

Date: 25th November 2016  
Author/Interview subject: Lauren Child (LC)  
Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth (JF)  
Other speakers: Abi (A), girls in audience (Girl), boys in audience (Boy).

[Introductory music]

JF Hello there everybody, I'm Janice Forsyth. A huge warm welcome to Authors Live. Absolutely fantastic to have you here. I know you've got a busy day at school, so thank you very much for giving us the time. However you are in for a huge treat. And also with me are some real live pupils from Highpark Primary School in Glasgow and Knightsridge Primary in West Lothian. And rather lovely they are too. They're going to be asking some questions a little later.

They along with us and probably you too have been marking Scottish Book Week, Book Week Scotland. It's been happening all this week. It's Scotland's national celebration of reading and writing and as always on Authors Live we like to make a very special edition of the show for that too. We knew we needed an extra special author to help us today.

We've found just the person. She is an award winning author and illustrator who's created so many books for children that – to be perfectly honest with you – we just can't keep count of them all. There are just far too many. And they're all brilliant. Many of you will be particularly familiar with her characters, Charlie and Lola. Of course, yeah, CBeebies, as well as in countless picture books. They're on the telly too. And today she'll be telling us about her Ruby Redfort series – I know, you love them, don't you – those books which she created for slightly older readers.

So as well as questions from the fine young pupils who are with us today, we'd love to put your questions to our author later on. So if your class, your school, your teacher has a Twitter account, get on it now and please ask your questions. Just think of any questions and we can relay them to our author. All you have to remember is to use the #bbcauthorlive. You got that? bbcauthorlive. And our brilliant social media Twitter team have a special desk and everything. And they

are waiting. They're so excited. So give them something to do, please. They're right now and they are desperate to hear from you.

But right now I know you're desperate to meet our very, very special author, so please, where ever you and all our wonderful people here, please give a huge Book Week Scotland Authors Live welcome to Lauren Child. [Round of applause]. Oh. Was that enough of a big build up for you, Lauren?

LC Yes, that was very generous I think. Thank you. Yes [laugh].

JF That'll do [laugh]. It's lovely to be here with all of you today and it's just always so special to have a real live author, because as you know the books mean so much to people, no matter what age they are. So to actually get an insight in to the person who's created those books in that universe is absolutely wonderful. So how did it start for you then? What led you to create these wonderful books for young people?

LC The Ruby books or books in general?

JF In general, yeah.

LC In general? Well I was always a very, very keen drawer. I loved drawing since I was teeny. I never thought I would be a writer. I always thought I'd do something to do with drawing. And then I was trying to come up with an idea for a film and I wrote and illustrated this piece of work which was really intended to become either a cartoon or maybe a live action movie, and I wrote *Clarice Bean, That's Me*, which was my very, very first picture book. And then someone said, I think you've written a book. So that's how it happened.

JF And it's interesting hearing that you had you a film idea first of all, 'cause I think the thing about your stories is they leap off the page and you can really, really imagine the pictures as well as seeing the illustrations too. Is that how it works for you in the creative process, that you're, sort of, seeing it as well as writing it?

LC Yeah. It does. I see everything in my head first, so I often don't do any drawings before I write because I don't need to. You know, I find...I...I'm, sort of, driven by the visual, I suppose. So I see everything and I see it very filmically, so that's why Ruby reads a bit like a film.

JF Yes. So you see the pictures in your head but when you're actually writing the book, does it tend to be, with any of your books, that you write them – I'm doing miming now of writing – maybe you do writing. And...

LC No, I definitely do that, yeah.

