



### Jo Cotterill

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

I was in my early twenties. I was working as an actor/musician and while I loved the jobs I had, there were gaps in between when I was auditioning and waiting, and doing boring office jobs to earn money. I felt like I wanted to do something creative and so I signed up for a 'writing for children' course. Once I started, I found it addictive! I wrote story after story to send to publishers but it was a full three years before I wrote something good enough to be published!



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

I learned to read very early, before I was even old enough to go to school. I used to go to the library and borrow as many books as I could. I took a book everywhere, but the places I probably spent the most time reading were in my bed (sometimes under the covers with a torch) and on the toilet!

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

I loved the Famous Five stories - smugglers sounded so glamorous! But I was particularly drawn to anything about the theatre: I read *The Swish of the Curtain* by Pamela Brown and *A Dream of Sadler's Wells* by Lorna Hill so often that their pages fell out!

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

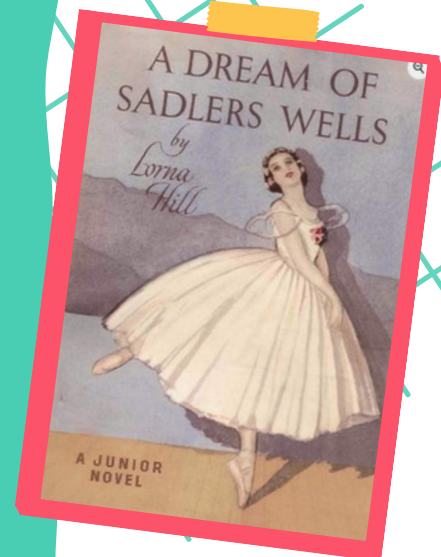
Amazing. I've been published for over twenty years and it still makes me swell with pride to see my name on a book in a shop.

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

Having almost total control over the way I work. I can work in bed, in my pyjamas, or get up and write at 2am if I want! If I don't feel well, I can take a day off without having to let anyone know. That's a very rare thing in an adult job.

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

Writing is hard. People think that authors must conjure up words like magic spells, but the truth is, that only happens about 5% of the time. Making your brain work super-hard when it doesn't want to can be tricky! I have autism and ADHD so I can be brilliant at coming up with ideas but not very good at completing the story. You also have face a lot of rejection in this job. I've written LOADS of books that have been rejected by publishers.



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

I think it's important for EVERYONE to read. Did you know that your unconscious brain doesn't recognise the difference between fictional worlds and real ones? So reading gives you the opportunity to feel things and go places you can't in real life. It encourages us to think and feel deeply, which I think is important for everyone, especially at the moment because our world is full of things we only connect with on a surface level.



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

I'm not quite sure. Ideas come from everywhere, and I don't really know why I feel so compelled to write but I think maybe because stories are how I make sense of the world.



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

No one reads my drafts before my editor. A publishing editor is like a very strict English teacher, and she tells me what's not working and then I have to fix it. I used to hate rewriting but I've got better at accepting it now! It's very rare that I disagree with my editor - she's almost always right!



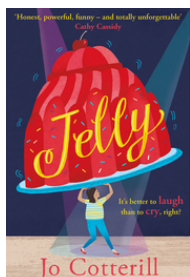
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## Finally, if you could read for an hour, on your own, anywhere in the world - where would it be?

My first thought was by the sea, but I think I would just stare at the sea instead of the book! So I'm going to go for a cosy cottage in the woods, with a log fire, blankets, and no one else around. I enjoy reading the most when there's no one to interrupt me!