



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Griselda Gifford

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

I learned to read before I was four and loved books from the start. By the age of eight, *Black Beauty* was my favourite and I was once in trouble, reading in a field some distance from home, for an hour or so until I had finished the book. The adults were so worried – thought I was lost! Later I loved “*Little Women*” “*Ann of Green Gables*” and many other American stories including the *Green Meadow* stories (given to me by American friends) where there was another rabbit called Peter! I went on to read everything – including most of Dickens and all the Arthur Ransome stories.

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

I used to write short poems and short stories at school and later, at boarding-school, I wrote a book for children. Years later, after working for AM Heath, literary agents, as a secretary, I sent the revised story to a publisher. They returned it but wanted me to write another, aimed at the 8 – 10 age-group. I was excited when the Bodley Head published the new story, illustrated by Edward Ardizzone. Another 31 books followed, over the years.

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

I write a story *for* children, not just *about* children – with good characters to carry an exciting plot through. Some of my books had illustrations, like the first one – and many illustrators have enhanced both character and plot through their work.

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

I have written stories for adults but prefer writing for children as I think I can see things from their point of view – my own very varied childhood (eight schools and many moves) is still fresh in my mind. Maybe I have never grown up!

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

I hope the physical book will go on for ever - for myself, I prefer to turn pages and have a book in my hands and I believe many children think the same way.

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

I am not a collector but have shelves of my own and books by other authors, for children and adults. I can't think of a specific book I would like to own but I am pleased that I inherited a book from my Macdonald grandmother, which includes a first person account by Ranald Macdonald, aged 11, about his escape after the battle of Culloden. This I rewrote as "The Story of Ranald" which had excellent reviews, TLS and others.