

Of Teeter-Totters and Book Reviews

I never liked teeter-totters.

The whole up-down . . . wait! Not that fast! Thunk! And then hitting the ground *hard* because the balance between you and the kid on the other end was off? Yeah. Hated that.

And then there were the times I wanted to teeter-totter (who knows why), and no one else wanted to, and I sat on my end, on the ground, and stared up at that empty seat, knowing I was going nowhere. Hated that too.

Book reviews are a lot like teeter-totters.

Get a glowing review for your just-released novel? Woosh! You're teetering up high in the air, loving the ride.

Find a bad review skulking online? Thunk! You totter down onto the ground with a huge wallop to your backside – and your ego.

Riding a teeter-totter is all about balance, right? Learning to go up and down with a certain finesse and childlike grace that allows you to take the soaring and the sitting with laughter. Rough landing? Oh well, it just means you have a chance to soar higher the next time.

So it is with book reviews. Accept the reality that some readers will love your book ... and some readers won't. Both types of people will post reviews online – and surprise! The people who love your book won't always post reviews.

Just as I learned it's no fun to go for a solo ride on a teeter-totter, it's unwise to wander the land of book reviews alone. When you're knocked off your feet by a scathing review (yes, scathing), it's a blessing to have a community of trusted writing comrades who will listen to you, pray with you, encourage you, love you. Ultimately, they will dust your bruised backside off and help you get back on the writing playground.

You can choose to ride the teeter-totter or not. Guess what? You can choose to read reviews or not. I know writers who say they never read reviews. I'm one of them, and yet at times I somehow find myself scrolling through Goodreads or Amazon or Christianbook.com, usually with my mentor on speed-dial. I also

know writers who always read reviews and say they learn from them. It's a choice.

The real questions are: What's the best balance for you? How can you best handle the ups and downs of book reviews – and who has your back as you walk along the writing road?