



## **An Interview with Verna Wilkins**

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

My earliest memories of books and reading are with my father. In the cool, tropical sunsets he told us stories. Some he made up himself and others were traditional story books from the Caribbean. I remember that some of them were quite funny. Brer Annancy tales in particular. Some were scary and I insisted on him transporting us to bed and closing the mosquito net tightly to keep us safe from the jumbies. My father had five daughters so he did not read Cinderella to us as she was far too weak a character.

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

Becoming an author was not because of inspiration but out of necessity. I had to learn the trade. I had to write! There was a dearth of picture books that included black children. The books in my children's classrooms, in the library and the book shops contained hundreds of books with white children. Children like mine were ignored. I was keen to give my children a sense of self, and personal value. I became an author and then a publisher.

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

For me a successful book or illustration is one that grabs my attention and holds it. It amuses and enraptures in equal measure. It leaves me with a desire to share it and to revisit it.

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

I write for all children. When I write my books and plan my illustration, I am acutely aware that I am writing for all children. However, because of the dearth of books with black children as the main protagonists, I make sure that I redress the balance and include positive images of black and children of all ethnic groups who have been traditionally ignored..

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

I believe that there is a place for the electronic book, but it will never replace the physical book. The future of the physical book for children is secure for the foreseeable future.

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

Q6. I am a dedicated book collector. My overfilled bookshelves bear testimony to my habit. I do not have a special book.