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Author/Interview subject: Jacqueline Wilson (JW)
Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth (JF)
Other speakers: Audience (Aud)

JF: Welcome to the latest Authors Live event, organised by the Scottish Book Trust in association with BBC Scotland. I'm Janice Forsyth, very, very warm welcome indeed! And you know we were all just very disappointed that the December event had to be cancelled, that was with Peter, er with Phillip Pullman, but we're so delighted that we're off to an absolutely cracking start in 2011 with today's event. Now this, as I'm sure you know, is one of a series of virtual author events, watched by many, many thousands of children online on Glow, and indeed in schools right across the UK, but we also have an audience here with us today. They are primary 7 pupils from Deans Primary School in Livingston. Have a wee look at them, here we they are, if you all look at this camera here you can all wave to each other. Hello! Aren't they a lovely bunch! Marvellous you've made lots of new friends. Now if you are watching remotely I know that you know this already but maybe the teachers aren't so sure about it, if the image freezes at all or buffers, that's perfectly normal during an internet broadcast, don't try to fix it, it will right itself eventually. So let's get to the main event, let's meet our author, I know that all the children here today and you too out there are terribly excited to meet her, I am too. She is Jacqueline Wilson, she's written so many books for children, she was children's laureate from 2005-7, she was awarded an OBE in 2002 for her services to literacy in schools, and she was made a dame in 2008. She is very, very busy, so we're extremely lucky to have her with us today. So please out there and here, give a huge welcome to Jacqueline Wilson!

Aud: (Applause)

JW: Hello everybody, it's lovely for me to be here today, it gives you a kind of weird feeling to know that so many thousands of children are watching us all over the country too, so if any of you are going to be yawning or picking your nose, remember, many, many children will be watching you! It's weird for me too because when I was your age I knew I very badly wanted to be a writer. How many of you want to be writers? Anybody? Put your hands up if you do. Right. Well I used not only to write lots of stories, but I used to fantasise about what it

would be like to be a famous writer, and when I used to go to school I had to go about half an hours walk to school. I used to pretend that I was being interviewed or giving talks about my books, and it's so weird now that many, many years later, these things are actually happening in real life for me. Now it was the only thing I was any good at when I was at school, writing. I was totally hopeless at maths, anybody here in the audience here really, really useless at any kind of arithmetic, anybody? Yes! Well I was the sort of person that when we had problems, when we had those problems where, you know, you have three men in a field and it takes them seven days to dig a hole and it says how long will it take fifteen men – I would never get to grips with the actual mathematical problem, I would just think 'why are these men digging a hole in the field? What's it for? Is it a swimming pool?', and everybody else would be writing down the answer, and I never worked out how to do it. So I wasn't very good at most school subjects. I was awful also awful at any kind of sporty thing, anybody here really hate it when you do rounders or netball or P.E at all? Oh, no, really sporty kids. I was useless! I was reasonably popular at school, but when it came to picking teams everybody would say 'well I'll have anybody, but not Jackie', 'cause I couldn't catch a ball, I couldn't throw a ball, I couldn't run fast, and it was pretty humiliating. So it was wonderful that I could write stories, and sometimes the teachers liked my stories so much they would actually call me to the front of the classroom, and I'd have to read aloud my story. And in year 5, I had my most favourite teacher of all, MR Townshend, he was so lovely, and he gave us all writing projects to do, and I said solemnly that I wanted to write a novel, and he didn't laugh at me, he said 'good for you Jacqueline, go ahead with it', and do you know I have still got it! Here it is, it's falling to bits, and it's got a very silly title, it's called The Maggots. That was the surname of this great big family – I loved to write about big families 'cause I was an only child and I thought what fun it would be to have lots and lots of brothers and sisters. Em now I'd called this a novel but as you can see it's only about fourteen/fifteen pages long, but I thought I'd written a really, really long book. And this family is pretty similar to the sort of families I write about nowadays, because there's a mum and a dad who've got all sorts of worries and problems, I've actually drawn little frowny lines on the mum's forehead, and they've got one, two, three, four, five, six, Seven children: there's a teenager, who's very full of herself and stays out late with her boyfriend, and worries her mum terribly; there's a rather earnest girl, with glasses, who loves reading; there's a girl with plaits, who's desperate to be an actress; there are identical twins, who keep playing tricks on people and get up to mischief; there's a shy little boy who gets teased, and there's a very fierce funny little girl with an awful lot of curly hair. Now do these actually remind you of any of the characters I write about now, even at the age of nine, or ten, I was writing the sort of stories that I

