

# *Why Torenne?*

*By Lee-Ann Liles*

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** *We would have never guessed a short account about a mother picking her daughter's name could draw us in but WTF, suckered gleefully, we were. Partly because the process and research it involved is a lot more interesting than we imagined and partly (a big partly) is because Liles knows how to write. We can't imagine a better treatment of the subject. So much so that after a couple tokes we all kind of grumbled that our moms hadn't called us 'Wencelus'. Or ShineRock or even Keroucginsberg but thankfully NOT 'X Æ A-12'!!!*

## ***Why Torenne?***

My daughter was born in 2011, the Year of the Rabbit. When I chose a name for her, I tried to be kind to the people who would have to pronounce it. Ambiguous, sexless names; unique and mystical, all struck a familiar and likeable cord with me. The farthest thing from my mind was to follow tradition and name the baby after a relative or a long dead ancestor. I was contrary to a title which had survived the ravages of time, bearing the mark of antiquity.

While scanning the websites which catalogued the newest designer names, I found myself partial to French names like *Doyenne* which means a woman who is respected or most prominent in her field. Names which spoke of trades or occupational names like Bishop, Deacon, Mason and Taylor had a ring of prominence, speaking to a certain platitude in character that should be attained and was sincere and trustworthy. Androgynous names like *Fallon* which is Irish for Leader were also paramount to my search, since I was always one to challenge a man, making him aware that females could wear the name just as well.

I fell in love with *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* like many teens who were into the suburban comedies in the 80's and Sloane who was Ferris's girlfriend

became a strong contender for a girl's name, a name easily mistaken for a guy. I revelled in picking out mysterious ones, I imagined during a rousing game of *The Price is Right!* the name Sloane Liles would be picked. "Sloane Liles, come on down!" the announcer would bellow and up pops a giddy, collegiate girl, leaping assiduously into the arms of Drew Carey at the booming announcement of her name. In *Ferris Bueller*, Sloane was sleek and sexy and it must have been difficult to pass her off as a teenager in the movie, yet her name had a sort of *Remington-Steel-ish* feel to it, like you expected the owner of the name to be a sleek Private Investigator, or at least his beautiful sidekick.

Call me weird and crazy but *The Shining* is the best movie ever. I continue to be amazed by Stanley Kubrick's preciseness in making this movie and he is also a big fan of hidden messages (like me!). For instance, every scene pans shots of Native American symbols in the background, representing the lives that were taken to build the Overlook Hotel. This of course is a mind trick, a subconscious ruse as the messages are found in the most difficult of places to hide them - on the big screen. Essentially, Kubrick amplified Stephen King's already seductive novel and created a plethora of fantastic wide-angled shots which snatch you by the collar.

If I could have named my daughter, Torrance after the family in the movie, I would have. Upon researching, I found that the name Torrance was actually Scottish for "from craggy hill or watchtower". There is Torrance, California, but I'm not sure how craggy or hilly it is. I might have also come up with the name Torene because of the interest I have for the "Shroud of Turin," the Christian relic thought to be the shroud of Jesus of Nazareth which supposedly covered his body in the tomb. In searching for everyday people with the same name while ignoring the spelling, I've found one person on Facebook and more recently a college football star Tauren.

Creating combo names was another great way to create a child's name, that was not unknown to my community. My name is Lee-Ann and her father is Torrie. From this combination we had so many choices, but only one rang true and it hit me like a strange epiphany. Torene's name said everything I wanted to say in a name.

Other interesting variations of the name:

Torin (m.) - IRE. Gaelic, means “Chief”

Turin (m.) - means “Victory Mood” - Slayed a dragon. (Tolkien).

Torren (m.) - IRE. means “from the craggy hill” as a shortened form of Torrance.

I named my son, Rayshawn during a time when double-barrel baby names were popular in the 1990’s. Sean (P. Diddy, Puffy) Combs clothing line was *Sean John* and I was looking for a name with a familiar ring to it, maybe something that rolls off the tongue. A cousin was given the ever-regal name Charles-Anthony which evokes a whirlwind of folk-heroes into our present-day thoughts. It reminded of armoured warriors on horseback in Medieval battle.

Consequently, my son was not the only Shawn in the family and so I wanted to add a twist. My father’s name was John and Shawn is a diminutive of John, so it would be like the son he never had. (I was an only child).

It was very necessary to give the baby a name which is an upright, positive name with a pleasant history behind it. I was very into the name Pasha about twenty years ago, when naming my then unborn son. Even though it is an honorary title for a high ranking officer in Egypt, in the Bible it means to rebel, transgress and revolt. Not good.

Although Torenne was not a difficult name for the nurses to figure out, before she left the hospital my daughter was called *Toreen*. I cringed at the nurse’s mispronunciation, because it was the first time Torenne would hear her own name. *Was it too late to change it?* I thought.

One of the few people who ever pronounced it fluidly the first time, was the flight check-in guy at BWI airport. Handing me the ticket with the gate circled, he announced, “Here’s your ticket, and this one is Torenne’s”. Suddenly, my face awoke with recognition at the sound of the *correct pronunciation* of Torenne’s name without the repetitive back and forth of trying to get the precise pucker of the lips to form the “T” and flashing teeth to complete the ‘Ren.

I discovered the way it was pronounced, gave an Americanized ring to it that I had never noticed before. It could now be held in regard with similar names like Cheyenne and Rhiann and Corinne, and now Torenne. Her name has finally found its place, its position to possibly becoming one of the top 100 names in baby books. I once was contrary to a title which had survived the ravages of time, bearing the mark of antiquity, but now I would like to see her name stand the test of time, with a few comebacks. We'll see.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *What inspired my literary submission was the naming of my now eight year old daughter and I wanted a name that was symbolic. As a writer, I'm always trying to find deeper meaning in my surroundings and so this is an exploration of that. Many of the messages around us are symbolic, whether found in pictures, advertising, or otherwise, so we are flooded daily with life's puzzles to decipher.*

*In Bermuda, derivatives of names and nicknames are popular, often showing up in the Obituaries. Certain names are also associated with different personalities, so this started as a cultural study, an exploration on my own little Island.*

*I think Why Torenne? would be important to readers who are seeking meaning in their personal brand.*

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** *LEE-ANN LILES is Bermudian with her B.A. in English from Notre Dame of University of Maryland. She is currently an MFA candidate with Baypath University in Boston and her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in Poetry Motel, Crack the Spine! The Bermuda Anthology of Poetry, The Bermuda Anthology of Poetry II, Caketrain Journal, Talking River Review, Damozel, Conte, The Nashwaak Review, Bottom of the World Magazine, The Call Number, BC Journal Vol. 1, BC Journal Vol. 2, BC Journal Vol. 3, Chronic Babe, PRECIPICe, 805 Lit & Art and NANNY FANNY. Her books Aerie: Short Stories and Of Gods and Fathers are in stores now.*