

THE REBEL READING SOCIETY

Author Spotlight



Camilla Chester

When did you decide that you wanted to become an author?

I've always wanted to be an author. My grandpa was a detective novelist so I knew that being an author was a real job and I was fascinated with Children's Authors. They were like rock stars in my world because they could create all these amazing stories. I still can't believe I'm a real-life author. A real one! Me!



Did you read lots as a child - if you did, where did you mainly read? If you didn't, what was the reason?

Yes, I read a lot, anywhere and everywhere but my sister was even more of a bookworm than me. Everyone thought she would be the writer in the family. We did weekly library visits as a family and I was a proud member of the *Puffin Club*. I had my own books which I alphabetised. I would've loved to be a librarian.

What was your favourite book as a child and why?

Can't possibly pick just one...there were so many, plus it depends what age you're talking. There were a few that I read around the age I write for (7-11) that I really remember because of how they made me feel. I could completely lose myself in them; books like *Tom's Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce and *The Giant Under the Snow* by John Gordon and *The Day Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr. Amazing writers. For fun I read *Asterix* and *Simon's Cat* - I love a good comic. I've never outgrown picture books either and still have my original copy of *Ferdinand*.



How does it feel to see your books in shops and being sold?

It's the best feeling in the whole entire world. My actual dream is to see someone reading one of my books on a train, tapping them on the shoulder and saying, "*I wrote that*". I bet it feels great for illustrators too. What a buzz!

What is the best part about being an author?

Other than seeing your real life books in a real life bookshop and/or library? Loads of things are brilliant - it really is a fantastic job. I've done so many cool things, like open school libraries (cutting ribbons with garden shears), judging writing competitions and I even had 500 kids up disco dancing at the International Literary Festival in Berlin. However, the very best thing is when you hear from readers. *Call Me Lion* is one of those books that has literally changed people's lives for the better and I am incredibly proud of that. It's hugely humbling.



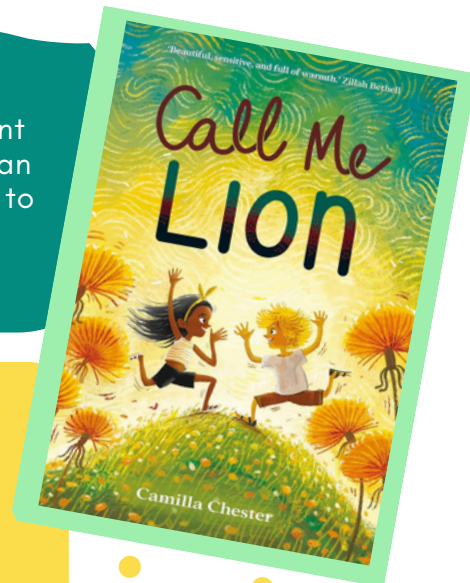
Art by: Irina Avgustinovich

What are the 'not so fun bits' in being an author?

Waiting. There's a lot of waiting for things and I'm not a very patient person. I'm trying to be better! Also the dramatic highs and lows can be a bit much. One minute you're a celebrity, the next you're back to cleaning the bathroom. Oh, and there really isn't much money in it either - at least not for me.

Why do you think it is important for children to read?

Nobody likes being told you have to do something and it can be hard learning to read, particularly if children are dyslexic, or their first language is not English, or they're facing some other barrier, but I know, that once a child finds the right book the whole world will open up for them. Reading is honestly the most magical and wonderful thing children can do - they just need to have the choice to find the right book(s) for them.



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What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

I want to write books that land, that readers remember, that feel powerful and important and make a positive difference. How incredible that I'm potentially creating books that will inspire new writers, that show joy and empathy and connection. My inspiration comes from life - look around; stop, listen, smell, taste, touch - we live in an incredible world, filled with amazing things. There are thousands of stories to tell.

Who gives you feedback on your drafts and how do you act on the feedback?

Fellow, trusted writers first, then my agent, then my editor. I also often write stories that are for, or feature real people in my life, so their feedback is always the most vital. I have never-ending drafts but I accept that it's part of the process to create the best book I can. It takes a lot of time, and tests my patience considerably, but I trust professional feedback so usually go with changes suggested.



More Info



More Info



Finally, if you could read for an hour, on your own, anywhere in the world - where would it be?

Well now, that's the beauty of reading - it really doesn't matter where you are because if the book is good you'll be inside the pages.

Art by: Irina Avgustinovich