write nowadays. My writing style though certainly was a bit embarrassing, and I would blush if I read any of it aloud to you, because it's really not that good, but it shows I was trying. And so that is how I wrote stories when I was your age. So I wonder do you have any ideas about how I write my stories now, do you imagine me sitting in front of a state of the art computer, or maybe lying back on a sofa, dictating to a secretary, no? I do it in exactly the same way, in a notebook with a pen, every morning, even this morning, I took out my notebook as soon as I wake up, sit up in bed and start writing. Now this story that I'm writing at the moment, it doesn't just fill this notebook, I think this is the fifth notebook, and now that's chapter fifteen, and actually my handwriting is nowhere near as neat as it was when I was a little girl. But this is the way I like to write, I often change my mind, I cross things out, I'm in my own private little world, writing away, and then when I've finished writing the entire story in longhand, then I have to sit down at my computer and type it all out, which is quite a task because often I can barely read my own handwriting, and then that is the time when I stop being creative and writing just for myself, then when I'm typing it out on the computer I can change all the different bits and pieces, I can hone my paragraphs, I can think of more interesting ways of expressing things. I can also think of my readers and think 'now will they find this bit boring?' or 'will they understand this bit?', and I sort things out as I go. So that is all the practical bit, the typing out on the computer part, the exciting lovely bit is when I'm writing, and also I'm gonna tell you something that possibly might irritate some of your teachers, I don't plan it all out beforehand. That's because I've written so many books, it's about a hundred books now, but somehow there's something in my brain that knows how to pace a book, how to work it all out, how to have exciting bits and then come to the right sort of conclusion. So when I start writing my stories now, I just think as vividly as I can of the characters, try and make them as real to me as my own best friend is, and then when I know all about them I just have some very rough idea of what they're gonna be thinking what's gonna happen to them, I start writing, and that's what makes it exciting for me, because I don't know what's gonna happen on the next page, or in the middle, or even at the end, and so it keeps me going. I find if I plan it all out carefully I've got fed up with the story before I even start. So I love, I love the whole idea of going into shops and choosing lovely notebooks, I have all sorts of different pens, I'd tried my hardest to make writing as fun and as interesting as I can because I don't actually always feel like writing. Lots of people think that writers suddenly, it's as if a light goes on in their head, inspiration, and I have to sit down to write. Often I really have to push myself, make myself actually sit up and start writing, but the moment I'm in my own imaginary world then somehow it takes over and it's not as if I'm actually, me, writing a story, it's almost as if there's a television screen inside my head, and I'm

experiencing it. Now when you choose to write a story, you can write it all different ways. I find it easiest to write in the first person, as if I am the child themselves telling the story, I find it's the most immediate and interesting way to write, and it's certainly a good way, if you're an adult writing for children, it helps you actually remember what it felt like to be a child, and I at the moment, I can't see any wood to touch, I'll cross my fingers, I haven't run out of ideas, and as I said, I have now managed to write about a hundred books. Although often when people here my name there's just one book, one character, that people think of, and that's probably because I've now written four books about this character, there've been a very successful long running television series, all sorts of different merchandising about her.. Has anybody got any idea which character I'm thinking of?

Aud: (mumbling)

A Girl in Aud: Is it Tracy Beaker?

JW: Tracy Beaker, absolutely! And whenever I talk about my books, I have to tell the very silly but true story, about how I got Tracy's name, because I knew I wanted to write about a child stuck in a children's home, absolutely desperate to be fostered, and I wanted to write about it in a very sort of fast, funny sort of way, with lots and lots of illustrations, and I knew she had to have the right sort of name. I wanted something quirky, and yet something believable and I knew I wanted her first name to be Tracy but I couldn't think of a good surname, last name for her, and I was thinking about this one morning in my bath. Now this is another place that I find quite inspirational, I don't know if any of you like to lie back in your bath and just day-dream. So there I was, in my bath this morning, just thinking 'right, I really wanna write this story about my girl Tracy, but what on earth shall I call her for her last name', because I knew I wanted the title of the story to be The Story of Tracy...and then I wanted this absolutely perfect surname. So I looked all round my bathroom for inspiration. Now I don't know what your bathrooms are like at home, but mine is just the conventional sort, and looking for ideas I thought 'shall I call her Tracy Facecloth? No. Tracy Soap? No. Tracy Toothbrush? No. Tracy Tap? Certainly not. Tracy Toilet? No, definitely not suitable..', and so I decided 'right, I am never ever gonna get any kind of inspiration just lying here in the bath hoping that some ideal surname will come to me'. So I sat up, washed my hair and then when I rinsed my hair, I don't have any elaborate shower attachments, I just keep an old snopy beaker on the end of the bath, run it under the taps and sleuth my hair down. So I reached for the beaker, and then stared at it, and thought 'Tracy... Beaker', and that I promise you, is the exact way I got Tracy's surname. So it just shows you that if you're

