

An Interview with Jacqueline Wilson

Jacqueline Wilson is a popular children's author who has written many novels. Some of her best-known books include the *Tracy Beaker* series, which was also made into a television programme, and *The Illustrated Mum*. This extract is from an interview with the author.

How old were you when your first book you wrote was published?

I was writing stories throughout my childhood, and my first short story was published when I was 17. But I was 22 before I got a book published.

How did you first become interested in writing? Did any author or teacher inspire you?

I loved books, I liked pictures, and it evolved from there. No, at my primary school, they made a fuss of me, I was chosen to read my stories aloud. At secondary school, stories were made to be more formal, so I had lots of corrections. So I feel if they read any of my books now I'd still get full of red marks! Do it the school way at school and your own way at home.

How long have you been writing books? And what is your favourite book you have written?

I never can decide, I think it's possibly *The Illustrated Mum*, it's probably the saddest of my stories, but it came almost how I wanted it to be. Each time I start a book, I want it to be this and that and it hardly ever does. I've written over 100 books now.

How do you come up with all your ideas?

I think it's a bit like asking you, where you get your dreams from, you don't exactly know, do you? Dreams are distorted and you have no idea where they came from. I don't know what's going to come next! I came up for the name of Tracy Beaker in my bath. I knew I wanted her to be called Tracy and be a feisty girl but I couldn't think of the right surname for her. In my bath, I came up with Tracy Toilet, Tracy Bath and lots more and then I was washing my hair and I pulled up this beaker to wash my hair down with, and that's when it came to me "Tracy Beaker".

Did you ever think your books would become a TV series?

No I didn't. For years and years, I got letters from children saying why don't you make such and such a TV Show? I was thrilled to bits with *Tracy Beaker*. I met a lovely woman called Sue, who held on to that idea for years and I don't know how anyone thought it would be that big. I do like to visit the set, I don't write the script as there's too many and it wouldn't be possible. They've written it just the way I would have thought!

How long does it take to write a book?

It takes too long! Children read them in 3 days and think it takes that long to write it – I wish it did. I write little bits on the train, and here and there. I try to write at least 500 words a day, then when it's finished I type it up, it can take as long as 6 months. I like to get two books written a year.

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