



### Abena Eyeson

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

My writing journey started about nine years ago. When I was younger, I loved acting and performing on stage. I haven't acted for a very long time, but that creativity didn't go away. I was inspired to channel it into writing after I had my children because most of the books they were reading didn't have characters that reflected them. After thinking about it for a long time, I decided to see if I could create fiction for children, always putting a Black child at the heart of the story. I found that I really enjoyed writing stories and creating characters. That's when my dream to become a published author was born.



#### 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 loved reading when I was a child. I would read anywhere. But I loved reading in bed and would sleep with my book under my pillow, waking up early to continue reading.

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

I also enjoyed reading Nancy Drew and the Famous Five. I loved the escapism of going on adventures with them and solving mysteries. Their lives were very different from mine but reading allowed me to step into their worlds for a bit.

Within reason, children should be able to read freely and find the books that appeal to them, whether it be a contemporary story set in real life, fantasy, poetry, non-fiction or whatever.

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

I still pinch myself. It's still very, very exciting.

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

When readers connect with a story that you have created and can see themselves in it or can relate their real life experiences to it, it is such an amazing feeling.

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

There are lots of challenges to overcome to get your story published like trying to get a literary agent and then a book deal followed by you worrying if anyone will want to read or buy the book. That is why resilience and perseverance are important attributes to have as a writer.

Writing a book does take time and lots of redrafting as well as editing, so that can be a challenge.



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

I think that children being read to and reading for themselves is an important way for them to connect with the world as well as developing a deeper empathy and understanding for people who may not be like them. Reading allows kids to discover new worlds, communities and other ways of living that may be different from their own. It also helps to fire up their imagination. They can escape into another world for a bit.



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

My children are the reason why I started writing fiction for children. They continue to be my inspiration. I think it is important to me that they and other kids read positive tales about children overcoming whatever challenges they face.

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

My editor is the main person who gives me feedback. But I also belong to a critique group with a small group of fellow writers I trust who give me feedback on my early drafts if I ask for it. I also give them feedback if they want it.

I am actually good at receiving feedback. Sometimes I need time to properly digest it. If I don't agree, I am able to make it known.

## FUN FACTS!

I like hanging out with my husband and kids as well as my extended family and friends.

I love laughter and conversation.

I enjoy movies, books, music - and good food too!

When I am cooking, I often have music blaring, stopping for a dance now and then.

I do like cheese and onion crisps.



## More Info



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

If I was combining reading for an hour with going to a country I have always wanted to visit, I would be reading for an hour in Botswana. It's a country I have wanted to visit for a long time, but haven't been to yet. If I could read for an hour, I would do that in Gaborone and then explore the city and visit a university friend who lives there with her family.