



**The Letterpress Project**

**Author and Illustrator E-Interviews**

# **An Interview With Cat Weatherill**

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

I remember my parents' books more than my own. We were a working class family. My dad had left school at fourteen to work in a factory. But he loved reading, so in the Seventies they bought book collections from the Readers' Digest and other publishers. I am guessing they were bought on a monthly subscription plan? I remember the smart RD condensed books, with their grey hardbacked covers, different coloured spines and satin bookmarks. A whole row of them, kept in a smart new wooden bookcase on legs, with sliding glass doors.

**Q2. What inspired you to become an author?**

There were four things that came together, like an aligning of planets! But perhaps the most important one was a comment from an editor at Scholastic. I wasn't an author then. I had been touring primary schools for several years, leading workshops on playground games, so Scholastic had commissioned me to write a teachers' manual on the subject. When I delivered it, the editor sent me an email saying it had been a pleasure to work on the book because it was 'beautifully written.'

I was stunned! I had never dreamed of being an author. I wasn't even writing as a hobby. But here was an editor at a famous publishing house, telling me my work was 'beautifully written.' Really?! I began to wonder if I should try writing something else. That was the beginning! It took three years, but I wrote **Barkbelly**.

**Q3. For you, what makes a successful book?**

One which makes me care about the central character(s). I like to empathise, and find either myself or someone I know in the story. At the moment, I am reading Nick Hornby's 'High Fidelity, which is all about failed romances. I have just broken up with an obsessive record collector and am finding him on every page!

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

Not really, except in terms of age.

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

I think it has a secure future. I occasionally read on my Ipad, but find it far less enjoyable.

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

No, I don't collect books. I am quite ruthless with 'one in, one out' these days. I live in a tiny cottage and can have no more than two bookcases. When I moved here, I gave away or sold 75% of my story book collection. Being a performance storyteller, I had folk tales from all around the world. My storytelling friends were horrified. Couldn't believe I could do such a thing. But I have to say, I haven't missed a single one of them!

There is one book I would dearly love to get my hands on... My parents had a hardback book of the classic fairytales with extraordinarily vivid illustrations. It was a 70s book, so the colours were deeply saturated: kingfisher blues, fiery oranges, deepest purples. The illustration I most remember was for The Goose Girl, with the decapitated horse's head nailed to the city wall. I have no idea who published it, but it had an orange cover, possibly showing Aladdin and the genie? Dimensions approx 14 x 20 cm. I'd love to hear from anyone who has one!