THE REBEL READING SOCIETY

Author Spotlight

Claire Hatcher-Smith

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

As soon as I realized the difference between real and imaginary! I spent most of my childhood daydreaming and, unsurprisingly, I also loved reading- stepping into other people's imaginary worlds and trying them on for size. I was, however, a bit slow at putting the two things together. Even slower at realizing I could actually write a book myself. Well, into my twenties...

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

Reading was my second favourite pastime, after daydreaming. I read everywhere. Bed, of course, especially under the covers with a torch. At the kitchen table (I was that kid, reading every inch of the cereal box). Hanging upside down off the sofa. Stretched tummy down on damp ground under the willow tree at the end of the garden. The only place I've never been able to read is in a car.

What was your favourite book as a child and why?

Just one? That's hard. But if I'm really not allowed Mary Plain and Olga de Polga and every Drina book ever written, not to mention Gerald Durrell, I would have to choose The Secret Garden. I was completely whisked away- to India and the Yorkshire Moors and that cold, cavernous house filled to the brim with secrets. It was also the first time I'd come across a strange, awkward little girl like myself in a story. And the magic, oh the possibility of magic...

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

Bonkers and utterly brilliant. Even better is seeing an actual kid, completely unrelated to me, with Mizzy in their hands.

What is the best part about being an author?

I get to write more stories about little girls like Mary Lennox who don't quite fit. And then I get to meet real kids who've read about my characters and see themselves in print for perhaps the first time too.

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

It is very hard not to compare my stories to other people's books, to keep believing in my own voice. I swing wildly between thinking I'm producing the funniest, most meaningful story ever, to looking at my laptop screen and seeing complete drivel. Chatting with other authors, this seems to be normal but I think I'm particularly good at it.

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

Reading lets us step into other people's lives. It gives us an understanding of places and people and experiences we wouldn't otherwise have access to. It gives us hope and widens our lenses and offers a glimpse of everything that might be possible, including the magic I found in The Secret Garden.

What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

I'm autistic and I've worked for over 30 years now with all sorts of neurodivergent kids. I wanted to help show those children that they too can be the star of a story. But I also wanted to give everyone the opportunity to view life from a different perspective. To see that we all have different ways of being in the world and that no single way is necessarily better than another.

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

My agent and my editors are my go-tos. It's scary sharing my first attempts but I know that they have the experience and insight to make my work better. And they're usually pretty gentle...

More Info

More Info

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

Ooh, I'm lucky to live in one of the most beautiful places on the planet (Vancouver Island) but, based on the law that says we always hanker after what we don't have, I would have to say a beach on Corfu, with white pebbles, turquoise sea and a tortoise ambling past (see my previous mention of Gerald Durrell...)

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