



The Letterpress Project

Q1. What are your earliest memories of books and reading? For example, did you have a favourite or inspirational book?

I used to love going to my local library and choosing my ten books every Saturday morning with my mum and sister. I'd start reading straight away in the car and read non-stop until I fell asleep at night. When I was in the infants, I remember sitting in the corner of the playground at break times reading my Enid Blyton books. I used to love her Secret Seven series so much. I became a foster carer last year with my husband, so we now have 5 children at home, so I often think my family is my own Secret Seven!

I feel really blessed that my mum encouraged me to read so much growing up and this is something I've passed onto my children. My foster children have developed such a love of books since joining our family and it has been wonderful to see how reading has changed their lives. Some nights we read six books and they still want more!

Q2. What inspired you to become an author / illustrator?

I did an English degree because I loved reading and wasn't sure what I wanted to do career wise. In my final year, there was a writing competition in my home town. I entered, thinking I didn't stand a chance but I won! It made me want to become a writer so I went to Falmouth University to do a Masters in Professional Writing. That course changed my life!

We had lots of visiting authors and it made me think 'why not me?' My tutor also said 'become an expert in something and then write a book about it.' So that's how my career started, writing non-fiction books about famous actors and singers I admire.

Q3. For you, what makes a successful book or illustration?

Ooh this is a good question. It's got to make you feel something and make you not want to put it down. I'm not a fan of cliff hanger books. I was devastated at the end of Kitty Peck and the Music Hall Murders by Kate Griffin, and even told Kate I wish the ending had been different because of what happened to one of the characters. (I read this book in 2014/15 and it still haunts me!) I like happy endings!

Q4. Do you have a specific audience in mind when you write your books / plan your illustrations?

I always think of myself as a child, and the children I visit during World Book Week, when I'm writing chapter books or picture books. For Rollercoaster Girl, I wanted the main character to be a shy girl, who stands up to a bully. I wanted her to give other shy girls the confidence to be themselves and not be afraid to go against the tide.

With my non-fiction books, I'm writing for that person's biggest fans and trying to find out facts that they don't know so they'll be surprised. For instance, in my Taylor Swift book, I found out that she has a giant picture of Ed Sheeran's face by her front door. Even her biggest fans were impressed with that fact!

Q5. What future do you think the physical book has? For example, do you think the electronic book will replace the physical book?

I have a kindle but I couldn't tell you where it is. Every now and again I try to persevere with it, but nothing beats a real book. I love seeing people reading real books on buses and trains, always want to high five them and say 'Yes!!!!!!' reading is so good. I love physical books and always will. Cuddling up with a child and reading a book together on the couch or in their bed is so special.

Q6. Are you a book collector? Is there a special book you'd love to own?

I'm not a book collector, I drastically cut down during lockdown and I tend to pass on books I love to friends or family when I've finished reading them. I don't want a book to sit on my shelves for years and not be read, when it can be enjoyed by someone else.

(Confession time, don't know whether to admit this or not. If I read a truly awful, offensive book – or my children get gifted one by a certain author – I don't donate it, I put it in my recycle bin because I don't want anyone to pick it up thinking it's a good read. I get satisfaction knowing it will get pulped.)