



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

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

I was never much of a reader when I was a boy – something I've written about in some detail in my memoir of childhood, *The Hidden Roads*. But! When I was eight and nine, I became utterly absorbed in *Our Island Story* by H. E. Marshall, brilliant stories no matter how jingoistic they sometimes are, and read them over and over again, and then began to write my own History of the British Isles.

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

No single thing - but, in this order: taking to head and heart the folk-tales my father said-and-sang to me when I was very young; curiosity about the objects in my childhood museum; needing to write down my thoughts and feelings as a teenager; serving as lit. editor for a university magazine; joining a publishing house (Macmillan) after graduating, and meeting real-life authors! Inspiration is *not* the word: rather, a slow forming of an intention – and then letting rip, all of a sudden, when I was 22.

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

I want it to challenge me, move me, and tell me more about myself. And, of course, the linguistic and technical skills involved; the awareness of layers in our lives; a sense of place, etc. etc!

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

No. Not so much specific as 'in round terms'. It matters a lot to me that irrespective of what age-group my publisher thinks a book of mine is for, it actually wins (in terms of age) a wider readership, including adults

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

No. All the evidence points to the ebook market having peaked. I think that the physical book and ebooks both have a future.

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

Yes. An illuminated manuscript!

Thank you very much for taking time to do this for us. We will advise you when we publish it on the website - www.letterpressproject.co.uk. Please return the completed interview to:

Karen Argent

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