

THE REBEL READING SOCIETY



Author Spotlight

Eva Wong Nava

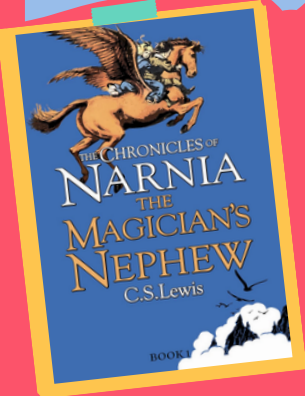
When did you decide that you wanted to become an author?

I remember wanting to be a journalist and write about things that were happening in the world. I think I was about ten or eleven then? I grew up hearing stories about the Japanese Occupation of Malaya during World War II from my father and paternal grandmother. Later when I was 12, I wrote a short story by hand about a girl who time travelled to the past to rescue her father, a young boy, from the Japanese. This story won a competition at my local library. This told me that I could make up stories about things that I care about and they could be read by people who care about the same things.



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

I was a precocious child, as my mother will testify. I was also a rebellious one, as my mother will confirm. During the day, I read on the floor lying down on my belly when I should be doing homework. At night, I read under the covers with a torchlight when I should be asleep. I loved how the books I read helped me escape to another place, time, and world. I felt that these books were my friends and we understood each other.



What was your favourite book as a child and why?

I read a lot of fiction as well as fantasy and fairy tales as a child. I grew up reading books by British authors like Enid Blyton, Diana Wynne Jones, and C.S. Lewis, as well as American authors like Mark Twain and Carolyn Keene. I loved The Chronicles of Narnia series by C.S. Lewis. And the Nancy Drew mysteries by Carolyn Keene kept me up at night. I also loved stories from around the world, like Greek and Roman myths and One Thousand and One Nights. I loved Heidi, the mountain girl, by Johanna Spyri and I have vivid memories of reading about Helen Keller in her memoir, The Story Of My Life. It was only until the end of the book that I realised Helen Keller was a real person. But, my favourite book is still The Magic Faraway Tree by Enid Blyton. Blyton's characters are lively and funny. I love Dame Washalot and Saucepan Man, Moonface and Silky, and all the antics they get up to. And a land above a tree that takes you faraway - that's the best way to see the world and make new friends.

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

Euphoric and unreal! I still can't believe it most times.

What is the best part about being an author?

I love writing for children. So I'd say that's the best part. Writing for children means I get to do school visits to introduce my books to schools in the UK and other parts of the world. That would be the second best part. School visits allow me to have conversations with students, teachers, booksellers and librarians, and learn from them. This has helped me write better stories. I also love being part of an author community like Rebel Reading Society, where many of the authors are my friends. It's always great to discuss ideas and share tips on writing with my friends and colleagues.

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

Authors have to live with rejections all the time. Not all our stories get published, as children's publishing is the most gate kept division in the industry. In a way, this is good because children are the most important and impressionable readers, and they deserve good quality books. On the other hand, it can dent your confidence as a writer when your stories are rejected by your agent and editors again and again. Publishing is an opaque business and an author will never really know what makes one book successful and another not.



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

This year, 2026, is the National Year of Reading. This campaign is a result of the devastating data indicating that we have a reading crisis at hand. Reading is important because books are time travelling devices. They transport the reader to another time, world, and dimension that the internet and social media cannot. Books are windows and mirrors. They show children that there's a bigger world outside their bedroom window and they reflect the reality and diversity of the world we live in. For me as a child, books showed me that we are more similar than different.



What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

Many things and people inspire me to write. Foremost, my books are inspired by my heritage and culture, and my children. They are also inspired by my philosophy and well being practices, for example, Qigong and Taichi. Qigong is breath work and Taichi is mindful movement. These are two ancient Chinese well being practices.

Before I start to write, I meditate to clear my mind and then I breathe in and out, and let my breath lead my mind to how I want my stories to take shape.

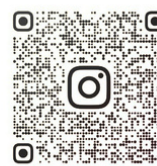
My stories are also inspired by my lived experiences - as a mother of two daughters, a co-parent, a former English teacher, an ethnic Chinese of the global majority diaspora.

And lastly, I'm obsessed by retelling folktales and fairy tales. These ancient stories that speak truth to power inspire me to rewrite them to make them more accessible for today's readers.

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

My awesome editors give me feedback. And since I'm published by several houses, they are a few. Maria and Alice at Walker Books are simply the best - they really have a good eye for stories that come from the heart. I've learned so much from Julia at Scholastic UK and also from Lucy and Arundhati at Hachette. And my daughters, who are avid readers, often tell me what they think about my book ideas and stories. I'd say I'm pretty good at taking feedback. This comes from being a freelance editor myself. I may not always agree with my editors, but I will find a way to solve the problem. Problem solving is at the very core of what editing is, after all. And keeping an open mind and line of communication is also very important when it comes to feedback.

Join us!



@THE_REBEL_READING_SOCIETY

More Info



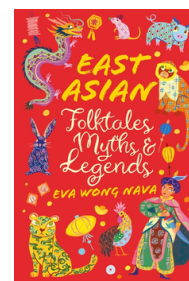
More Info



More Info



More Info



More Info



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

My in-laws have a chalet in the Italian Alps that faces Monte Bianco, the highest mountain in Western Europe. It's there where I'm in a state of mind that I've come to call my Heidi Moment. I'm relaxed in the mountains. The leaves murmur gently in the summer breeze and the peal of church bells at specific times of the day is transporting during the winter. It's here where I can totally let go of everything and just immerse myself in a book.