- JF You do. And then you do the illustrations. Is that how it tends to work?
- LC Yeah. Clarice Bean was completely different, 'cause I did both at the same time and I think that's because I loved comics and cartoons and graphic novels when I was little. And so that was the natural way for me to write. And I think it made me a writer because I suddenly realised you can write in pictures. And that's what comics do. But then as I got more confident as a writer, I began to not need to do pictures first, 'cause I see it all in my head.
- JF Yes. It's fascinating that idea. I'm sure...do any of you read comics and graphic novels? Yeah. I think most of the people here...I'm sure where ever you are too. 'Cause I remember when I was a wee girl many, many years ago, I just loved comics but also began to write books, not proper books but I would do it in graphic novel form. It's just that idea of putting the picture together. And funnily enough it was to do with a...being a young female spy, which is what I wanted to be. So the...
- LC Yeah. I know. I think it...it is a lot of people's ambition.
- JF Yes [laugh]. And if we can't it achieve we can read Ruby's adventures. So in terms of Ruby then, what made you move on to her after so many of the picture books?
- LC Well because I'd written three Clarice Bean picture books and they were a little bit like comics in a way because there was as much writing as there were pictures. And so I started writing Clarice Bean chapter books. And then I wanted Clarice Bean to become passionate about a series of books because I was looking around me and I realised that things have not changed in that way, that children still are as passionate about books as they ever were when I was a child. You know, and I think the dawn of Harry Potter and everything really made that an even stronger urge to read a series. And so I thought Clarice Bean would want to read a series of books too.
- So I wrote Ruby as a fictional fiction series within Clarice. And then I started getting letters from my Clarice readers saying, are the Ruby Redfort books real? And then I thought, it would be really interesting to make this pretend series a real series, so you too can read exactly what she's reading.
- JF Yeah. Isn't that funny though, actually that you're the writer so you're in charge of your universe and creating the characters, but then actually your readers love the books so much that then they actually...yes.

- LC They made them real. Yes, they did. And that happens a lot actually with...when I talk to children like you, that's what happens. Somebody says something and it becomes an idea for me. And so my readers do have a direct influence on what I'm doing.
- JF Yes. And although it's the Ruby Redfort series and got a fantastic girl of the heart of this, the great thing about these books is they're not girls' books, are they.
- LC No, not in any way. I'd...all I wanted to do was to put a girl at the front of an action packed book because...I don't know, if...very rarely in films are girls – female characters – at the front. They're usually the sidekick. And the same is true a lot in books, that rarely is a female character the action hero. And I just wanted to change that. But actually if you called her Robert, I'd have to do very little changes for the book because it's not about a girl who's wearing lots of makeup or interested in clothes or anything like that. It's about a girl who's pretty brainy and she's got lots of very, very good friends, but she likes drama. She likes danger and she seeks it out.
- JF Yeah. Fantastic. I just love so much the idea of you making up novels within a novel and then your readers saying, no we want those to be real. And then you make them real. It's just...it's terrific. We've got some questions from our audience. So...and we've got a couple of people who are going to come up and join us here. Who's going to come first from Highpark Primary School? First two, up you come. Hi there. Hello. And I'm going to have this microphone for you. So what's your name?
- Girl Adison.
- JF This is Adison. And what's your question for Lauren?
- Girl My question is, how long does it take you to write a single Ruby Redfort novel?
- LC Ah. Now, well they only give me nine months to write them. And it really, really isn't enough, which is why the last month of writing, I stay up all night pretty much every night and I'm really losing the plot by then. It's the only way to get them done in time. So they don't give me enough time. So it's exhausting [laugh], is the truth.
- JF And do you like that answer? Because actually I guess if you've got homework and stuff sometimes you can be quite last minute with it.
- LC Yeah. You can think of me [laugh].

- Girl Yeah.
- JF Yeah. Do you like having a...I mean, although you have to meet it in the end, is it good to actually have a deadline though?
- LC Yeah. It's very good to have a deadline. I think it's hard for anyone to do anything without a deadline because you have to be very disciplined. And I don't think I'd have ever written them if they didn't do this. But I'm very relieved to get to the end of it, because it was a little bit too much stress.
- JF Yes. It's hard work, that's the thing. Adison, great question. Are you surprised by that answer? What do you think of it taking nine months to write the novel?
- Girl It's quite a long time.
- JF Yeah. Presumably you're not doing it every minute of the day for nine months? No?
- LC Oh gosh, I am [laugh]. That's the thing. I mean, it's...I can't tell you how much work it is and...
- JF Wow.
- LC ...you know, I think really a year and a half would be much more realistic because of all the plotting. 'Cause there's lots of teeny weeny little threads and you have to remember every single one. And because there six books, you have to remember every single character. And know what they do, what they like to eat, all of these things. Otherwise someone will write to you and say, well you said she didn't eat donuts and she clearly does eat donuts, you know.
- JF So it's a fun job but hard work.
- LC Yep.
- JF Clearly. Thank you. Brilliant question. What's your name?
- Girl Iona.
- JF This is Iona. And...so your question for Lauren.
- Girl What inspired the character of Ruby?
- LC Ruby. Well she was really inspired by my love of watching American TV when I was a little girl. My mum always [laugh]. My mum always said I watched way too much, but I got lots and lots of ideas from that. And I loved all the banter. They seemed to do this very good thing of, you know, the characters saying all these

