



The Letterpress Project

An Interview with Christina Matula

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

When I was younger, I had a beloved illustrated compilation of fairy tales and folktales from around the world. It gave me a life-long curiosity about other countries and cultures. I also loved reading books with strong female characters, my favourite of which was Anne of Green Gables by fellow Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery. The main character, Anne Shirley, ever curious and optimistic, is also smart, strong, and full of grit. Something we can all aspire to be.

Q2. What inspired you to become an author?

It was a combination of things that happened all around the same time. The first was volunteering at a family literacy charity and learning how reading for pleasure can make a huge difference in outcomes for children in under-served communities. The second was seeing how my own kids' eyes lit up when they had a book in their hands. And lastly, it was about looking for but not finding a specific book – this happened during the Mid-Autumn Festival in Hong Kong when I learned about the legend of Hou Yi and Chang'e, the archer and the lady in the moon. I ran out to find a picture book about it in English to read to my children, but couldn't find one, so I decided to write one myself, which became *The Shadow in the Moon*.

Q3. For you, what makes a successful book?

Any book that brings delight to a reader, whether it's a picture book, a graphic novel, or a chapter book is successful. But for me, the most successful books are where the reader can either see their own experiences reflected (a mirror) or learn to empathize with someone who doesn't share their experiences (a window).

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

I love writing for middle-grade readers (ages 8-12). They are at an age where they are still close to home and family but are starting to explore and find their independence in the world.

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

There's no gadget that can beat the feel of a physical book in your hands – the texture of the pages, the sound of the cracking spine, or the way you can curl up on the sofa with it. That said, I love audiobooks, which are wonderful to listen to when I'm out walking the dog. Fresh air and a good book is almost a good a combination as a physical book with a cup of tea.

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

There are so many books I'd love to have on my bookshelf. I'm trying to read the ones I have before buying new ones and I'm also trying to use the local library more. But I would love to have a set of illustrated hardcover Jane Austen books – my paperback copies have not done well with overseas moves and years of humidity in Hong Kong.