



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH BEVERLY LEWIS

1. You are a regular on multiple bestseller lists, including the *New York Times*, and your books have been published in eleven languages—and counting. What do you think of your widespread popularity?

Wowed—and humbled! I never imagined such a writing journey—or a reception from readers—after my first Amish novel, *The Shunning*, was released in 1997. Sharing God's tremendous love through story is an opportunity I don't take lightly, and I am so thankful for His hand of blessing on my work. My Plain relatives and friends have been surprised and pleased by the apparent desire for a less hectic way of life—and appreciation for the Amish—many of my readers have voiced over the years.

2. Does Home to Hickory Hollow differ from your previous series?

Yes! HOME TO HICKORY HOLLOW is a collection of individual novels, unlike my prior series. While there are some repeating characters and a common setting that tie the books together, each novel is a complete story that readers can enjoy in any order they wish.

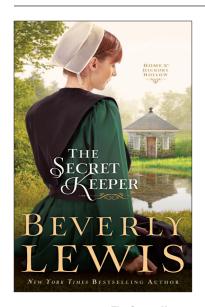
3. What inspired your newest novel, The Secret Keeper?

Years ago, I received a letter from a young woman who was eager to know what it would take for her as an Englisher to become Amish. Since then, I've received many other such letters from people with a similar hope, or with a longing to somehow share in the Old Ways. Those letters planted the compelling seed for this story. Jenny Burns, who gives up her modern life to become a seeker with the hope of becoming an Amish church convert, certainly wouldn't have come to life without them!

4. Tell us a little about The Secret Keeper.

My main character is a twenty-five-year-old single Englisher named Jennifer Burns. Jenny shocks her family and friends when she bids farewell to her modern life in favor of the Old Order Amish world. The people of Hickory Hollow are naturally very curious about this beautiful young seeker who comes to live among them—one handsome Amishman in particular. Yet while Jenny delights in finally being able to live Plain, she faces many challenges in her Proving time.

Like the other books in Home to Hickory Hollow, *The Secret Keeper* revisits the beloved setting of my very first Amish series, Heritage of Lancaster County. More than any other book in this series, though, *The Secret Keeper* offers a window into the lives of some of the most memorable characters from *The Shunning* and its sequels. For example, Jenny comes to live with Samuel and Rebecca Lapp, Katie's adoptive parents, during the time of Jenny's Proving. Rebecca is actually a viewpoint character with gripping secrets of her own, and even dear Katie makes several appearances, along with her husband, Daniel, and the rest of their darling family. *The Secret Keeper* definitely gives longtime fans a chance to catch up. And although this book is a wonderful read on its own, some are calling it another sequel to *The Shunning*!



The Secret Keeper

Home to Hickory Hollow by Beverly Lewis Trade Paper ISBN: 978-0-7642-0980-2 \$14.99; 352 pp. Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-7642-1148-5 \$19.99; 352 pp. Large Print ISBN: 978-0-7642-1149-2 \$17.99; 448 pp. Ebook ISBN: 978-1-4412-6272-1; \$14.99

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5. The concept of the Proving is very important to this book. What exactly is a Proving time and how long does it typically last?

A Proving is the process through which an Englisher can become a member of an Amish church. The specific requirements vary, but during a Proving, a person separates from the English world, wears Plain dress, and learns and adopts the Old Ways—the community's traditional cultural practices. This includes everything from attending Preaching services to practical matters like hitching up a horse to a buggy and learning to speak Pennsylvania Dutch. Potential converts are expected to reflect *Gelassenheit*—a compliant and submissive spirit—in all they do. If they succeed, they are baptized into the Amish church.

A Proving time can last anywhere from six months to two years—the exact length is determined by the bishop and ministerial brethren in an individual church district.

6. What are you currently working on?

Well, right now I'm very busy writing *The Last Bride*, the fifth novel in Home to Hickory Hollow, as well as *Child of Mine*, a collaboration with my husband, David Lewis. *The Last Bride* will be released on April 1, 2014, and *Child of Mine* on June 3, 2014.

7. You certainly have a lot going on! How can readers keep up with your work?

There are many ways to stay in the loop! To sign up for my free newsletter, readers can visit my Facebook fan page, facebook.com/officialbeverlylewis, where I answer questions related to my writing life and the Amish tradition, or my website, beverlylewis.com. The website includes my monthly blog, book excerpts, delicious authentic Amish recipes, and news about my upcoming fall book tour, which will include library and bookstore events September 4-13 all over Kentucky and Indiana. I love this opportunity to connect with my readers!