one liners to each other. And I watched a film called Buggy Malone, which you may have seen, I don't know, but she...it's a very, very funny film. And it's...every single person in it is a child actor. And there's a character called Jodie Foster who's now a grownup actress and I love the way she talked. She was very mouthy and she wasn't afraid anything. And she was in a lot of films when I was a girl. And I just loved how she was a...she was a female character but she was never a girlie character. She's very much just an American kid and that's really what inspired the character.

JF You'll have to watch Buggy Malone now, won't you. [Laugh].

Girl Yeah [laugh].

JF I think you'll enjoy it. I think you'll really enjoy. Great question. So Iona and Adison, thank you very much. And a round of applause for our first questions. Thank you. [Round of applause]. Yeah. How interesting. Your mum says, you want too much television...

LC Yeah [laugh].

JF ...but then it helps you become an incredibly successful novelist. And great to hear about Jodie Foster. And Buggy Malone, it's a very funny film. If you haven't seen it, I think you'll enjoy it. There's certainly lots of action and the whole cast are children. Now, we've got some pictures here of your characters which we're going to show to everybody, Lauren. So maybe we can talk through some of these characters, 'cause some people might not be familiar with them. So who...tell us about these guys.

LC So these are two pictures of Ruby. And I had a very, very clear idea of what she should look like and I describe her very vividly in the first book. And so I...but even so...even though I describe her as being very, very small for her age and having this long dark hair and green eyes, often when I talk to fans of Ruby, they imagine her blonde or with red hair or...and I think it's because we create our own pictures in our head when we read and that's the wonderful thing about reading, is you can make it up yourself.

JF Yeah. Terrific. So let's look at our next pictures.

LC Now these are three pictures of her best friend, a boy called Clancy Crew. And this is just to show that sometimes I don't have a clear vision of what the character looks like. I know exactly what he's like as a personality, but I don't know what he actually physically looks like, other than he's skinny. That was it...I

don't think I really say much more than that. But any of these pictures could be the right picture. And you may have a very, very different impression of him.

JF Gosh. That's so interesting. Okay. And who do we have next?

LC Ah, now these are two of Ruby's best friends, a girl called Mouse and a girl called Del. Del is one of those really, sort of, quite surly but very loyal friends. You know, she's quite...she is quite a mouthy girl. And she gets in fights and things. Mouse is called Mouse because she has a very, very tiny voice. But again I just...I really wanted to make a lot of the friendship in Ruby, because when I was your age, I really minded about that and friends became the most important thing in my school life, more important than the work, more important than everything. And so I really wanted to talk a lot about friendship.

JF Yeah. 'Cause it is that thing, isn't it, it's...a lot of that is to do with sharing secrets and things that you wouldn't talk to adults about.

LC Yeah. Absolutely.

JF Yeah. And let's look at our next picture.

LC Ah, next picture again is interesting...

JF Yeah [laugh].

LC ...in that this is the...Ruby is recruited to join a secret agency called Spectrum. And the boss of Spectrum is a woman called LB. And I called her LB because I couldn't think of a name for her. But she in my head was based on this actress, Hollywood actress, very, very famous a long, long time ago called Lauren Bacall. And so I called her LB because I just had in my mind that she was this very glamorous gravelly voiced woman. And then that's the, sort of, picture of what Lauren Bacall, the old Hollywood star, looked like. And then as I went on writing them, she morphed and she began to look in my mind's eye like this woman. And so she's completely changed. And that's another thing that can happen. As you're working up a character, your picture of them moves and changes.

