



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Jackie Morris

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

My earliest memories of seeing books in any number was in the school library corner at Swan Lane School in Evesham. We didn't have many books at home and i loved seeing these huge picture books, face out on the shelves, like paintings you could open. Even then Brian Wildsmith drew me in. I loved his colour. I could talk more about it but at the time I knew nothing about how his design was so excellent, his drawing beautiful, his colour sublime. I just knew that each book illustrated by this person was beautiful.

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

I was desperate to be an artist, but so so very many people told me that it was impossible to make a living as an artist. My dad was a policeman, my mum was full time stay at home mum. People who came from a background like mine couldn't be artists I was told. Then one day I was home from school and I saw Nicola Bailey on Pebble Mill at One illustrating The Tyger Voyage. I looked around me at all the illustrations there were in the world, on cards and one books etc and i thought that if I tried really hard perhaps I could do that. I knew that I could get myself a part time job, and then I could paint, draw and learn. And maybe I could be an illustrator.

I don't know then about the lies grown ups could tell, nor the fact that sometimes it's not about how much money you ca earn at your job but how you spend your time that counts.

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

I love books where the pictures tell the story, Like Footpath Flowers. I love Where the Wild Things Are, such an adventure, beautiful pictures, beautiful design. I love Angela Barrett's books. Her paintings are so wonderful. I love colour, but also books like The arrival by Shaun Tan, beautifully drawn, each page gorgeous, and all in monochrome. And again no words.

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

Sometimes I have an audience in mind. Not always. Sometimes the story just takes over. What this actually feels like inside is this....I have an idea and kind of 'see' it in my mind's eye. I then muddle through trying to commit that vision to paper. It never works, but sometimes at the end of the day there is something passable there and I walk away and on to the next piece.

That is the most honest way I can describe how I work. But, in that muddle is about 40 years experience of moving coloured water around on paper, so I know how much water to paint to use, when to wait for paint to dry (which is when I do interviews etc) when to use wet on wet, and most important, when to stop.

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 this question has been proven to be out of date. Sales of kindles are falling as people find reading on a screen to just be not so satisfying. And books have become more beautiful in order to compete.

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

I do have many books, but am learning to let them go once I have read them. I passed on 99% of my children's books, as I would rather they were out in the world being read. To me, books on a shelf look dead. I want them to be in the hearts hands and minds of children.

I would love to have a US first edition Where the Wild Things Are. But better still I would love to have a Brian Wildsmith sketchbook. I do so love sketches.