

Marianne Mineo: Storybook Up-&-Comer

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/marianne-mineo-storybook-up-comer/>

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Marianne Mineo is new to the scene as an indie writer and illustrator of children's storybooks but already she has brought two titles onto the market since October 2012. This is a woman who feels very strongly about what she's doing, but she also has the ability to focus her passion towards creating marketable product.

Born in Switzerland, Mineo is an advocate of Amazon's KDP Program, has eight siblings, has lived very internationally (having lived in America, India and currently in England), she homeschools her two girls who now read the likes of **Little House** and **Anne of Green Gables**, and is herself an Agatha Christie fan. She loves stiletto heels but wears comfortable, versatile boots with a flat heel that she can wear with just about anything. Her favorite food is her dad's fondue. She can't decide on a favorite color because she loves them all. And she is an avid tea drinker, because "a nice cup of tea makes things seem better."

So I asked her, "*What's your usual day like?*" Because these are the types of things I want to know. What is she doing that most of us are missing or forgetting or just not having any idea how to do?"

This is what she said.

"My alarm rings, I get up and take a few minutes to wake up and get into gear. Then I go wake my girls. Because we're homeschooling there's no need to rush through the morning routine so I try to take my time, give them lots of kisses and cuddles while we get downstairs for breakfast. Sometimes I read to them while they're eating, other times we talk about the day or whatever topic is on their minds and then I send them upstairs to dress, make their beds, brush teeth etc. while I do the dishes and prepare their work pages for the first phase of school. We do school in 3 phases, having breaks in between."

OK, so far she cuddles and has breakfast with the kids. Good, good. Cuddles and breakfast. I can do that.

“We stop for lunch and then finish whatever school we have left to do. After that the girls go to their room so I can get a little quiet “me” time. They read books, play with their dolls or watch a video and I have some time at my computer to check my messages etc. while I have my afternoon tea.”

Quiet me time. Good. Tea and emails. Very doable.

“After that, we get ready to go out. Some days we go to the park, other times they have gymnastics class or we do the shopping etc. Once we get back I try to fit in some other work, either writing, working on jewelry or illustrations.”

Fun stuff, getting outside to breathe and move around, maybe shopping. Then work. OK, this is interesting.

“If it’s my turn to cook dinner I’ll then start the cooking, sometimes continuing to work at the same time. We have dinner and then we spend some time together as a family. We play games, read stories or do a project. The latest craze has been to play [Minecraft](#) together as a family. We play in “Creative” mode and try to impress each other with the different structures we are able to build.”

Cook dinner, eat, play games, talk as a family. Good. No time for television, clearly.

“Once the kids are in bed, I fit in some work until I am ready to go to bed.”

My favorite: Marianne with her girls, also busy.

Mineo’s daily plan looks wildly different from what I expected, so I asked her, “How often are you able to dedicate a day to writing &/or illustration?” I didn’t expect her to say that she works solidly 2-3 times a week because she homeschools, but I didn’t expect what she did say, either.

“I just try to fit it in here and there whenever I can. Some days everything flows, the kids keep themselves entertained, my artistic juices are flowing and I get a lot accomplished. Other days it’s just not happening... There’s no set rule for me, I just try to juggle it as best I can.”

This Gives Me Hope

What strikes me about Mineo’s response - and in fact her whole manner - is that her day-to-day schedule is ideally centered around her kids and the family life she wants to share with them, and that her creative prolificacy seems to be secondary or even tertiary. This gives me hope, that even if you work all day long, you can find those moments to “fit in some work” and “try to juggle it” all. I can indeed make things happen in my creative life without sacrificing the time I want to share with my family.

I’m not a homeschooler, but I am a teacher, and so was keenly interested in what Mineo had to say about educating her kids. I am of one opinion with her philosophy of teaching. Here it is:

“I am a firm believer in the idea that if a child is not grasping a concept it is not because the child is dumb or unable to understand, it is because it’s not being presented to them in the right way.