JF That's amazing. 'Cause I've spoken to a lot of authors and I've never heard anyone that specific about that, about the change.

LC Yeah. It's very weird, but that's exactly what happened [laugh].

JF [Laugh]. They're taking over your life.

LC Yes, they are.

JF They're taking over your mind. And we're going to...let's look at our next picture now. Ah, yes.

LC Ah well as in most spy stories or secret agent stories, there's usually someone called the mentor or the, sort of...the person who is like a guardian angel type figure who looks after our young hero. And in this case, this...it's a man called Hitch who is a really top secret agent. And he's masquerading as a butler or house manager in the Ruby Redfort household. So her parents think he is their house manager and Ruby's the only person to know that actually he is a secret agent there to look after her. This woman here is the housekeeper, Mrs Digby, who's a very funny woman. And is...sort of, comes out with these very, very stern comments every now and again. And I rather like Mrs Digby.

JF And I rather like her dress.

LC Yes, it's quite nice isn't it [laugh].

JF Very nice. It's lovely. Now we're going to look not at a character but...in a sense it's a character, but look at this. So this is our setting. Tell us a little about this and idea of the map too.

LC Well I always think it's nice to be able to plot through where the character has been and you see this in a lot of children's books. And adult books actually. 'Cause they do happen in a lot of thrillers, you'll see a map. And you even see it in *Winnie the Pooh*, which is rather sweet and I remember that. So you know where all the houses are, where everybody lives, where Ruby goes, all the little secret agency meetings that she has, they're all marked on the map.

And so these are...this is illustrated by my friend Emily Faccini who is a wonderful map illustrator. But before it came to her, it had to be constructed by a map maker, someone called a cartographer. And he had to take all my references that I'd written down and somehow make them in to a visual, which is quite a hard thing to do. But remarkably, even though I'd never written anything down, everything pretty much with the exception of maybe four or five things was exactly where it was meant to be.

So I think that just proves to me that as a writer, you're so in the world of your characters that you actually can see it. And you can feel where they are.

JF That's interesting.

LC Yeah. It's really strange.

- JF I guess in a way that's the opposite of what we were talking about, about the characters physically changing. 'Cause here your map has stayed so correct...
- LC So correct, yeah.
- JF ...that a proper cartographer can represent it. And I suppose that gets us back to the idea of writing is hard work and you're in with all the details that you're creating of this universe.
- LC Yes. In so many ways I think it's a very antisocial job, because you have to stay in that world in order to, you know, keep the continuity of everything. Yeah.
- JF Well let's enter that world now. I think we should...do you fancy a reading?
- LC Yeah.
- JF Brilliant. Well we're going to have a terrific one now. From the latest Ruby Redfort novel, this is from *Blink and You Die*, read by Abi.
- A The soap phone rang in the bathroom the next morning and Ruby spat out her toothpaste. So what are you going to tell me? asked Clancy. Ruby could hear his little sister Olive in the background talking to someone. Who's there with you? Olive. But who's she talking to? Buttercup. Huh? Her doll. Ruby listened for a moment. Jeepers. Exactly, said Clancy. So what were you going to tell me? Well I'm not going to say it over the phone, am I, Buster. Of course you're not Bozo. I was wondering if you'd like the pleasure of my company. Plus if I have to listen to more of this dolly talk, I'm going to go crazy. Anyone would, said Ruby. Is she like this most days? Try every day. I'll meet you in half an hour, usual place.
- The usual place was the tree on Amster. They met there when they wanted to be completely alone and out of sight. It was as they sat up in the oak that Ruby filled her friend in on everything she had omitted to tell him before. LB killed Bradley Baker? said Clancy. Are you actually serious? Serious as the look on your face. But, I mean, really? I mean, kill him? How? What you have to ask is why, said Ruby. Why, said Clancy, why is why the question I have to ask myself. Why not? Can you get me out of Twinford as quickly as possible, followed by, could you call the Sheriff's office right away, because those are the questions I would be asking if I just found out that the boss of the secret agency I worked in had murdered her best friend. And not just some average Joe either. Not that that would make it alright or anything. But we are talking about Bradley Baker, legendary agent of Spectrum 8.

