



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Linda Newbery

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

I can remember reading and re-reading my favourite books as a young child. One I loved (though it was sad) was an abridged, illustrated edition of *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell. I also have fond memories of *The Weetabix Book of Birds*, which I think my parents got for me and my brother by sending in tokens from cereal packets. It had the most beautiful photographic illustrations, which fascinated me, as well as line drawings. Both books contributed to my love of animals and wildlife.

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

One author I loved in particular as a child, Monica Edwards (again, with strong interest in the natural world). I began with *Wish for a Pony* at the age of eight or so and went on to read all her books, 46 of them. What started as a conventional pony story developed into two series which encompassed far more. From eight on it was my ambition to be an author.

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

Not sure whether you mean one I've read, or one of my own, so I'll answer both! A successful book to me is one that repays a second, third or fourth reading; if it's worth reading only once, it hasn't succeeded, which means a worthwhile book must contain more than plot. For one of my own: it would be a book I can read years later without cringing, and even enjoy, because I will have forgotten many of the details.

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

That depends on what kind of book it is. I've published quite a few short, illustrated stories for young readers, for example ***Barney the Boat Dog*** and ***Cat Tales***. For those, I think of them in the hands of children who are just starting on chapter books, or alternatively being read aloud as a bedtime story. With ***Lob***, I wanted to think of it as a book for everyone from about seven to a hundred and seven, with the possible exception of teenagers. For my older novels, especially the young adult ones, I don't think so much about audience – the important thing is to write a book that pleases me.

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

The advent of e-books has seen publishers place new emphasis on making printed books beautiful objects to hold. I don't think anything will ever replace the pleasure of holding a book and turning the pages.

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

I suppose I am a collector, with so many books in my house that I struggle to find space for them. My husband keeps buying books and piling them up on tables, whereas I like mine properly shelved. So nowadays, unless I know I'll read a book again, I usually give it away once I've read it – and I use libraries a great deal to keep up with new publications. For these reasons I don't really covet particular books, but if I had the chance to buy first editions of the ***Flambards*** books by K M Peyton, with their Victor Ambrus illustrations, I certainly wouldn't turn it down!