

AUTHOR Q&A

10 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT MICHELLE LEVY:

1. I was a serious dancer until I was sixteen. We're talking *Dance Moms* here.
2. I can read music.
3. I play the piano and sing, but will never play or sing for anyone because I'm shy about it.
4. I'm borderline obsessed with musical theatre. *Into the Woods* in particular. Don't ask me about the movie version unless you're prepared for my honest opinion and have a few hours to hear it.
5. I spent a few summers working as a wrangler/trail guide on a dude ranch in Colorado.
6. I used to have a pug that would sing along with opera music. Pavarotti was his favorite. See for yourself: <https://youtu.be/ACsqgKaU7Zw>
7. I have a Great Dane named Magnus who's well over six feet tall standing on his hind legs.
8. My Maine Coon cat, Max, lived on his own in the Rocky Mountains for four months before returning home to my brother, who then gave him to me. Max has some serious scars and is now convinced he'll starve if his food dish isn't absolutely full at all times.
9. I will scream like I'm being murdered if I see a spider moving quickly anywhere in my general vicinity.
10. I spent most summers in a tiny town in North Dakota where I hung out with my cousins on their farm doing things like climbing hay bails, riding in a tractor, shoveling cow manure, and playing with ALL THE KITTENS! There was at least one litter of adorable little kitties every year, which *almost* makes up for the whole shoveling cow manure thing.

FAQs

Where are you from? Where do you live now?

I'm from Littleton, Colorado. Technically it's Highlands Ranch/Lone Tree, aka the southern most Denver suburb before you end up in Castle Rock. But now I live in Los Angeles and desperately miss thunderstorms.

How long have you been writing? How did you start writing?

I started writing when I was 34. I had a creative writing teacher in high school that made me feel too stupid to write. I guess I *was* pretty stupid, because even though I always had some great stories going on in my head, I believed him and didn't write any of them down. Until I finally got an idea that wouldn't let me not write it down. Unfortunately, it wasn't *Not After Everything*. I had to write four other manuscripts before that one.

What is your writing process?

I find it changes with each book. Sometimes I meticulously plot, sometimes I lightly outline. Sometimes I write from 11:00pm until about 4:00am. Sometimes I have to sit down at exactly 5:00pm and write until 11:00pm every single day. Sometimes I absolutely can't write at my house—I've drafted entire books at Starbucks. The thing that remains consistent in my writing process is that I draft fast. I drafted *Not After Everything* in five weeks. Personally, I have to vomit the words onto the page so that I have something to work with and go from there.

What do you find to be the most difficult part of the writing process?

The easiest for me is drafting. When I have an idea it all comes rushing out at once. The most difficult would be revising without guidance. Those first revisions before I ask my critique partners to give me notes just about kill me.

Where are your books set? Why?

Not After Everything is set in a fictional version of the Denver suburb I lived in when I was in High School. My previous manuscripts were set in Connecticut, Los Angeles, and Northern California, so I don't really know why I chose that for *NAE*. It was just where that story decided it wanted to take place, I guess.

Are your characters based on real people?

Not even a little bit.

Where do the ideas for your books come from?

My ideas mostly start with the characters. *Not After Everything* happened because Tyler's voice popped into my head one day and I had to figure out what his story was.

Who is your favorite author?

There are so many! Jandy Nelson, Laini Taylor, Andrew Smith, Gayle Forman, Lauren Oliver, Libba Bray, and John Green, just to name a few.

When you aren't writing, what do you like to do for fun?

I like going to movies and plays and watching TV and reading books. Anything with great storytelling!

Do you do school visits?

BRING IT ON!

What's next?

All I can say is that it involves psychological issues.

Lightning Round!!!

- ❖ **Favorite Dessert:** Chocolate ice cream!
- ❖ **Favorite Color:** Black. Ooh, how emo of me.
- ❖ **Cats or Dogs?** Both. I have one of each and refuse to choose between my children, thank you very much.
- ❖ **If you couldn't be an author, you'd be...** a casting director. I'm one of the lucky people who gets to do what I've always wanted to.
- ❖ **Favorite Food:** I'd love to say something sophisticated here like Indian food or sushi, but it's probably pizza.
- ❖ **Coffee or Tea?** Coffee!