So if LB did that, then yes, can you get me to a safe house and could you call the Sheriff, would be my first two questions. Well thank goodness you're not me, Clance, because both of those questions are dead ends. For one, who's actually going to believe any of this? For two, if LB really is his killer, then how far am I going to get before I end up going the same way as Baker?

Clancy opened his mouth to speak, but could not think of anything cheerful to say. So what you've got to look at, said Ruby, is the whole big picture. My boss might be a traitorous killer, she has the means, power, possibly a motive, but we need to examine the evidence.

For example, what do we know about Bradley Baker? Clancy shrugged and said, he was the youngest spy Spectrum ever recruited. He was the most talented code breaker and agent they ever had. He stole a sideways look at Ruby. No offence, Rube. Don't sweat it, Bozo, I hear it all the time. And, continued Clancy, he was killed in a plane crash. Which, it seems, was no accident, said Ruby, nor was it at the hands of the enemy. But rather by the hand of his most loyal ally.

So what has this got you thinking? asked Clancy. Ruby paused before speaking. What if Bradley was not all that he seemed? What if he were the so called 'bad apple'? Let's just say, he was a double agent. LB would have had to kill him for the sake of Spectrum, for the sake of this country. She stretched her arms out wide, the world even.

Clancy let out a heavy sigh. I'd feel a lot better if that's how it was. It could have been that LB knew what nobody else knew, that he was a phony, a fraud, an imposter. Like some kind of mole you mean? Yeah, nodded Ruby. Boy it sure makes you think, said Clancy. Imagine finding out that your best friend, most loyal ally, is a total fake, not to mention murderer. He looked at Ruby, though I have to say, Rube, if you turn out to be an evil genius, I can't see myself killing you. I kind of like your company.

I appreciate that, Clance. I really do.

JF Fantastic. [Round of applause]. Thank you very much. Thank you, Abi, that was terrific. And it's great actually to hear it read. And that whole thing going back to you being inspired by American television. Just to hear the American accent, that brings it to life with the rhythm of what you were writing, those great words like 'Bozo'. How much fun do you have with that aspect of it, the, kind of...the American side of it?

- LC I've always loved writing the dialogue. That's...it's always my favourite thing, writing characters in dialogue, their conversations. So that was the good bit, you know, in writing. I love that.
- JF Is that quite good...if people are thinking...I'm sure a lot of the people watching, you know, try out some writing, is that maybe a good way to get in to it, with maybe some dialogue, couple of characters.
- LC Definitely. Definitely. I always think start with a bit you're most interested in. I always do that. I very often start a book right in the middle or just with a sentence that appeals to me, because I think otherwise it can be very daunting, you know, just...you've got...you start at the beginning and then you have to, sort of, wade through the book. And some people are brilliant at that, but I never plot my stories before I start writing. So I just write and see what happens.
- JF Gosh. That is so interesting. Oh I'm loving this. Right. So...our audience and we're going to have a couple of other questions from our audience. Halley and Ryan from Knightsbridge, if you come up and you can ask your questions. Hello. How are you?
- LC Hi.
- JF So hello, Halley. What's your question for Lauren?
- Girl My question is, what skills do you need to become an author?
- JF Oh what skills do you need to become an author?
- LC Oh I don't think I've ever been asked that question before. Well I think you need a lot of determination, 'cause you really have to stick with it, which comes back a little bit to our deadline question, that really does help with that. But I think when you're first starting out, you've...and nobody is going to necessarily publish your book, you really have to believe in it. You have to write about something that you really are interested in and write from the heart. I think that's very important because when I first started writing stories, I was trying to write something that I thought the publishers would like to publish. And actually that is not a good way of going about it. Always write something that you're really passionate about. And, yes, stick with it and believe in it. I think those are the...probably the most important things.
- But all...I did a lot of research for Ruby and that can really help with a story like this, 'cause you've got to get people to believe in this really crazy scenario. There are a lot of layers to this plot. And if you thread in things that are actually true, people are much more likely to believe it.

