

SQUEE! An interview with bestselling author Rachel Renée Russell!



1. What inspired you to want to write the squee-worthy Dork Diaries series?

My dorky daughter, Nikki—who also illustrates the books! Many of the dramatic tales, zany escapades, and exciting adventures chronicled in the books are based on real-life experiences from our own middle-school years. I am thrilled to know that girls and boys around the world enjoy my book series and are inspired to embrace their uniqueness and be kind to others. So, just keep reading, and always let your inner Dork shine through!

2. How do you come up with the drama-filled stories in each book?

Many of the events in the book series are based on real life experiences my daughters and I had when we attended middle school and high school. Most individuals can probably recall an awkward period in their lives when they just didn't fit in, had a first crush, felt super insecure, or had a moment so embarrassing that s/he wanted to "Dig a hole, crawl into it, and DIE!" as Nikki Maxwell would say. It's a universal thing that most tweens and teens want to be popular, successful, and admired—and hang out with the cool people. I think most adults feel this way as well.

3. Do you still write in your own diary?

I would love to! But, unfortunately, I'm usually way too busy trying to finish up Nikki Maxwell's diaries by the manuscript deadlines. Although I don't write in a diary on a daily basis, whenever I have an important decision to make or am facing a major challenge in life, I always sit down and write a long diary entry to organize my thoughts, clear my head, set goals, and/or create a plan of action. My new book series, The Misadventures of Max Crumbly, was inspired by one of those diary entries, and a recent one motivated me to remain laser focused on landing a new movie deal for Dork Diaries.

4. Did you have a sibling like Brianna?

I'm the oldest child in my family, and I have two sisters and two brothers. None of my siblings were like Brianna. However, my daughter Nikki was a very active and curious child and loved to dismantle things, like our television. Nikki also had a wild imagination and was very adventurous, so I would say that she inspired much of Brianna's personality and over-the-top antics.

5. Nikki, Chloe, and Zoey are total BFFs! Do you have BFFs like Chloe and Zoey?

Yes, I do. But it's somewhat challenging because my BFF doesn't live in the same area of the USA as me! But we talk on the phone a lot and visit each other when we can. Like Chloe and Zoey, my BFF has ALWAYS been there for me!

(continued on next page)

6. MacKenzie is a not-so-friendly frenemy. How do you deal with bullies like MacKenzie?

Dealing with bullies like MacKenzie can be tricky sometimes. When I meet people like her, I usually try to keep my distance, but that is not always possible. Although Nikki Maxwell is able to deal with MacKenzie on her own, it's always a good idea to seek emotional support from a good friend and, if necessary, guidance and/or intervention from a trusted adult. Never feel embarrassed to reach out for help if you're having trouble with someone. Most of us have experienced bullying before. And, even as an adult, I've had to deal with bullies in the workplace, so this is a good skill to develop. I think the most important thing to remember when you're in this situation is that you're a good person and valued by society, even though the bully will say and do mean things to try to convince you otherwise.

7. Nikki's dog, Daisy, is so cute! Do you have any pets?

Yes! I have a dog named Mika, and she's a Yorkie. She is an honorary member of Team Dork and even participates in phone conferences with my editor and agent by barking excitedly nonstop. Mika also hangs out under my desk until the wee hours of the morning while I write. And, when we're both sleep deprived during manuscript deadlines, she's a lot grumpier than I am. Here's a fun fact! The dog, Daisy, in Dork Diaries is actually inspired by my daughter Nikki's standard poodle, whose name is also Daisy! Nikki got so emotionally attached to all those adorable puppies she was illustrating in Dork Diaries Book 10 that she actually went out and adopted a new puppy before we finished the manuscript.

8. Was your life a lot like Nikki's when you were her age?

With so many siblings, there was always something funny, exciting, or dramatic unfolding in our house. Many of the adventures that Nikki Maxwell has in the books are based on experiences I had as a child. Like, for example, my sisters and I actually had a singing group for a few years, and we performed at the iconic Apollo Theater in New York City, just like Nikki Maxwell participated in a talent show in Dork Diaries Book 3. I also was obsessed with writing in my diary.

9. Do you ever do the Snoopy dance just like Nikki does?

I wish I could say no, but I do have my own version of a Snoopy Happy Dance. I'll admit that it's not as cool as Nikki's, but I try my best! Fun fact! When Jean Schulz and the Charles Schulz Museum heard about Nikki's Snoopy Happy Dance, I got a special invitation to do a book signing there. I really enjoyed meeting Jean Schulz and had a wonderful time visiting the fantastic museum.

10. Will Brandon and Nikki ever get together?!

I hope so! But you'll have to keep reading to find out :-)!