

Interview Questions by Ann Montclair (for *Alaina Claiborne*)



Tell me a little bit about you the person, not the writer.

I grew up on the Southern California coast, but always preferred the mountains, which is how I ended up calling Montana home. I originally wanted to be a K-9 cop, then a lawyer, then an elementary school teacher, then a cultural anthropologist, then a chef—now I'm a writer and business owner, so you never know which direction life will take. My favorite days are those spent away from phones and computers. I eat some form of chocolate every day, detest soda, never had a cup of coffee, *Castle* and *Downton Abbey* are my new favorite TV shows, I love to be in the kitchen, and I enjoy curling up by the fire with a good historical romance or thriller. And, as far as I'm concerned autumn is the perfect time of year.

Who do you read for inspiration? Who are your influences? Why?

I'd have to say that Kathleen E. Woodiwiss and Johanna Lindsey were my original writing influences. They have very different styles, but I enjoyed every book of theirs I ever read, which is rare for me. I knew I wanted to aspire to be the type of author about which a reader could say the same. I read too many authors and genres to list, and my tastes are eclectic, and not necessarily within genres in which I write. I gravitate toward historical fiction first, and then branch into thrillers and westerns. I have a few shelves of non-fiction titles too. One genre I rarely read or enjoy is paranormal—I save that for X-Files marathons.

In your opinion, what makes a book a good read?

If I can connect with the characters—that's always a priority. Even if a book is in one of my so-so genres, if the characters are awesome, I'm more likely to read it. I love flawed characters—not enough books have them.

In your opinion, what makes a book a poor read?

Dull, lifeless characters, and page after page of too much description. I love to feel a part of the story, to know what the character is seeing and how they're feeling, but if it takes 5 pages to talk about one meal or two pages to describe a table setting, then they've lost me.

What's your ideal writing environment? Do you have any special rituals you enact or "must haves" before you write?

I'm a complete grouch if disturbed without good reason (sort of like when I don't get

enough sleep), so I definitely like a quiet area in which to write. I tend to wear noise-reducing headphones with soft music playing. If I'm working on a historical western, sometimes I'll listen to old western movie music. I always fix a cup of herbal tea, fill my water cup, and grab a few bits of chocolate. I've recently begun spending about ten minutes doing yoga before I write—I find it helps clear my thoughts and it's a nice transition between "life" and writing. Where I write depends on my mood. Sometimes I prefer working on my desktop in my office, but I'll often move around the house with my laptop or go outside if the weather is fair and conducive to what I'm writing. I like bundling up in the autumn on a lounge chair outside, before the snow begins falling—it's a lovely way to write.

What inspired you to write the novel you're publishing?

Alaina Claiborne is a story I absolutely wanted to tell because the characters have been with me for many years, and the story did develop slowly over those years. It wasn't until I began working with my new editor that I realized the potential of the book and the series. I'm not usually inspired by any one thing to write a specific book—the ideas just happen. I mull it over, play out scenes in my mind, and if I can see the characters take on a life, chances are I'll write their story. I like pretending the characters are starring in a movie, with me playing the part of the heroine (of course). This one was especially fun—handsome British agents, horses, a grand English estate, and travelling the high seas—so fun I want to do it again!

Describe your cover. Is it a scene from your book? Do you like it? Why?

This is my favorite cover so far, and I've had a lot of great feedback on it. It was redone for the second edition release of the book, and though it's not a specific scene from the book, it probably could be. In fact, I wanted to use the cover image of the woman riding the horse so badly that I ended up changing the hair color of the heroine to match the cover. This is the first time I've changed the way a character looks because of the book cover.

The Author

Award-winning author MK McClintock writes historical romantic fiction about courageous and honorable men and strong women who appreciate chivalry. Her stories of adventure, romance, and mystery sweep across the American West to the Victorian British Isles, with places and times between and beyond. With her heart deeply rooted in the past, she enjoys a quiet life in the northern Rocky Mountains.

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