THE REBEL READING SOCIETY

Author Spotlight

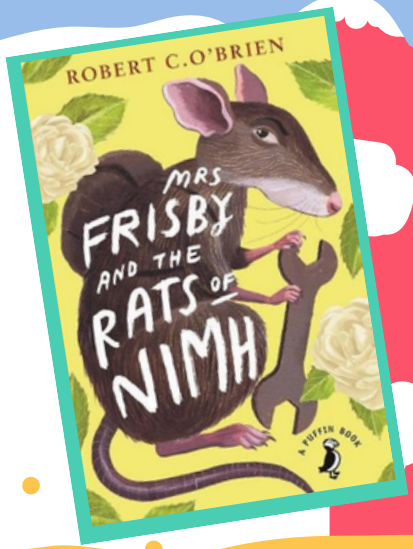
S.J. Poyton

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

I always wanted to be a writer, my first book was a graphic novel about a bee, with no words that I made ages six.

I am neuro diverse with dyslexia, so my brain makes it tricky for me to learn to read and spell. Even now I'm a very slow reader and my spelling is shall we say - creative!

But I LOVE storytelling, and writing brings me so much joy.



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

I have always had a complicated relationship with reading. I loved it but due to my dyslexia it was very difficult for me to de-code the text. I was still reading Peter and Jane books aged thirteen - that's like reading Biff and Chipp or phonics books that you read in key stage 1 in secondary school.

However with books I LOVED, I would read very slowly on my own, in my own space, where I felt safe. It was a struggle but the stories made it worth it.

What was your favourite book as a child and why?

I had LOTS of favourite books as a child, depending on my age, and interests - I couldn't possibly pick only one! So here's a few.

My favourite picture book was *The Tiger Who Came to Tea by Judith Kerr*, I hoped a tiger would come visit us, none ever did - but my wish did kind of come true. Aged five I did have a fully grown lion in my garden. It had escaped from the circus and after prowling in my back garden it went to sleep in my neighbour's garage!

Chapter Book - *Little Nose books by John Grant* about a neanderthal boy and his pet a mammoth.

Middle grade - *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH by Robert C O'Brien* - about genetically altered rats with the intelligence and lifespans of humans that are trying to avoid being caught by the scientist that made them.

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

A dream come true and a bit surreal, like it's not real. It really is magical.

What is the best part about being an author?

Oh this is tricky, there is so much I love about being an author. I adore author events and meeting readers. But the best thing is hearing from readers, especially when they liked the book of saw themselves in the characters.

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

This is easy to answer. When the editing gets to down to the SPAG. Being dyslexic my spelling is bad and I missed grammar lessons in school (to learn how to read), so I find grammar really really really hard. (Don't tell your teachers or my editors!)

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

Firstly I personally think stories and storytelling is the most important thing. Stories have been vitally important for us as a species for bonding, entertainment and survival since we lived in caves and told tales around the fire.

Reading is important as it is freedom and independence. Reading gives you independence, you don't need to rely on someone else to read to you. Reading also gives you the freedom to choose what stories you want to access - whether it's facts, history, or escape, the power to enter stories in your own hands.

Reading is power.

What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

I once wrote a book that was inspired by a toilet roll tube. Inspiration is everywhere, You just need to curious and that will feed your creativity and story will flow out of you. I always have at least six book ideas rattling about in my brain at any one time.

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

My family are usually the first people I bounce story ideas off, and they read the start of the writing. Then I have friends who are also writers and we share our work and give each other feedback. Lastly, now, I have agents and editors who help shape the stories to be the best they can be.

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?

Easy the Natural History Museum in London at night, under the mighty mastodon. (Mastodon is cousin of mammoths - there's a full size one in the entrance hall of the museum.)