



### Agnes Monod-Gayraud

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

I always wanted to be an author, ever since I was in school. The trouble was that I was too shy to really dive into writing because I was too scared that I wouldn't be good enough to publish a 'real' book. It took me a long time to realise that writing is a skill and a craft that gets improves through practice, just like any other skill. In other words, effort and dedication are more important than ambition or even talent. It wasn't until I was an adult that I felt 'brave' enough to make the decision to become an author and share my ideas with book publishers and, of course, readers.



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

I read loads as a child, mainly because I grew up in a single-parent household in New York City and my mother worked long hours. Every day after school, I was either in the library reading or getting books that I would then devour at home. Books were a way of escaping reality, which could often be rather dull or challenging. Books allowed me to explore new worlds and ways of seeing of understanding other people and places.

**What was your favourite book as a child and why?**

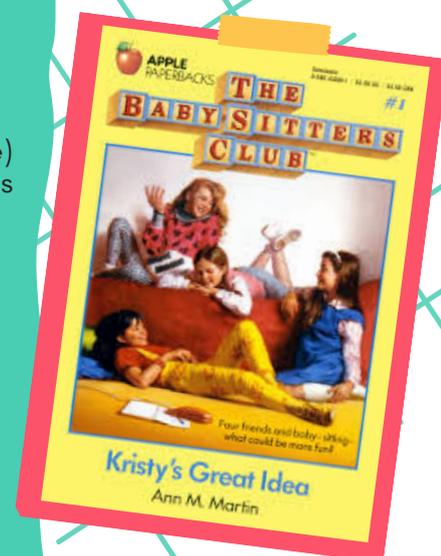
There's already a clue in the answer to the previous question... the heroine of my favourite book, *A Little Princess*, is known to 'devour' books. That idea really stuck with me my whole life. This book drew me in with the drudgery and hopelessness of Sara's situation and inspired me with its relatively happy ending. I read this book over and over, nearly living through the action as if it was happening to me in real life. I think I also took solace in the fact that many children have difficult lives and that it wasn't just me. Also, I often reread the *Five Children and It* series by E. Nesbit, as well as ALL the *Sweet Valley Twins* (and *High*) books, as well as the *Ramona* series and *The Babysitters Club*.

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

Funnily enough, when I spot any of my books (i.e. written or translated by me) it always feels like it's someone else's book, perhaps a very good friend's book. Once the wonderful reality does sink in, it feels quite amazing.

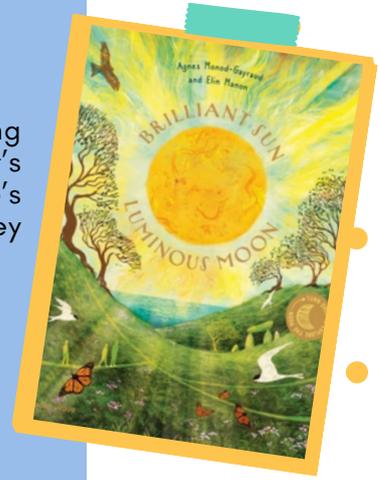
**What is the best part about being an author?**

The best part is finding out that someone is moved by some element of your book. For a children's book author, seeing a young person being interested and inspired by your work is like no other feeling. It's incredible to have that sort of impact on your fellow humans!



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

The tough bit of being an author is coming out of your shell and being vocal about your work if you are a rather shy person by nature. It's certainly a challenge, but it does come with its positive sides. There's nothing better than meeting with readers and finding out what they enjoyed about your book (and also what they didn't enjoy as much).



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

Reading opens doors to other worlds, giving children a chance to learn and explore worlds they don't always get to visit in real life. Reading gives insights into other voices and other ways of looking at the world, which is essential for understanding who we are as living beings and how to keep making the world better for everyone.

## What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

I find that the greatest inspiration is the magic underlying nature, the unseen myths and secrets that lie beneath everything we can see with our eyes. All the things that we can feel with our hearts and the role of stories in bringing those feelings to life and sharing them with others. The wonder of life and humanity is the biggest gift of all, overall and in writing.

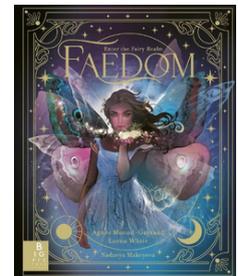


## Who gives you feedback on your drafts and how do you act on the feedback?

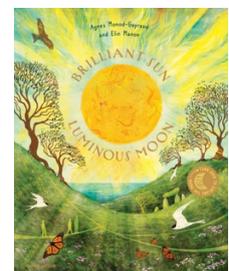
Most often, my feedback comes from my editor and yes, it can be challenging sometimes if the feedback requires a substantial revision. When I get feedback for a story I'm working on, my method is to take a deep breath, read through the comments, and then I put it aside for a week to let it all 'marinate' in my mind. Then I tackle the revision one bit at a time so that it's not so overwhelming.



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

The location wouldn't really matter if I'm already reading because my mind would be elsewhere, but I do find that Holland Park is the perfect setting for settling down on a picnic blanket in the Sun and indulging in a book.