



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Caroline Lawrence

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

My mother used to read to me and my brother and sister, even after we learned to read, partly because we didn't have a television. I also remember my fourth grade teacher reading us *A Wrinkle in Time* at the end of each school day. Being read to is one of the happiest memories I have of childhood. But I loved reading on my own, too, and would often go up into our mulberry tree to devour *Nancy Drew* mystery stories. When I was younger, I loved *Curious George*, *The Cat in the Hat* and *Harold's Purple Crayon*. (I grew up in California, in the USA) When I was older I read Sherlock Holmes and adventure stories like *King Solomon's Mines* and *Bhowani Junction*. The book that changed my life was *The Last of the Wine* by Mary Renault. I read it aged 18 and it inspired my life-long passion for the Classical worlds of ancient Greece and Rome. Be careful what you read; a book can change your life!

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

I love stories in all forms and especially movies. If my mother gave me her joy of reading, then my dad gave me his passion for cinema. My first ambition was to write film scripts but it's easier to get a book published than a movie made.

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

A successful book for me is one that is fast-paced and unputdownable, but also one that teaches me something new. Movies and books are 'empathy machines' and I love stories that show me other times, places and people. I don't really like fantasy because I feel the world we live in is infinitely fascinating, especially the past. Having said that, I do love science fiction, especially the ABCD: Asimov, Bradbury, Clarke and (Philip K.) Dick.

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

I really write for myself! But because I have an inner age of 11, my books are most appreciated by kids. But lots of adults like them, too.

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

I think there will always be physical books and I love them, but I'm not sentimental about them. I also embrace electronic books, talking books.... any kind of story, in fact!

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

I'm not a book *collector* but rather a book buyer; my husband and I have over a thousand books on our shelves! In fact, we're always giving away books to make room for more.