

THE 13 TREASURES Reading Resources

Q&A with Michelle Harrison:

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE YOU WANTED TO BE A WRITER AND WHY?

I've always loved stories, so it felt natural to me to want to tell them as well as read them. I started writing short stories when I was about fourteen, and it was around that time that I got it in my head that I would write a novel one day.

WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FOR THE 13 TREASURES FROM?

Here, there and everywhere. I based the character of Tanya on my niece, who, according to a fortune-teller my sister saw when Tanya was a baby, would grow up to be 'very psychic'. This, combined with a lifelong love of fairy lore and tales gave me the idea of a girl who has the rare ability to see fairies.

The Hangman's Catacombs in the story are based on deneholes in a patch of woodland where I grew up. From the first time I saw them I was fascinated and scared by them; these cavernous holes in the ground with no real explanation as to how they got there.

THE 13 TREASURES is an old legend I came across during my research. What's interesting is that the list of objects never seems to be quite the same from one reference to the next, there are always differences in the items and the magical powers they have. The legend immediately sparked my imagination and led me to my own interpretation.



WHERE DO YOU GO OR WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION?

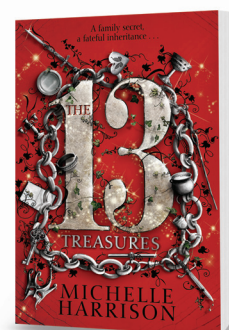
I don't really go looking for inspiration, I tend to be inspired by things that fall into my path. For instance, the charm bracelet in THE 13 TREASURES is inspired by one I found in a second-hand market. I immediately wondered who'd owned it, what their life was like, what their secrets were. What did each charm stand for? The fun part was then weaving it into a story. For me, this usually involves a lot of staring into space or drawing spider-grams of ideas until I figure out what that story is. I get inspiration from most things: newspaper stories, pictures, old places and objects, or things people do and say.

WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE YOU WERE AN AUTHOR?

After my illustration degree I worked as a relief bar steward in a social club. It was during that time that I wrote my first draft of THE 13 TREASURES. After that I worked in an art gallery, before becoming a children's bookseller for Ottakar's/ Waterstone's. I currently work as an editorial assistant in children's fiction at Oxford University Press.

THE 13 TREASURES by Michelle Harrison
ISBN 9781847384492 £6.99 PB
www.michelleharrisonbooks.com
www.myspace.com/michelleharrisonbooks

SIMON AND SCHUSTER
www.simonsays.co.uk



THE 13 TREASURES Reading Resources

Q&A continued:

DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN THREE WORDS

Creative, persevering, daydreamer.

HAVE YOU ANY ADVICE FOR ASPIRING AUTHORS?

- 1.) Read lots. Not only will it widen your vocabulary but you'll learn how good stories are constructed.
- 2.) Write lots. Keeping a diary or writing short stories is a great way to start. Then keep practising. Re-write. Think about how you can improve what you have.
- 3.) Don't give up. I'm a big believer in perseverance.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD?

I loved Enid Blyton's FAMOUS FIVE stories, and returned to them over and over again. But if I could only choose one book as my favourite I would have to say THE WITCHES by Roald Dahl. I remember the feeling of absolute terror I had when I first read it aged about ten. It's a brilliantly scary book.

WHAT COULD YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT?

My family, books, music, writing and drawing. I'd also be pretty peeved if chocolate and make-up weren't available.

WHO FROM THE PAST WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE MET?

Jack the Ripper. Obviously not in a dark alley but I'd like to know who he was, and why he committed those terrible crimes. I'm a bit of a sucker for

unsolved mysteries.

WHAT IS THE MOST EMBARRASSING THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

Embarrassing myself is a specialty of mine, so there are many examples. But a time that comes to mind is when I was about seven years old and was in a friend's garden, playing with her rabbit. I'd never had a rabbit as a pet before - only dogs and a cat - so I couldn't understand why it was refusing the juicy raisins I'd found in its cage and was enthusiastically offering it. It was only when my friend managed to stop howling with laughter that she told me that what I had in my hand weren't in fact raisins, but the rabbit's droppings. I was mortified.

WHICH CHILDREN'S BOOK DO YOU WISH YOU HAD WRITTEN?

Harry Potter (don't we all?). I'm a massive Potter fan. For young adults I wish I'd written THE MERRYBEGOT by Julie Hearn - one of my all time favourite books.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN FAIRIES?

I couldn't possibly say I don't in case a fairy drops down dead somewhere.

THE 13 TREASURES by Michelle Harrison
ISBN 9781847384492 £6.99 PB
www.michelleharrisonbooks.com
www.myspace.com/michelleharrisonbooks

SIMON AND SCHUSTER
www.simonsays.co.uk