JF Oh great question, great answer. Do you...would you like to write yourself?

Girl Yeah. I would like to write, yeah.

JF Well you've got some good advice there from Lauren. Thank you for that question. Ryan, what's your question?

Boy My question's, who's been your greatest inspiration?

LC Oh another really good question. It's usually lots and lots of different things that all add up to getting me where I am now. I think one was, I saw a Tim Burton film. Do you know the director, Tim Burton? Well he...I mean, he's recently done things like Alice in Wonderland and movies like that, but the movie I saw was a film called Edward Scissorhands. And what I loved about it is that he created an entire world. So he thought about each piece of the story, whether it's the music, the costumes, the character. Everything felt of a piece, like he'd really put together all the designers and writers and people working on the film very carefully. So it had his own personality in there. So that was an influence for me, 'cause I'd never thought about that before, that you could actually create the whole world.

And then there are wonderful illustrators that have made a great difference to me. Illustrators like Ronald Searle who did a lot of...you may have heard of St Trinian's and he did drawings for that. Then there's the wonderful illustrator Quentin Blake who you might have heard of. He amongst other things – many, many other things – did Roald Dahl illustrations. Oh there are so many people, but film I think has been my biggest influence probably. But there are wonderful characters as well in literature. People like Pippi Longstocking, who I think is a wonderful strong, funny character. So she's a big influence.

JF Good answer for you?

Boy Yeah.

JF Lots of things to look up now when you go back. Look up all these references. Great questions, thank you both very much indeed. Let's have a round of applause for Ryan and Halley [round of applause]. Thank you so much. Really good questions. And there are lots more coming in...on Twitter, I can tell you that.

Now the codes and the puzzles in the Ruby series are really, really important and they're put together with the help of Marcus du Sautoy who is some kind of mathematical genius. How did you get him involved?

- LC Well got him involved really early on because anyone who's read the Clarice Bean series will know that I made Ruby a, sort of, girl wonder character, so she's...incredible genius. And she's a code maker and code breaker. So I don't think I would have made her quite so clever if I'd known I was going to write the series, because in order to write wonderful genius codes in a book, you need to be a genius. And I'm not. So I...
- JF Were you good at maths at school though? Were you interested?
- LC No. I...well I wasn't good and then for one year I had the most amazing maths teacher and that changed everything for me. And he showed me the...you know, the beauty of maths and that they...maths is like puzzles and patterns and I suddenly begun to understand its relevance in everyday life. But before that, no I loathed it.
- And so I love working with Marcus because he also has that, you know, inspiration, the way that he manages to inspire people like me and younger people as well. And he has such a thing about it, and it's infectious. And you begin to see the beauty of it. And so that's why we got him involved. And so he wrote these brilliant codes for us.
- JF And we've got an example of them there. And how much response then do you get from readers in terms of sorting out the codes and stuff?
- LC Quite a lot. A lot. And, I mean, my worst thing is when I'm doing a talk and somebody asks me something about how the code works [laugh]...
- JF [Laugh].
- LC ...and I'm afraid...I understand it completely and utterly at the time that Marcus has explained it, but I'm afraid after that I...it just goes.
- JF Well you've got other universes that are taking up your brain. And for fans of Ruby Redfort, you know, this...it says on the cover of the book, series finale. So is that it? Is it bye bye, Ruby?
- LC It is. It is. It...certainly for now. I mean, whether I ever come back to her, that's a possibility because I love the world and I love her. But it does mean you can't do anything else. And there are so many other things I want to do.
- JF Maybe later on, when she's a grown up, you might return to her.
- LC Yes. I know. Exactly. There's always a chance.

JF And we know you respond to your readers too. Now let's see. I think we've got another couple of questions, haven't we. Come on up, those of you who are...oh hello. Right from the front row to our couch. Hi there. So what's your name?

Boy Ian.

JF This is Ian. And what's your question for Lauren?

Boy Have any of your books except your Charlie and Lola books been turned in to TV shows or movies?

JF There you go. Thank you, Ian.