lucky, you can get ideas from anywhere! Now lots of children think I write out of my own true experience, and that all the things that have happened to all the people in my books have happened to me. In which case, I would have had the most tragic, terrible childhood ever! Mostly I make everything up, but I did decide it might be fun to write my own true story. Now what's it called when you write your own story about yourself? It begins with A. Anybody got any ideas? Yes!

A Girl in Aud: An autobiography.

JW: An autobiography, well done! And I've written my own autobiography for children, Jackie Daydream, from when I was born – so I've obviously got a vivid imagination, 'cause I can't really think back that long ago – till when I was eleven years old. I called it Jackie Daydream because that was the nickname a very fierce teacher at my primary school gave me, not like my lovely Mr Townshend, my favourite teacher who encouraged me with my writing, Mr Branson was in year six, and my goodness he was fierce! And in those days, long, long ago in the 1950's, teachers were allowed to hit you whenever they wanted, and if they thought you weren't paying attention they would sort of throw chalk at you, even the blackboard eraser at you, and Mr Branson used to parade up and down all the aisles in the classroom and peer at what you were writing, and if you made an inkblot or a spelling mistake his ruler would come out and whack you across the knuckles. And so I was terrified of Mr Branson, we all were, and I never dared look him in the eye, and because of this, because I was so scared and shy of him, he said I was sly, which was very unfair I think, and he actually called me Jackie Slyboots. And also it was in Mr Branson's class that I had to wear glasses. I think I was very short-sighted throughout my childhood – maybe that was one of the reasons why I could never catch a ball, I couldn't see it coming at me – and so I went to the opticians and they said 'you've gotta wear glasses', so I had to go to school wearing my first pair of glasses, and you know what it's like when you have to go to school with either glasses, or braces on your teeth, or maybe a new rather odd hairstyle, you're really worried that everybody is gonna laugh at you and tease you. Well all my friends were absolutely cool about my glasses, but Mr Branson took one look at me and said 'oh look it's Jackie Four-eyes', which again was a really horrible nickname. But the other nickname he called me, I think was entirely justified, and that was Jackie Daydream, because instead of always concentrating in the classroom, and listening to how you solve maths problems, I would frequently go off into a little world of my own, make up another bit of a new story, just sort of gaze out the window. I wonder are there any daydreamers here at all? It's very tempting sometimes and so, and this would, Mr Branson would look at me and see from my eyes that I just wasn't concentrating, and he'd suddenly shout 'Jackie Daydream pay attention!' and so when I wrote

the book I thought, okay I'll call it Jackie Daydream. And there were all sorts of things about my best friends at school, my boyfriend when I got into year 6, our holidays, all the different things I liked to do, or hated to do, and there are two chapters, not one, two chapters about all my favourite books, because I was a total bookworm. I absolutely lived in the library and I knew right from the start that the two most important things in my life were reading and writing, and so it was great fun for me to write Jackie Daydream, and there are all sorts of photos of all my friends at school, and teachers, and I included a photograph of Mr Townshend. I was also on, I think it was Blue Peter on children's television talking about Jackie Daydream, and wonderfully Mr Townshend – though he was an old, old gentleman by that stage – actually got to hear about this and wrote to me. Sadly he's dead now, but for just a little while I was back in touch with lovely Mr Townshend, and I could tell him just how much he meant to me, and how very much I felt he'd encouraged me with my writing. Now I normally write very contemporary novels but sometimes I like to do something just that little bit different, and I've always been passionately interested in the Victorians, now I wonder, do you guys actually study the Victorians at school at all? When I wrote a book called The Lottie Project, and I was asking children about studying the Victorians, often children looked at me as if I was completely crazy saying I was interested in them, they say 'you like the Victorians, they're so booring!'. But I tried in The Lottie Project to show a modern child who also had that idea about the Victorians but then was gently converted, but then when I came to write this book Hetty Feather, I pretended I actually was a Victorian girl, Hetty is a foundling, now that doesn't mean she's an orphan, it means back in Victorian times when women had children and they weren't married and didn't have any means of supporting the children, they couldn't keep them themselves, and so what they sometimes were forced to do was to give them into this particular institution, the foundling hospital, and then they could never see their babies again. Imagine how sad it was for them, and how sad it was for the children, being brought up in this institution which was very strict and fierce, with matrons who very much just told the children what to do, the children they had enough to eat and even the girls were given a good education, but they were very much told that they were foundlings, they had to know their place, and when the girls and boys got to the age of fourteen, when they left the foundling hospital they couldn't go on and do all the exciting things that we can do nowadays. It wasn't quite so bad for the boys because many of them went off to be soldiers, but for the girls there was only one occupation thought suitable for them and that was to be servants. Now my Hetty is a fierce little thing, she doesn't actually want to grow up to be a maid. She's very much a rebel, she's got bright red hair and often people say that people with bright red hair have got fierce tempers, I think that's a

