



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An interview with Joanna Nadin

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

I was taught to read at a very young age and I can't really remember a time when I wasn't buried in a book, either at home, with my (still) much-loved Ladybirds, or in the town library, sitting in between the stacks, with a pile of Pullein-Thompsons (books were second only to ponies in my loves at that point).

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

I never set out to be a writer. I was far too busy wanting to be IN a book – to be George in the Famous Five, or Heidi, or Velvet Brown. That stayed with me into adulthood, and it was only after a string of jobs in TV and politics that I realised that, despite working in Downing Street, my life was never going to be as exciting as any of E. Nesbitt's creations. So, in a long parliamentary summer break, I decided to write a book of my own – the kind where I could play at being someone slightly more brilliant than I really was. Seventy-something books later, I'm still doing just that.

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

I suppose there are two measures – one, I like them to delight readers, two, they need to pay my bills. This is a job, not a hobby, so success is measured in not having to go back to a day job in politics.

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

I always know which age group I'm writing for (and their parents, a lot of the time). But mainly I write to make myself laugh or cry, and just hope others do the same.

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

It won't. Physical books sales are stronger than ever. I do use one to read manuscripts, and crime novels that I wouldn't otherwise keep on my shelves. But children's books I always buy in hard copy. As do most parents and children too.

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

I have a massive collection of original Ladybirds and Puffins. My most precious are my Joan Aiken *Arabel's Raven* series (my inspiration), James Thurber's *The 13 Clocks and the Wonderful O*, and a book called *The Reluctant Vampire* by Eric Morecambe (of Morecambe and Wise). The last of these I borrowed so often from our library they barred me from taking it out again, and I only managed to find a second hand copy a couple of years ago. It's a gem.