Every child has their own way of learning and I believe it is my responsibility as their teacher to ensure that I am presenting it in a way that makes sense in their heads. When we do creative writing in school I find myself relearning things long forgotten from my own school days, which I then try to reflect in my own writing.”

Mineo also explained that her husband is the one who pressed her to start writing and illustrating books, and he manages the publishing and [marketing aspect](#) of that joint venture. It’s clearly a well working match.

“My ideal working environment would probably be by the beach with a laptop.” Sing it, Sister. “Unfortunately, that is not quite where we’re at yet. I tend to work on my desktop in my bedroom, with my kids playing nearby so I can keep an eye on them.”

In addition to her writing and homeschooling, Mineo creates handmade jewelry, which she sells in [her Etsy shop](#). For her, storybooks are one of many projects she loves to do. Describing herself as someone who is surrounded by many creative people including a live-in mother-in-law who paints, I asked her what inspired her to write these particular books.

Her First Book

“With my [first book](#), I was actually just going to make a little reader for my daughter. I wanted to tell her the Christmas story from a different perspective and so I created Holly the lamb. It became quite popular with my girls and so we decided to turn it into a book that all kids could enjoy. We have also just released a mini platform game starring Holly. With the Holly series, I think the inspiration is in [finding a unique way](#) to share the classic stories from the Bible in a way that is fun and new.”

I asked Marianne if she had maybe a personal anecdote she might share about her experience as a writer, something that really meant something to her. I think every storybook creator has this, the Defining Moment when they realize they don’t ever want to not be able to have this experience of being a creator of storybooks.

A Family of Many Number(s)

“Last Christmas we traveled down to Switzerland to spend the holidays with my family. We spent a wonderful 2 weeks at my sister’s house. She has 6 children and lives in a large renovated farmhouse that has, on its property, a 3-bedroom studio where my parents live with my youngest brother. It was wonderful to have (nearly) the whole family together.

“On December 25th, Christmas morning, we all gathered for our traditional Christmas brunch. We were quite a crowd with 7 of my mom and dad’s 9 children, 8 of their 9 grandchildren, 2 spouses (my sister’s and mine), and my mother-in-law. Brunch consisted of delicious croissants, brioche and hearty German breads, pâté, foie gras, prosciutto, smoked salmon and other cold-cuts, honey, Nutella and jams, bacon

and eggs for those so inclined, hot chocolate with whipped cream, fresh coffee, homemade cakes and more.

“After everyone had fully satisfied their appetites, we cozied up in the living room to sing some traditional Christmas songs. One of the children then requested to read the Holly story, seeing as it is about Christmas. I thought it was very sweet that they wanted to hear the story before playing with their presents. We plugged my tablet into the large-screen TV so that the illustrations could display for everyone to enjoy and had a wonderful time reading the little story of the first Christmas.”

Her Second Book

Mineo says her family is very supportive of her writing. “When I was working on my second book, [“Baby and Mother”](#), which has over 30 illustrations, my older daughter would sit next to me and draw her version of whatever animal I was in the process of illustrating. Her creations were all very cute.”

What inspired this project? “[It] was geared more for younger children. My sister had just given birth to her 6th child and I think that inspired me to make a book for the very young. It’s all about baby animals finding their mother and teaches children the names of the baby animals, which mother they belong to, and the sound that each animal makes.”

What’s Coming Next

I wondered if more ebooks were in the making, and there are. As Mineo puts it, “I have about 3 or 4 other books in various stages of being created plus ideas for 3 or 4 more swimming around somewhere.” Sounds like a writer to me!

Of what themes or ideas she would like to tackle next: “Sometimes I think that, because I have 2 girls, my books wouldn’t hold as much appeal for boys. We have a new series that we’re starting to work on and I’m looking for an angle that will appeal to boys as well as girls. They will address some of the challenges that children face day-to-day like cleaning your room in a humorous and fun way.”

I think there is a lot we can take away from a chat with Marianne Mineo. She has found a balance between family and her creative work, and of working in a partnership with her husband. You can also find her on [Amazon.com](#).

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