



Sample Interview Questions For Debra Brenegan Author of *Shame the Devil*

1. How did you first learn about Fanny Fern?
2. Since this is a novel that is based on the life of a real person, how much research did you do for the book?
3. What was the most exciting thing you discovered about Fanny Fern?
4. How did you decide what "real" events from Fanny Fern's life to include in the book and what to "fictionalize?"
5. The novel utilizes the perspectives of several peripheral characters based on real people, including N.P. Willis, James Parton, Grace Parton, Mary Eldredge, Catharine Beecher, Nathaniel Willis, Grace Willis, Ellen Willis, Louisa Jacobs, Lucy Bumstead, Oliver Dyer, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and, of course, Walt Whitman. Did Fanny Fern really interact with all of these people? Besides Fanny, who did you enjoy writing about most?
6. In less than one year, Fanny Fern lost several close family members including her husband, daughter, mother, sister and sister-in-law. How do you think this affected her and her future writing career? Was it common for people to experience this much loss during that era?
7. Fanny Fern had three husbands and a fabulous career. How did her experiences compare to the typical woman's experiences in the mid to late 1800s?
8. Fanny Fern wrote often about the social issues of her time, including poverty, health care, divorce, child rearing/custody, gender roles, marriage, materialism, education and work opportunities. Do any of her opinions still resonate with you regarding twenty-first century society?
9. Fanny Fern was considered one of America's first "celebrities." How do you think her experience compared to the experiences of celebrities today?
10. Fanny Fern acted as Walt Whitman's mentor. In your book, Walt Whitman says to Fanny, "You will be immortalized! You will be remembered until the end of time . . ." Why do you think Fanny Fern has *not* been remembered by most people? Why do you think Walt Whitman, who was not as well-received in his time, is much more well-known than Fanny Fern?
11. What do you want readers to take away from your book?
12. What are you working on next? Will you write more historical fiction?