers made a lot of money), then I switched to Liberal Arts because I didn't know what I wanted to be. Finally, I majored in English and got certified to teach because even though teachers don't make much money, working with children is so rewarding. After I got my masters in English Education, I was certified to teach N-6th grade and 7-12 English.
- * **What jobs did you have before you were published?** When I was a teenager, I worked as a babysitter first, then in an ice cream store, and finally in a grocery store. All through college I worked as a waitress in various restaurants. Finally I worked in a video store and then as a substitute teacher. I took time off to stay home with my children and have since become a freelance editor for various authors as well as a literary agency.
- * **What places have you lived as an adult?** After I got married, I lived in Albany NY, then Syracuse NY, then Austell Georgia, then Worcester MA, and Finally back home to Central NY. Phew, are you tired yet? I sure am.
- * **Where do you live now?** I live in a small town in Central NY and plan to stay put for a while..

* **Are you married?** I met my husband in college when I was eighteen, got engaged nine months later, got married a year and a half later, and we just celebrated our 21st wedding anniversary in 2010.

* **What is your husband's name?** Brian Townsend

* **What is your husband's occupation?** He is a Pharmaceutical Specialty Sales Rep

* **Do you have kids?** We have four children (3 boys and 1 girl)

* **What are your children's names?** My boys are Brandon, Joshua, Matthew (all teenagers and close in age) and Emily is my darling diva who is still a little girl (4 years younger than her brothers, but she rules the castle!)

* **Do you have pets?** No! As much as I love animals and my children want a dog, I have enough human animals thank you very much ☺ They are all in school now and involved in sports so we all know who would be taking care of the pet ... moi!

* **What are your hobbies?** I love to read, travel, take pictures, and do lots of adventurous activities. I am the dare devil of the family and will try just about anything so stay tuned :-)

* **What is your favorite thing about being an adult?** I get to make my own decisions, call the shots and do what I want...then again that is also the worst thing about being an adult. It might not feel like it, but sometimes it's nice to let someone else handle all the responsibility.

* **How did you get your agent?** I met her online, and then we met at the New Jersey Writers' Conference. I introduced myself (like she had told me to do), and we hit it off immediately. Then I informally pitched to her, and she was gracious enough to allow my peeps to pitch as well...only I had no clue we'd drawn a crowd. When we were done, I got up to leave and she stared at me with this shocked face, asking are these your peeps too? To which I shrugged and said, I have no clue who they are, but I'll see you later at karaoke. To this day she still makes me pay for that, but it's all good. She not only came to karaoke, but she signed me immediately after receiving my manuscript and I've never looked back. Having an agent really is like being married, so no matter how great they sound, take caution and make sure you "fit" together.

* **What was your first book published and when?** My agent sold my middle grade series The Samantha Granger Experiment off just a partial and landed me a three book deal. Then just five months later, she sold my adult cozy mystery series A Fortune Teller Mystery Series off just a synopsis and landed me another three book deal.

* **What other books have you written?** Fused comes out October 1st 2010, followed by Fearless in the spring of 2011, and Freedom in the fall of 2011. Meanwhile Tea Leaves to Die For comes out on September 1st 2011, followed by book 2 in June 2012, and book 3 in March 2013.

* **Will any of your books be turned into movies and can I be in them?** Actually my first book *The Samantha Granger Experiment: Fused* has been adapted to a screenplay by Hollywood Director Doug McKeon and is currently being shopped to studios so stay tuned. As far as being in a movie, I have no control over who will appear in a movie or I'd have everyone I knew ☺

* **When did you first get interested in writing and why do you write?** I've always written poetry and a couple of short stories, but when I took a semester off from college and was saving for my wedding, I started to read a lot. Then the writing bug hit me in 1989. My first attempts were really bad. It's harder than it looks, people. After I had my first child in 1994, I started to write during naptime so I could have something that was just for me. It wasn't until 2000 when I started actively pursuing my writing by joining writing organizations, entering contests and going to conferences. Then in 2004 I moved back to Central NY and got serious, landing my agent in 2006 and the rest is history ☺.

* **Who or what was your biggest influence in deciding to become a writer?** That's easy ... my mother. She has always encouraged me to go after my dreams and be whatever I wanted to be. She really made me believe I could do this no matter how long it took.

* **Where do you get your ideas, names, and locations from?** My ideas come from random things all over the place. A song on the radio, something I read in the newspaper or hear on the TV, something my kids will say or do, etc. Names take a bit of work for me and I look a lot up on the internet or in baby name books. As far as places go, I tend to gravitate toward small towns. I love that cozy community atmosphere.

* **Are your characters based on people you know?** My characters are a combination of a lot of things. People I know, hours of people watching in the mall, people I see on TV or read about in magazines, etc. I love to go for unique and quirky aspects to make them fun and interesting.