LC Well Clarice Bean was the first book I wrote and was immediately optioned for a film funnily enough. And then it just...like most things that get optioned for film or TV, it didn't get made. And I was really glad about that, because it...you just never know what they're going to do with it. And books...your characters become terribly precious to you, so you hate the idea of them, sort of, being misrepresented in TV or film. And then a few years later, someone asked again if they could make Clarice Bean in to a TV series. And I actually suggested that we did Charlie and Lola instead. So as yet, no. None of the other things have. It's only Charlie and Lola.

JF Great. Thank you, Ian. And what's your name?

Boy Kieran.

JF Hi, Kieran. What's your question?

Boy Who is your favourite author?

JF Aha.

LC Oh, now that's a very hard one. And I get asked that a lot. But...so you're talking about children's authors, is that right? Sort of...

Boy Yeah.

LC Yeah. I think...I don't have a favourite author, but I have favourite books. So Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking. She's one of my favourite characters and one of my favourite books because she's such an interesting character, the like of which I'd never seen before or since. You know, this incredible female character that again is not about being a girl. It's about being a kid. And I love her. She's someone so strong.

She can lift a horse and she's got all the money in the world. And it...everything about her is everything I wanted when I was a child. And then there are other wonderful characters. Obviously I...there are...you know, some of Roald Dahl's characters I really loved like Fantastic Mr Fox. I think there's...Anne of Green Gables who again is the most funny, witty character and really sassy. And I really liked her. But there's just so many, it's impossible. Betsy Byars is a wonderful writer and is still in print. And I read her when she was...when I was young. And I bet you could read her books now and you wouldn't know that they were written in...you know, 40 years ago.

JF Fantastic. And do you have any favourite authors?

Boy Yeah, I'd just say Roald Dahl as well.

JF Uhm-hmm. Great. Well, look, thank you very much. Two more splendid questions. You can go back to your seats. Thank you very much [round of applause]. Cheers. Yeah, we've got a question from Jack at Smithton Primary School in Highland, saying, did you want to be an author when you were a child? And it was just interesting to hear you talking about doing so much reading. I mean, the two are interlinked really, aren't they, yes.

LC Yeah. They are. I mean, I loved reading. I always loved reading. And my mother took us...she loved reading, so she took us to the library twice a week which I loved because I began to realise that you can order books, so you...if you're interested in a subject you could actually order something you were interested in. But I never wanted to be a writer, no. Wasn't expecting to be a writer. That was a complete accident.

JF Yeah. That's good to know though, 'cause I think, you know, as you said, the idea of sitting with a blank page, that's intimidating. Then, I want to be a writer, can seem something that's not realistic. So I suppose you just have to wait to the right moment. If it's going to happen, it happens.

LC Yes. And you don't need to decide what you want to do. I think that...I think that's...I think we're often asked when we're quite young, what do you want to do? And how would you know?

JF And I love the idea also of just getting inspiration from all sorts of places. It's not necessarily just books.

LC Oh no. Yeah, exactly.

JF Yeah. Now we've got a question from a primary school I know, Killermont Primary, from the P6a. Hello. Thank you very much for watching and for joining

in. This is using the #bbcauthorlive on Twitter. Were you like any of the children in your books when you were younger?

LC Yeah. A little bit. There...I suppose in Clarice Bean, that has the biggest link to my actual childhood. And I did have a younger sister who's very much like Clarice Bean's younger brother. And I had an older sister who's very much like...or was at that point very much like Clarice Bean's older sister.

JF Yeah. You explore all of that, sort of, sibling rivalry thing...

LC Family life, yes.

JF ...don't you in your books.

LC Yes. And they're, sort of, the love/loathing thing that happens in families where you do actually really like your family but it...that's not to say they're not irritating at times.

JF Yeah. I can see lots of smiles of recognition from the people here...

LC Yeah [laugh].

JF ...they're going, yeah you're absolutely right. Oh we've got another one from Killermont. Yeah, how did you feel when you found out that Charlie and Lola was going to be on television?

LC Well I felt both excited but also, you know, nervous because you do come to really love your characters and mind about how they're portrayed. And so I was...you know, I just wanted to make sure that it felt like their world and wasn't taken away in to something completely different.

