



The Letterpress Project

# An Interview With Jasbinder Bilan

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

When I was growing up our house was one that was full of stories. We used to have big family gatherings and everyone reminisced and recounted the funny things that happened on our family farm in India.

As far as actual books were concerned my dad was very keen that we became members of the library and that was where my love of books was sparked. One of the first books that I loved was *The Lion The Witch And The Wardrobe* by CS Lewis. It opened up a world of imagination and adventure.

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

As a little girl I was always fascinated by books and stories and I can remember writing on small scraps of paper as soon as I could squiggle with a pen. In the beginning I didn't realise I was too young to write proper words, but I felt like a writer. It was my favourite thing to do.

I had some wonderful teachers at my Primary School and one of my teachers in particular really encouraged me with my writing. She entered one of my poems for a competition, which was such an exciting moment. I can remember her taking a photo of me blowing bubbles to go with the poem, which was about the magic of bubbles!

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

I think one of the most important things about writing a book is to be true to yourself and try not to mimic something that is already out there. A successful book

will be one that is written from the heart, with passion and with respect for your young reader.

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

I always try to write a book that my eleven year old self would have adored. I am also a teacher and I know that children are a picky audience, so I try to make it as exciting and gripping as I can while making sure that my reader can get right into the shoes of my main character and experience the story as if they were actually there.

**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 is a real magic in physical books. Publishers are going the extra mile to create books that children will love to hold and engage with, which is something you can't easily do with an EBook.

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

I have a lot of books on my shelves and I especially love illustrated books. Some of the picture books out there are amazing. When I was young one of my favourite books was an illustrated version of The Greek Myths so perhaps I'd love to hunt that down and I'm sure I'd adore it just as much now.