* **Has any of the stuff you've written about ever happened to you?** Oh yeah, my life is my material, people. Trust me, you don't want to know ☺ And for my teen books, my kids give me loads of information. Although I'm not psychic, and even though I feel like a superhero at times...I'm not, darnit ☺

* **Does writing come easy for you?** Every writer has his or her strengths and weaknesses, so I would have to say certain aspects of writing come easier for me than others. Some days the words just flow, while other days I have to struggle to reach my daily goal.

* **Where do you write and what kind of rituals do you have when writing?** Even though my children are in school full time now, I still love to write during naptime. I usually do more promotion things in the morning, then take a break and write during the afternoon. I write on a laptop at a little desk in the corner of my formal living room with lots of light and a great atmosphere. I have an office in the basement with a main computer where I store all my stuff, but

I feel like I'm in a dungeon. Ambiance is everything for setting the mood. I need light and silence and a Diet Pepsi for my brain to register it's time to write.

*** How long does it take you to write a book?** I am lucky. I'm a very fast writer. I write about 10 pages a day Monday through Friday so that's 50 pages a week. That means I can finish one of my teen books in one month and a cozy mystery in two months. That does NOT mean, however, that the books are ready to go to my editors. Writing is rewriting. I might take a month to write the first draft of a Samantha Granger book, but then I spend another month polishing it. Polishing is the best part because that's when the magic happens ☺

*** Is writing the second book easier than the first?** No, it's harder. In a series, the characters are already fleshed out which is great. However, the plot has to be even bigger and better. The pressure to make every book better than the last is tremendous, and the fear of not being able to top yourself never goes away.

*** What are you working on now?** Book one of Samantha Granger (Fused) is already finished and so is book two (Fearless). I just finished book one of my Fortune Teller Mystery (Tea Leaves to Die For) and am about to start book three of Samantha Granger (Freedom), followed by the second Fortune Teller book. It never ends...sigh...but trust me, folks, I'm not complaining. This industry is too hard to break into and even harder to stay published. You have to grab every opportunity that comes along and enjoy the ride while you can.

*** What is the best and worst thing about being an author?** The best part is getting to work from home in my PJ's if I want. I love working from home, making my own schedule and taking breaks whenever I want. However, the worst part of being an author is also working at home. Writing is a very solitary occupation. You have to force yourself to get out of the house and interact with people or risk becoming a recluse. In my case, being a mom of four keeps me plenty active.

*** Do you illustrate your book covers?** No, my publisher has a whole team of people who do everything from coming up with titles that will sell to creating fabulous covers that really catch the eye. I've learned long ago not to get too attached to a title or cover, and to trust in the people who spend countless hours researching these sorts of things. I am happy just to write the books.

*** Is it hard working with an editor?** So far I've lucked out and adore both of my editors. I know they want the book to sell just as much as I do. Nothing they say is personal; it's all for the benefit of the story. In the end, they are usually spot on.

*** Is it hard writing for both teens and adults?** Sometimes it's hard switching gears and getting both the tone and the language right, depending on which genre I'm in at the time. I constantly have to remember which audience I'm writing for, but I love it. Writing for both age groups keeps things fresh.

* **Do you read your own email?** I read all my own mail and answer everything. It might take me a little while to get back to you, but rest assured, a response will come eventually.

* **Who are some of your favorite authors?** There are so many it's hard to name them all, but I do enjoy anything funny. Meg Cabot, Ally Carter, Lauren Myracle, and E. Lockhart are some of my favorite teen authors. Donna Andrews, Tamar Myers, Annette Blaire and Janet Evanovich are some of my favorite mystery authors.

* **What are some of your favorite movies?** I love romantic comedies like *The Proposal*, *27 Dresses*, *Serendipity*, etc. I love funny women's fiction movies like *Bridget Jones Diary*, *Because I Said So*, *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, etc. I love dramatic movies like *Dear John*, *The Last Song*, *Letters to Juliet*. I love action adventure movies like *The Lightning Thief*, *Harry Potter*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, etc. Basically, I am a huge movie buff...there's very little I don't like (except horror!)

* **What are some of your favorite foods?** I love Mexican and Italian, but I hate all kinds of seafood. I wish I didn't because it's so good for you, but I think it's mental. I can't get beyond the look and texture.

* **What is your favorite color?** Purple (any shade).

* **What music do you like?** I love modern country, rock, and some pop, but I don't really care for heavy metal, rap, or classical music.

* **What gadgets are your favorite?** My iPod, my Netbook, my Kindle and my cell phone.

* **What things can't you live without?** Diet Pepsi, coffee, wine, makeup, comfy clothes, my computer, and electricity!

* **What advice can you give kids?** Follow your dreams and never think anything is impossible.

* **I have a few questions for a school report. Can you answer them please?** I wish I could. I have so little time for my own deadlines and my family, but I wish you the best and hope this list helps answer your questions.

* **I want to write books, too. What should I do? Can you read my work and help me?** I think it's fabulous that you want to write books. You should go to the library and look through some how-to books that really help explain the writing process and the industry. Then when you're ready, find a critique partner who is your age and has the time to read your work and give you feedback. I wish I could help everyone, but I barely have time to read my own work and my critique partner's.