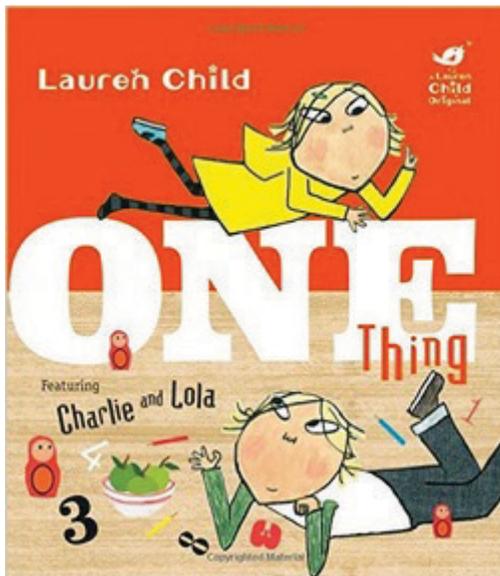


Charlie and Lola author reveals why she chose a Montessori nursery for her daughter

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Article By: Sue Learner, Editor
26215

Lauren Child, creator of the popular children's picture books, Charlie and Lola which have been turned into a CBeebies TV show, has returned to the much-loved siblings after a five-year break with her new book 'One Thing'.



Imaginative and funny with quirky illustrations, the Charlie and Lola books, have sold millions of copies worldwide and been translated into 19 languages.

Lauren Child told daynurseries.co.uk: "I'd actually written the story more than a decade ago and I'd wanted to illustrate it for a long time. Because I've been doing my Ruby Redfort series for older children for the past few years, I'd actually been missing doing illustration. It's been lovely re-visiting the characters."

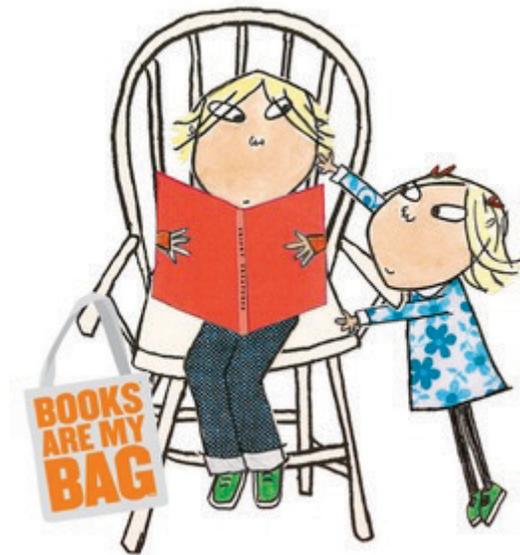
As well as writing the Charlie and Lola books, Ms Child has written the Clarice Bean series of picture books and novels, plus the detective series of Ruby Redfort for pre-teens. She wrote the first Charlie and Lola book in 2000, with 'I will not ever Never eat a tomato' and won the annual Kate Greenaway Medal for the year's most 'distinguished illustration in a book for children'.

Her new book featuring the famous sister and brother duo is about numbers and counting.

Numbers are 'incredibly important to children'

“It’s really about how numbers shape everyday family life. Numbers are incredibly important to children – how many minutes, how many stickers, how many things – but they often experience them differently to adults. What’s the difference between three minutes and a squillion to a child? I think it’s quite arbitrary to small children,” she says.

Ms Child, who lives in North London, but grew up in Marlborough in Wiltshire, has said in the past that she got tired of people asking how she wrote for children, when she didn’t have any children of her own. The phenomenal success of her books shows being an author is as her partner Adrian said, all about “imagination not imitation”.



She does however now have her own daughter, five-year-old Tuesday, who she adopted from an orphanage in Mongolia when she was two and a half. When Tuesday first came to London, she spoke no English and although she understood Mongolian, she was unable to speak the language because no one sat and chatted to the children in the orphanage.

Consequently she only started speaking at the age of three. This delay in her language development was one of the reasons Ms Child picked a Montessori nursery for her daughter.

Montessori nursery is 'very ordered, organised and calming'

She says: “I think the ethos is particularly good if you are a child from another country, because it’s a very kind place, very ordered and organised and calming. And there isn’t a huge amount of noise which is good when you are learning a language.”

On being asked whether she sees her daughter becoming a character in one of her books, she says: “The funny thing about this is that she already is! A lot of what I have written years before I met her seems in tune with her. I remember someone saying to me very early on that ‘Lauren we think you drew her’. And now she is part of my writing,

of course, because everything feeds into writing, really. Writers' work is shaped in the context of their own worlds.

"I'm very lucky because she loves reading. She even likes the act of turning the page. We have been through a lot of books. At the moment her number one favourite is 'Eloise' by Kay Thompson."

Favourite character is Clarice Bean

Despite the Charlie and Lola books and TV series being her biggest success, it is Clarice Bean who is her favourite character "partly because she was the first but also because she has the most to say and the most interesting way of saying it".



"Clarice Bean That's Me is very special to me because was the picture book that taught me about the world of picture books. The Ruby Redford books I'm also very proud of because they are so complicated - I never thought I could write books with such intricate plots so it was satisfying when I realised I could. But I think if you made me pick that for emotional reasons I'd pick Clarice Bean."

She believes "children and parents love the Charlie and Lola stories because it's centred around the relationship between brother and sister, and there are no adults intervening. And the books are also set in the 15 minute window in a day when everything is going well... You do get those perfect moments in day and I wanted to write about those - sometimes with young children you forget that they exist".

Her favourite books from her own childhood are The Eighteenth Emergency by Betsy Byars "because she showed me that books can be funny and sad at the same time".

Another favourite is *The Shrinking of Treehorn* by Edward Gorey and Florence Parry Heide as she says: “This book is just the perfect marriage of illustration and text. They work together to tell the story – you couldn’t have one without the other”.

Plus *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren “because she is just the most marvellous girl character. I love her”.

At the moment, she is working on the sixth and last *Ruby Redfort*, and there is good news for all those *Charlie and Lola* fans out there, as ‘*One Thing*’ is not the last in the long-running series, as she says: “I am also thinking about the next *Charlie and Lola* book”.