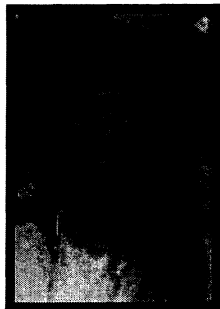


The Write Stuff: Fantasy Author Profiles



Name: (Jennifer) (Carolyn) Robin McKinley

Birth Date: November 16, 1952

Place of Birth: Warren, Ohio, USA

Notable Books:

Spindle's End (2000)

Rose Daughter (1998)

The Outlaws of Sherwood (1988)

The Hero and the Crown (1984)

The Blue Sword (1982)

Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast (1978)

Awards

ALA Best of the Best Books for Young Adults
(*Beauty*, 1966-1988)

Newbery Honor Book (*The Blue Sword*, 1983)

Newbery Award (*The Hero and the Crown*, 1985)

Biography

McKinley spent her childhood and teen years moving from place to place as her father got transferred to different countries with the navy. Everywhere she went, books were her constant companion. As a

teenager she began to dream up elaborate stories about an imaginary land called Damar – a land that would later become the setting for her award winning books *The Blue Sword* and *The Hero and the Crown*. To help pay the bills while she took time to start writing the stories down, she worked as a research assistant, a bookseller and a horse trainer. Then, in the middle of writing the Damar series the idea came to her to rewrite the story of Beauty and the Beast. *Beauty* was picked up by the first publisher who saw it, and became an instant classic.

McKinley's writing career was not always so fortunate, however. Shortly before *The Blue Sword* was completed, a horse fell on her hand, delaying work on the novel for six weeks. When *The Hero and the Crown* was almost through the writing stage, she fell and broke an ankle. It was good for the book because McKinley had nothing else to do but type, but it prompted her to joke that when her next book neared the end she would have to lock herself in a padded room. Luckily, the break did not have a negative effect upon her writing, as the book won the Newbery Award for Young Adult Fiction. In her acceptance speech she admitted to the audience, "the stories may simply happen to me, but I have chosen to accept the responsibility to write them down as best I can."

What seems to draw readers to McKinley's work is that she writes about "girls who do things." Her heroines are strong, courageous, loyal and honourable, but they do not forget that they are girls. She mixes just enough romance with her adventure to satisfy a wide range of interests.

McKinley continues to write - her most recent work being *Sunshine* (2003) - and now lives in England with her whippets, plenty of rose bushes, and her husband, the writer Peter Dickinson.



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Name: Kenneth Opper

Birth Date: August 31, 1967

Place of Birth: Port Alberni, British Columbia, Canada

Notable Books:

Airborn (2004)

Firewing (2002)

Sunwing (1999)

Silverwing (1997)

Dead Water Zone (1992)

The Live Forever Machine (1990)

Awards

Governor General's Award for Children's Literature (*Airborn*, 2005)

Michael L. Printz Honor Book (*Airborn*, 2005)

ALA Notable Book for Children (*Airborn*, 2005)

YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers (*Airborn*, 2005)

CLA Book of the Year for Children (*Silverwing* and *Sunwing*, 1998 and 2000)

Hackmatack Atlantic Readers' Choice Award (*Silverwing*, 1998)

Air Canada Literary Award (for most promising Canadian writer under 30) 1995

Biography

Oppel got his start in writing in 1985 when a friend of the family gave a copy of his manuscript for *Colin's Fantastic Video Adventure* to Roald Dahl, who passed it on to his literary agent, who liked it well enough to get it published. He obtained his BA from the University of Toronto and wrote *The Live Forever Machine* as a course assignment in his final year. After graduation he got married and moved to England with his wife while she completed studies at Oxford. He now lives in Toronto, but has also called Victoria, BC; Halifax, NS; Newfoundland; and Dublin home.

Oppel is one of Canada's most successful fantasy authors, and has written over 20 books for children and young adults, including picture books (*Peg and the Yeti*) and chapter books (*A Bad Case of Ghosts*). He says that his ideas come from anywhere and everywhere, and that it is not getting ideas that is the hard part, but turning them into a good book. "I find writing very hard work, and I write and rewrite my stories many times before I am happy with them. I think inspiration is a small part of the writing process; perseverance is equally, if not more, important!"