JF And you were happy with it. Kinnaird Primary, hello Kinnaird Primary. Thank you very much for watching, for your question. Lauren Child, if you were to have any of Ruby's friends, who would they be? Yeah, so which of Ruby's friends would you like to be your friends?

LC I really like...I'd really Clancy to be my friend. You could not have a better friend than Clancy. And I always think loyalty in a friend is the most important thing. You know, someone who's going to stick up for you, not talk behind your back, all of those things. So I think he'd be my number one.

JF Clancy's number one. Thank you. This is Braidbar Primary School. Hello Braidbar. Did you enjoy writing lessons while in school? So we know that you didn't think you wanted to be an author, did you actually have writing lessons? Did you have to write compositions and essays?

- LC Yeah, we did actually. I loved all the bits that were about just creative writing and studying books. I loved that. I was...I found all the, sort of, grammar lessons and things really confusing. I remember just finding that too much. And that felt a lot like hard work. But once you get it, it's wonderful because you've got it. And it's just the hard bit that comes with learning to write. But I loved all the creative part of it.
- JF Let's see if we could do two really quick ones. St Ninian's Primary. Hello. Matthew says, what is the most enjoyable part of writing a book?
- LC Oh I think getting lost in the world is the most important thing, a most lovely enjoyable thing. Yeah. I think that's...I love that, 'cause you can just...you can just leave everything else behind.
- JF Is it sometimes funny to come back to the real world? You're like, where am I? Am I back in reality?
- LC Yes, it's very odd actually, yes. That's true. It is.
- JF Echt Primary School. Hi there Echt Primary. Is there a place that you get the most inspiration to write? And if so, where is it?
- LC I always used to go down to Wiltshire, in the West Country of England and write on my friend's farm. 'Cause there was something very nice. It just felt very separate from my every day. And...so I loved working there. But unfortunately 'cause I have a daughter now, I can't do that. Not unfortunately to have my daughter, but I'm not able to get away. But...so I generally work at home. But for this last Ruby, I actually worked in a café, 'cause I quite like all the business of a café.
- JF Ah, like JK Rowling did the early days.
- LC Oh yes.
- JF And just one final one to squeeze in quickly. Comely Park P6. Hello Comely Park P6. How do you come up with your titles, Lauren Child?
- LC Oh that's often agony. Because everybody has an opinion because there's the sales team, there's bookshops and everybody, sort of, wants to say what they think will sell. But for this one – *Blink and You Die* – I came up with it immediately before I wrote it, which is very unusual. And everyone agreed. So that was really nice.

JF Yeah. 'Cause it does, it absolutely grabs you. That title works, *Blink and You Die*. You want to read that book to find out why, don't you. Well I can't believe it. We're out of time.

LC Oh [laugh].

JF It's passed so quickly, hasn't it. Thank you for all your brilliant questions and thank you for all your terrific questions. If I didn't get round to reading them, I'm sorry, but we'll pass them on later. Lauren, thank you so much. It's such an interesting insight that you've given us in to just the world of being a writer and this whole idea of creating your own universe.

LC Oh well thank you. I've loved your questions. Thank you so much.

JF Ah, really good questions. And also the idea that, you know, a lot of these people who are here with us today and watching might be doing their own writing and just, you know, be inspired by watching the telly possibly, reading comics and just being out and about in the world. So let's have a huge – your biggest – round of applause ever, here and there, for Lauren Child. Yes, come on. [Round of applause].

LC Thank you.

JF Very good. Very good. I can hear you cheering as well. I can hear you...yes, you. Just to say, if you missed any of this or you want to tell your friends, family, other teachers, other schools, spread the word, you can watch this event again online very soon. You just go to the Scottish Book Trust website which is [scottishbooktrust.com/authors-live](http://scottishbooktrust.com/authors-live). So look out for that. And you can watch all the previous events. We've had loads of them. Really good fun and really interesting. And you can also sign up to watch future broadcasts. So we'll be back very soon with another Authors Live. Hope to see you then. But from all of us, Lauren Child, me, Janice Forsyth, these lovely people, thank you and goodbye. More applause, yes. [Round of applause].

[Music plays].