bit silly, but certainly Hetty has a temper of her own and she has a mind of her own, and she decides what she's going to do, and all sorts of different things happen to Hetty. At the end of the book it has what I hope is a good ending, and a surprise ending, but since I've written it so many people have got in touch with me and said, 'come on, what actually happens next to Hetty and did she ever end up a maid, and did she ever find Madame Adeline at the circus again, and what is going to happen to her now she knows who her true mother is?'. And Hetty herself didn't seem to go away, she was sort of as if a ghost of Hetty was sitting beside me all the time, so I did write some other books but now I am writing another story about Hetty, a sequel, very nearly finished it. I'm now on about chapter eighteen I think, it'll be about twenty chapters, and yet I think even at the end of this sequel to Hetty, there's probably more I want to write, so it's probably gona end up with three books, and when you write three books all about the same character it's called a trilogy. So there might well be a Hetty Feather trilogy, I hope so, 'cause I love writing about Hetty, though you have to work harder if you're writing an actual historical book, 'cause you gota make sure you've got the facts right. I couldn't have Hetty looking at an outfit and saying, 'Oooh that looks so cool', because you didn't use words like that back in Victorian times, and she couldn't text her friend on her mobile, and she couldn't play computer games, and she couldn't watch the television, and she couldn't jump in the car because none of these things had been invented. So I had to think myself back to what it would be like and then I particularly had to make an effort to try and imagine what it would be like to be brought up in this harsh institution, everybody wearing the same odd uniform, never understanding what's going on in the outside world. But it was thrilling to be able to do this, it was as if I were leading another life altogether. I've even started dreaming about Victorian times now because I got so interested in it. But I don't intend just to write Victorian stories, and I thought just for the last few minutes, I'll talk a little bit about my latest book, which actually comes out in February, and as you can see it's called Lily Alone, and this is a bang up to the minute contemporary story about my poor girl Lily, whose the eldest of four. And there's Lily, and then there are the twins, Baxter and Bliss, then there's the very little sister, Pixie. And they've got a mum, and their mum loves them in lots of ways, but the mum isn't the sort of kind, sensible, loving, gentle mum that you would want her to be. Mum's very young, mum wants her own kind of life, mum gets a new boyfriend and mum decides to go off to Spain with the boyfriend and leave the kids on their own. She makes a tentative arrangement that somebody, maybe, will come in and look after them and see they're alright, but this all goes horribly wrong, and Lily, whose just eleven, is left in charge of her brother and two sisters. And they don't actually go to school because she's worried that one of the teachers at school might find out. And so