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Name: J(oanne)K(athleen) Rowling

Birth Date: 1965

Place of Birth: Bristol, England

Notable Books

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (2005)
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2003)
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2000)
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (1999)
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (1998)
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (1997)

Awards

British Children's Book of the Year (*Philosopher's Stone*, 1998)
ALA Best Book for Young Adults (*Philosopher's Stone*, 1999)

FCBG Children's Book Award (*Chamber*, 1999)
Carnegie Medal (*Prisoner*, 2000)
Whitbread Children's Book of the Year (*Prisoner*, 2000)
British Book Awards Author of the Year 1999
Order of the British Empire 2000

Biography

Rowling moved around a lot when she was young because both of her parents were in the Royal Navy. To occupy her time she would make up elaborate plays which she and her sister would act out. When she was nine, her parents moved again, to a rural community called Tutshill, outside of Chepstow, Wales. Around the same time, Rowling's favourite grandmother, Kathleen died. Rowling would later adopt her name as a tribute when she needed an extra initial. When she was a teenager her mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Instead of going through a time of recovery, like most people with MS, Rowling's mother got progressively worse. Her death in 1990 was devastating for Rowling. She had started writing about Harry at this point, but now she could write about his feelings for his dead parents on a much deeper level.

Before Rowling started writing, she studied French at the University of Exeter, worked for Amnesty International in London, and taught English in Portugal. While there she got married and had her first child. (She now has two children.) After nearly six years of writing and trying to get the book published, Bloomsbury finally offered to pick up the manuscript, and Harry Potter, the boy wizard, was introduced to the world.

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Name: O.R. Melling (aka Geraldine Whelan)

Birth Date: c. 1952

Place of Birth: Dublin, Ireland

Notable Books

My Blue Country (1996)
The Hunter's Moon (1993)
The Singing Stone (1986)
The Druid's Tune (1983)

Awards

CLA Young Adult Book Award (*Druid's Tune*, 1984)
Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award (*The Hunter's Moon*, 1994)

Biography

Although she was born, and currently resides in Ireland, Melling grew up in Canada. Life was hard for her and her family as her father struggled to support ten children as a carpenter. When she graduated from grade twelve, her parents told her she had to go to work instead of attending grade thirteen. All of her hopes for attending university were dashed, even though she was at the top of her class academically. Melling resented her parents for forcing her to quit school and left home. Their decision turned out to be a blessing in disguise, however, as it gave Melling the opportunity to live in Malaysia for a year as part of Canada World Youth – a cultural exchange organization. (Her future book - *My Blue Country* - would be based upon this experience).

After Malaysia, Melling moved to Ireland and took jobs working as a barmaid, bank clerk, and publisher's assistant. She adopted her childhood best friend's name (she didn't think Geraldine Whelan sounded like a fantasy writer's name) and began to write. *The Druid's Tune* was published in 1983 and was honoured with the CLA Young Adult Book Award. *The Singing Stone* came out in 1986 and was as popular as its predecessor.

Eventually, she decided to return to school and was accepted at the University of Toronto. Her high school ambition to become a lawyer ended when she "almost died of boredom" during her lectures, so she obtained a BA (Philosophy and Celtic Studies) and an MA (Medieval History) instead. She tried to apply for a PhD in English Literature, but was denied, based on a lack of prerequisites. When she stated that she had written two novels, she was

told that writing has nothing to do with literature.

Melling's novels are packed with elements of Celtic mythology, issues of identity, and the use of time-shifting to move back and forth between a mythical era and the 20th century. She loves writing fantasy, and disagrees with those who see it as an unliterary genre. "Most people think of fantasy as escape literature. An art that blots out the grim realities of our time... I view fantasy, with its idealism, as providing readers with moral strength for daily living".

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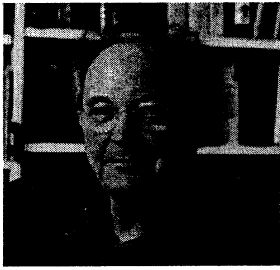
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Name: Philip Pullman

Birth Date: October 19th, 1946

Place of Birth: Norwich, England

Notable Books

The Amber Spyglass (2000)

The Subtle Knife (1997)

Northern Lights/The Golden Compass (1995)

The Ruby in the Smoke (1986)

Awards

Carnegie Medal (*Northern Lights*, 1996)

Guardian Children's Fiction Award (*Northern Lights*, 1996)

Whitbread Book of the Year Award (*Amber Spyglass*, 2001)

Eleanor Farjeon Award for Children's Literature, 2002

Biography

Both Pullman's father and step-father were in the Royal Air Force, so he moved around a lot as a child. He lived in Zimbabwe and Australia before settling down in Wales. After graduating from Exeter College he became a middle school teacher, and then an education professor at Westminster College in 1986.

His first children's book, *Count Karlstein*, was published in 1982, and was followed by *The Ruby in the Smoke* – the first of four Victorian adventures featuring a character by the name of Sally Lockhart. Pullman is most famous for the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, however. The trilogy, which includes *Northern Lights* (*The Golden Compass* in North America), *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*, garnered him international attention and numerous awards. Besides writing novels, Pullman also writes short stories, and plays, and illustrates his work.

Pullman continues to live in Oxford, and writes in a shed in his garden, which contains several hundred books, a six-foot long stuffed rat, and a computer which is decorated by dozens of brightly coloured artificial flowers attached with sticky-tack.

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