

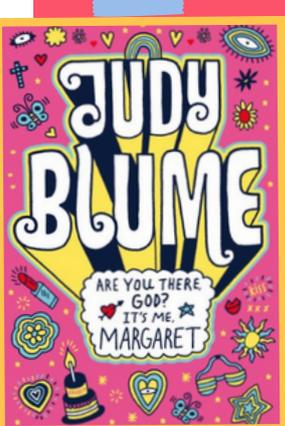


Kristina Rahim

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

When I was about...43! I have had lots of jobs over the years - the most recent being a property developer, which I did for about fifteen years. However, when Covid and the lockdowns hit, my building projects had to take a back seat while I took on the role of home school teacher for our two daughters while my wife's job continued.

During that time, I used to make up stories with our girls (who were in Year 1 and Year 3 at the time) when we went out on our daily walks. Before I knew it, I was using my free time to scribble down story ideas and create new characters. After reading books on the craft of writing and taking some online courses, I was completely hooked. I knew this is what I wanted to do.



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

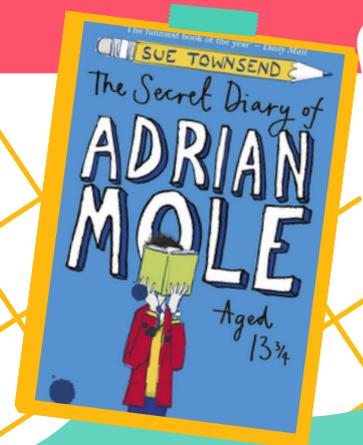
I definitely read, but I wasn't a huge bookworm. Movies and music were more my thing when I was younger (and are still two big loves of mine, as well as books!). I moved house a lot growing up, but I remember in one home, my bedroom had a built-in wardrobe with sliding doors, and I used to line up my books in a row along the bottom, because I didn't have a bookshelf. I used to love spending time in my room listening to music. Sometimes, if I wanted to feel cosy, I would take a blanket and squeeze INSIDE my wardrobe with a torch and slide the door shut to read. It felt like my own little secret hideaway where I could escape into whatever story I was reading at the time. I'd forgotten about doing this until thinking about this question, so thank you for that memory!

What was your favourite book as a child and why?

I used to love Judy Blume books, and I was also a massive fan of The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole. I think I enjoyed these stories because they talked about the lives of kids who were a similar age to me, so I could relate to a lot of what they were going through. It's interesting to me now that I have ended up writing these kinds of contemporary children's fiction stories myself!

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

Amazing! Every time I see a book of mine in a bookshop, library or school library, I can't help but have a massive grin. It's also a strange feeling, to think these words went from my head to scribbled notes, to my laptop, back and forth to my agent and then my editor, to then finally land on a bookshelf for people to pick up and actually read! Even though that is obviously the main aim for all aspiring authors, when it does actually happen, it feels amazing, and strange!

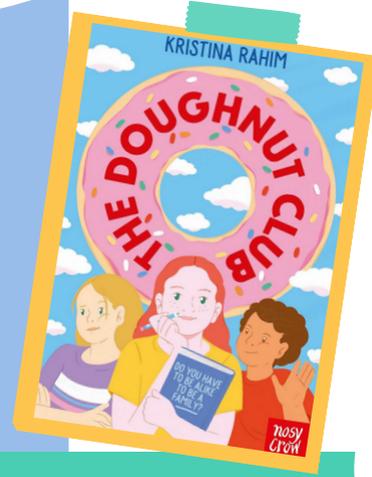


What is the best part about being an author?

There are so many brilliant parts of being an author, it's hard to choose just one. I love it when a shiny new idea pops into my head. That first feeling of 'Oh, this could be fun' and then scribbling down random thoughts around this idea, trying to see if I can make it work. The first time holding a finished copy of a new book - that is special. And more recently, I've realised how incredible school visits can be. This was the part of the job I was probably the most nervous about, but so far, I've been absolutely loving meeting young readers and getting them excited about exploring their own story ideas.

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

The tough parts of being an author, for me, are in the edits – which is one of the biggest parts of writing a book! You can feel proud of yourself when you finish that first draft of the shiny new idea, but you know, this is just the start! That first draft will be chopped and changed, chapters moved, characters deleted, plot twists changed. There is no short cut to this process either. It has to be done in order to make the story the best it can be, and it can be really tough. But I know now, all that work really is worth it, and the right story will find it's way through in the end. I just need to make sure I have endless cups of tea and multiple packets of crisps to keep me going during this stage!



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

Reading can open so many worlds up to children. Whether it's books, graphic novels, comics, magazines, non-fiction texts, all of these are filled with new ideas and information that can enhance any child's life. The more children lose themselves in words, the more they can discover.

I think it's important for children to see themselves reflected in stories, but I also believe the more children read books which give an insight into lives different to their own, the more inclusive and understanding the next generation will learn to be.



What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

To begin with, the inspiration for my books came from my own family. My wife and I started to notice as our daughters got older, they were getting more questions from their peers about their family set up. When they were young, we turned to picture books to help explain how they came into the world, but as they got older, there were fewer books which included donor conceived characters. I decided to try and change this and was inspired to write my own.

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

The first person to read anything new now is my brilliant agent, Silvia. She will then give her initial thoughts and suggestions for me to work on before it then goes to my editor. My editor and I will then go back and forth with edits until we get the story in the best shape we can.

Getting feedback is quite a rollercoaster. I love the collaboration of working with someone else on an idea, but often, when those editing notes first hit my inbox, I have to take a deep breath before I read them. I know a lot more work will be needed once I've read these notes, which can sometimes feel daunting. But I also know that the story will always be better for it afterwards.



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

On a sun lounger by the sea somewhere. The sound of the waves, warm sunshine and a good book is heaven to me.