they just, they live at home, and they go out to the local playground, and for a while mum's left them enough food but then mum doesn't come back when she's supposed to, and then a teacher comes round wondering why they haven't been coming to school, so they decide that until mum does come back they will camp out somewhere in this great big park. Now I thought this gave me lots of opportunity as a writer because, partly, if you were in this situation it might be fun, you could eat more or less when you wanted, you wouldn't have to go to bed straight away at night. If you were camping out in a park it would be exciting, you could play all sorts of games, but then also it would get scary, you would feel so worried about things, and poor Lily, she's got not only to care for herself but she's got to try and care for her family too. In effect she's got to be the mum, and I had great fun going round Richmond Park, which is a great big park, ten miles round park, just outside London, very near where I lived, and I tried to think 'where would I hide in this park?', and there's lots and lots of very old oak trees which are hollow inside, and I found the exact right tree which the children could actually climb up inside and hide in. There are many cafes in Richmond Park, I thought well the kids wouldn't exactly steal food but maybe, you know the way sometimes, you know, ladies get together and they eat but they leave large wedges of cake behind or sandwiches. The children could always come up and sort of grab a bit, so they could get extra food that way round. And I thought, 'what would really frighten them at night in the park? What would the fun things be?' and I had a really fantastic time writing *Lily Alone*. And I did wonder if any of you fancy writing, I thought you might like to write a story like this, about some children – you invent your own characters – stuck in a situation with no adults around them and they've just got to fend for themselves. And if this idea doesn't grab you, maybe you'd fancy writing a Victorian book, maybe you'd fancy writing about a child in a children's home, like *Tracy Beaker*, or you might even want to write your own autobiography – it's up to you! Now I've talked for quite a while, I think this is gonna be the best bit of all, when we actually have some questions! So I know that some of you have got some questions, and I hope that there might be lots and lots of questions from all the other children viewing all over the country, so whose..

JF: There are, there are indeed a great many question – a round of applause I think for Dame Jacqueline Wilson.

Aud: (Applause)

JF: I think it's so wonderful to hear you talking so enthusiastically about what you do. You're clearly as enthusiastic about the writing as everyone is about the reading of your books. Now as you can imagine, so many questions have come in from

across the country, but we have a question here from one of the members of our audience. Could you put your hand up whoever's going to ask the question? Yes just along at the front row here, and we'll give you a microphone. Thank you

Girl: This is the one of, (clears throat), sorry, this is one of the most asked questions but what inspired you to start writing books?

JK: This is always the bit where I flounder a little, trying to think what inspires me, as sometimes I get very lucky in that a situation presents itself to me. For instance I was in America with my daughter Emma, we were sitting in Central Park just people watching – fascinating place – and um, and this fantastic looking woman walked past, very pretty but very exotic looking. She had amazing decorative tattoos all over her, and she had two girls with her in very sort of bizarre dressing up clothes, and when they'd gone past my daughter said to me, 'don't they look like the sort of children that you'd write about?' and I thought yes. So I made a little note in my diary 'strange mother, lots of tattoos with two girls', and can anybody tell me the title of the book that I went on to write after that?

A Girl in Aud: Is it the Illustrated Mum?

JW: It is indeed The Illustrated Mum. So sometimes I get given a gift, other times it's just whatever pops into my mind really. I mean I've, I always get worried, you know, will I run out of ideas? Will I cease to feel inspired? But fingers crossed, it hasn't happened yet!

JF: Thank you for asking that question, and yes indeed that question was asked by I think at the last count thirty-eight different schools right across –

JW: Oh my goodness!

JF: the country. There you go. Eh now this question comes from Mia in Hyndland Primary School in Glasgow, and also from Bridge Academy, and the question Jacqueline is, 'why in some of your books do people die?'. Lots of your books are to do with sad stuff, or even death. This is a grim thing to talk about for most people, especially children, taking this into account, why do you still write about it?

JW: I think that's a very good point Mia. I think because it's interesting. Now way back in Victorian times lots and lots of children's books had the most harrowing death scenes, and thought it's very sad, often they would be quite favourite sections of books because, I think when you read a book, it's lovely to read a book that makes you laugh but, it's always quite interesting to read a book that makes you cry too. To get your emotions engaged within the story. And from time to time,

yes I plead guilty, I do have some characters dying, or a pet dying, and I try to write about it as truthfully as I can, not to be morbid, but sadly it is something that often we have to come to terms with, maybe a granddad dies, or your pet cat dies, or whatever, and it's no use glossing over things because it is very sad and very upsetting indeed. So I try and write about things as truthfully as possible, but I try even, I know in *My Sister Jodie* there is a very sad ending, but I did try to have a sort of, a little feeling of uplift and hope at the end because I truly don't want to depress people at all.

JF: Thank you very much, well that was a serious question, now to a lighter one which has just come in a few minutes ago from St Ann's Primary School. Hello St Ann's. And this is: Is it true, Jacqueline, that every time you write a book you get a new ring? They've spotted the rings.

