



The Letterpress Project
Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Cath Jones

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

I think it is safe to say that I have always been BONKERS about books. My childhood home was overflowing with them.

However, I found learning to read really tricky. My Mum finally decided to ignore the advice of school which was to leave the teaching to them and in a few short months she had taught me to read. I clearly remember the euphoria of reading a book from beginning to end, on my own. I was supposed to be asleep but was under the duvet with a torch. I emerged triumphant, to share my joy at having read the whole of *Camberwick Green* !

Three book moments stand out from my primary school days. Our headmaster used to come into class to read to us and I recall rushing home to enthuse about T.S. Eliot's *Old Possums book of Practical Cats* and Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Both books were immediately bought and I still have them.

The third moment was quite literally life changing. The librarian from East Sheen public library came in to my school to talk about libraries. I could not believe that I could borrow books for FREE! That very weekend I got my own library ticket. I was your stereotypical bookworm, in and out of the library reading whatever took my fancy. Eventually, I went on to qualify as a librarian!

My brother's bookcase was full of treasure. Biggles and adventure stories such as the Willard Price Adventure series took me to another world. I WAS Biggles, easing back the joystick and battling villains.

As I had learned to read so late I completely missed Enid Blyton. It seemed to me that my sister had hundreds of these boring books! I was just too old for them.

Q2. What inspired you to become an author?

I don't think I was ever *inspired* to become an author. Quite simply, I have always known I would write. English was my favourite and best subject at school and I had a rather crazy imagination.

The closest thing to inspiration would have to be the fact that my English teacher at school was an author. I remember being thrilled when I realised she had written my favourite book, *Timothy and Two Witches*. It is a magical book with beautiful illustrations. Margaret Storey is in her nineties now. It felt really good being able to send her a copy of *Bonkers About Beetroot* with a Christmas card this year to tell her that I was now an author too.

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

When I write stories I generally have two aims in mind. I want to keep the reader interested enough to keep turning the page and quite often I want to make them laugh.

When someone turns the page of *Bonkers About Beetroot* or *The Smart Hat* and laughs that is a *ker-ching* moment! Job done. That is success.

I really enjoy writing Early and Reluctant readers. To keep the story interesting enough to engage an early or reluctant reader and use appropriate words for different ability levels is quite a challenge. I am very proud of my eight readers published by Ransom Books, in particular *Ben's Jerk Chicken Van* and *The Ping Pong Gang*.

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

Each story I create is written for an imaginary reader, whether it be a child or an adult. I let my imagination go wild with early drafts and then I edit! That's when I think would this story be enjoyed by a reader or not.

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

I cannot imagine the electronic book ever being more successful than print books. The physical act of turning a page is just glorious! I did try and use e-books when I was travelling but it was not for me. I was in the Himalayas and ended up having to find a shop that sold books so I could buy a physical book.

Also, if I read a book and enjoy it I want to share it. You can't lend e-books as far as I am aware.

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

As an ex librarian it would be odd if I were not a book collector! At one point, I had in excess of 3000 books crammed into a tiny flat. All the bookshelves were full and books were stacked on the floor. Perhaps I was a bit of a book hoarder! Then I moved house and carried out a giant cull. In the past, if I enjoyed an author I wanted to read and *own* everything they had written! I currently limit myself to one book per author (mostly!) and constantly weed my bookshelves. I borrow hundreds of books a year from public libraries rather than buying *everything* I wish to read.

However, I do collect picture books, particularly first editions. Hardback picture books are gorgeous to own! There is no particular book that I would love to own. I will just have a browse in my local bookshop and see what takes my fancy!