



The Letterpress Project

An interview with Moira McPartlin

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

My first memory of owning books is from when I was about six years old. I won a school art competition and the prize was a Ladybird Craft book and *Ricardo and The Puppets* by Mary E Little, a story about a mouse who lives in a library. I grew up in a small village with no library. Every Saturday morning my mum and dad took me to the Carnegie Library in Dunfermline where I could choose four books. If I was lucky they sometimes treated me to a trip to the bookshop to buy my very own books. I loved any book that featured animals. A favourite is *Wish for a Pony* by Monica Dickens, but also classics like *Little Women*, *What Katie Did* and of course Enid Blyton. I still have most of these books now, fifty years later. When my boys were small I loved reading to them at bedtime. Roald Dahl was their favourite and I am happy to say their children also love Granny reading Roald Dahl to them at bedtime despite the fact that this tech smart generation of small children own iPads.

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

I have always been an avid reader and for as long as I can remember I have wanted to write a book. When I was small I owned a toy printing set and I would try to make my own newspaper, but it never quite worked out. When I was a teenager I filled notebooks with loads of dreadful poems and sketches. It wasn't until my family had grown that I seriously began writing. I worked in Finance and travelled all over the world on my own. I would write to pass lonely hours spent in airports, restaurants and hotel rooms. This time my notebooks filled with experiences and stories.

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

A successful book needs believable, well-rounded characters. I believe if a writer takes the time to develop a character fully, then that character can drive the story and the plot will take care of itself. Many writers might disagree but character driven stories always come alive for me. It is the same with illustrations. If an illustrator can bring out the essence of the character then the story will work.

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

I am the audience I write for. I write the books I want to read. I never think about the real audience until the book is written.

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

I believe there will always be a place for physical books. The walls of my house are filled with books I have read and reread through the years. I recently went on a two month trip and to save space read only ebooks. I longed for a physical book and the first night after I returned home I delighted in being able to cosy up in bed with a real book.

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

I own hundreds of books. I love owning books and returning and to favourites. I wouldn't call myself a collector although in 2015 I challenged myself not to buy any books for a year, to read the ones I owned or borrow from the library. The challenge was a success, and to reward myself the first book I bought in 2016 was the 1st book in the Bloomsbury Illustrated Harry Potter Series. I might collect these in future, this book is a thing of beauty and a joy to read.