



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Henrietta Nwagwu Rochford

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

As the youngest of six children my earliest and fondest memories of books was going to the library with my older siblings. We spent lots of time especially in the holidays at our local library taking part in reading, writing and drawing competitions, fun times. I would read lots of different types of books but I always loved a story with a happy ending. With so many amazing books I find it difficult to pick one book.

Q2. What inspired you to become an author?

Growing up as a child in the UK I read lots of books, but not all of the stories I could always relate to. As I grew older and became more self-aware I started to realise that there weren't many characters that represented me, my family and my every day experiences. This feeling continued when I started searching for books for my children. I started to write down and make notes of certain situations and conversations we would have as a family. My children are naturally very inquisitive and want to know about everything, which I love. They are conscious about their identity and as parents we try to make sure they are very comfortable and confident about who they are. I wanted to make sure that I contribute to telling their story and helping other children feel the same confidence. It is important that all children and people are represented.

Q3. For you, what makes a successful book?

For me, a successful book teaches the reader something new and exposes them to a variety of topics, which allows them to reflect and start healthy discussion about the new information learnt. When I am choosing children's books I want to see positive representations of all families like my own and others. I like my children to also read

about different cultures, families and places. Exposing them to and given them a broader understanding of the world in which they live.

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

Primarily, I write for all families, but do have in mind specifically multicultural families and families who generally do not see themselves represented in every day literature and base my stories on my own multicultural family, who I feel are not very included within today's variety of children's literature. I believe for a more harmonious society we need all children and families to be exposed to as much culture and diversity as possible.

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

I am hopeful and believe the physical book has a future especially children's books. It is important that our children learn to hold a book and turn the pages whilst learning to read. I think a child's bedroom, classroom, library etc is incomplete without a bookshelf filled with amazing books of all different sizes, shapes, colours and representation. I believe books should be part of all children's daily routine.

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

We are definitely book collectors and have a large collection of children's books in the children's bedroom. My favourite children's authors are Ifeoma Onyefulu (for books about Nigeria), Floella Benjamin (Author of 'My Two Grannies' and 'My two grandads my favourites of hers'), Trisha Cooke (Author of 'So Much') to mention a few. I personally read and collect a lot of different self-help books/motivational books/speakers. There isn't a special book currently that I have seen that I would love to own, however two of my personal favourite authors are: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chinua Achebe- they are both so amazing. I am always on the look out for their new releases.