



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Fiona French

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

One of my earliest memories of reading and books was devouring 1950's comic book stories when visiting my parents in the Middle East. It would have been the long Summer holiday, and my father was working for an oil company in Tripoli, Lebanon. In the town was a newspaper shop which sold comic books imported from America. They were marvellous ! I read the story of Macbeth in this way, complete with wicked Lady Macbeth and screeching witches. I can recommend the classics being introduced like this!

I did not have any favourite book but was omnivorous book worm.

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

After leaving school I went to Art College in South London where I studied Fine Art. I had many inspiring teachers, (Charles Keeping was one of them.)

A large step towards writing was encouraged by reading C G Jung's works and doing my thesis on ' The Mandala ' .

It is always hopeful to talk about inspiration, in real life it seems to be continuous work which sometimes leads to inspiration. A reasonably good idea is a good enough start.

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

A successful book is one that gets published ! A successful illustration is one that adds some extra meaning to the words. The picture and the writing should go hand-in-hand.

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

With ` Wild Wolf ` in particular the original story kept me searching for a happy ending to make it available to young children. The setting of the story sent me to Canada to explore all the background, especially the mountain scenery. When I have done this much research over many years, I am just focused on doing justice to the story.

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

A very short reply - what future does humankind have ? As long as there are people who read there will be real books. The bright or subdued light from electronic books is hard on the eyes, just simply turning pages is restful. (of course I am biased !)

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

I had a large collection of books, then five years ago I moved to a smaller house and had to reduce the number I owned. Now, I have three small bookshelves (& maybe a few tucked away in a cupboard) It was a hard decision but they went to a good cause - out into the wide world for other people to collect.