JW: This is a wonderful thing I said once on television and then it became a sort of self fulfilling thing in that I had celebrated writing several books by buying a new ring and then I said it on television and children started saying to me each time I brought out a new book and I did a book signing "Oo where's the new ring?", so I thought hmm, I'm going to make to most of this. So I do, for the most part, go and buy a new ring. This is the newest ring and I'm very proud of it and it's got a little frog sitting on the front and it's very big and very sparkly, and so that's my favourite baby at the moment.

JF: An exclusive there. Now this is from St Patrick's Primary in Auchinleck in East Ayrshire. Are you happy with eh television programmes made from your books.

JW: I am very happy with the television programmes. Obviously Tracy Beaker has been the most popular television programme and I think Dani Harmer has done a wonderful job making my Tracy come true for so many people and there's also been other adaptations of my work that I've really really enjoyed, particularly there have been two that I've thought have been absolutely perfect. One was the television version of *The Illustrated Mum* and the other one was the television version of *Dustbin Baby* and I get sent a DVD and I must admit that from time to time I watch them, Not to pat myself on the back but to applaud the way the director and the actors have brought my characters to life. I think they're fantastic.

JF: We all know that feeling when you're reading a book and you love it so much and you're disappointed when you come to the end of it. Interesting question from Islay Primary, have you ever written a book where you didn't want the writing to end? You didn't want to the book to end?

JW: I'm always quite pleased when I get to the end and in fact I'm childish enough that when I've written that last sentence I actually print The End. But it's always a delight but by the next day I'm already starting to miss the characters and wish that they were still with me. I mean at the moment I write two books a year and so I only have about a week in-between books and then I start off with new characters, but just occasionally a character will haunt me like Hetty Feather, like Tracy Beaker indeed, and then when that happens I think okay, time to write a sequel.

JF: You give yourself a week in-between? My goodness me.

JW: I do

JF: Now this comes from Ifton Heath Primary School from Meg Jandril, hello there, and Freehold Community School in Oldham: apart from writing, what do you like to do in your spare time? It doesn't sound like you have much.

JW: I love to read. I always have a book on the go. Whenever I go on holiday I'm quite good about clothes and just have a few easily packed outfits, but my suitcase always weighs a ton because I take about 10 books with me because I have this fear that I will run out of things to read, so I love reading. I like going swimming. It's the only sporty thing I can do, and I do try and go swimming. I don't go everyday now, but as often as I can I swim. I love to shop and it's very frustrating because I am in Glasgow at the moment with fantastic shops and I don't think I'm going to have time to go round them all. I love art galleries, I love going to films, I love walking. I don't look like the sort of person who strides out but I do, I like to go for 2 hour walks. Ummm....what else do I like? I like seeing my friends and having fun.

JF: It does sound like fun. Now this might be an impossible question to answer. It comes from St Thomas Moore Catholic Primary School in Peterborough. Hi. The question is what message can we learn from all of your books together?

JW: I don't actually set out to do books with messages. I'm trying hard to write a book that will entertain children and engage them and that they're fun to read but I suppose, if there's one message in my book it's that some people are from some reason or another, odd ones out. They don't fit in, they don't have a conventional family background, they might look a bit different, they might like to do things differently, and I think the basic message is it's okay if you're different. In fact it's great if you're different, and don't let's pick on other people because they're different.

JF: We have some questions here about young people wanting to be writers. I might combine a couple about advice that you would give to people who want to be writers and that's from Albyn School in Aberdeen from Olivia in (6 Betts), St Elizabeth's, Jessica, who's a huge fan and can't quite believe she has access to you, Sister Laura Margaret Market Rasen Primary School from Hannah Thompson, Anderson Primary School from Ryan and also from Hannah in Aberdeen saying that her stories right now are about 3 sides of A4. How do you build up to writing a whole book?

JW: Well, that question is simply its age, Hannah, in that when I was your age 3 sides were fine and in fact sometimes made my writing bigger and more sprawly simply to take up longer on the page. Sometimes I do that now though I can really fool myself, but it's just the older you get, the more you're ability gets to spin out the story, to imagine it so fiercely, to write all the different bits about it, so that the readers feel that it's actually happening right in front of their eyes. That's just a skill that happens naturally as you get older through many years of practice. Writing tips. I always suggest people keep a diary because it's a wonderful way of actually getting into the writing habit. I've lost count of the number of people that say to me, Oh I'd love to be a writer, but I don't have the time. You can make time. Even if you just wrote for half an hour a day, that would be enough for one really long novel each year.

JF: Sadly we are running out of time now. We could have talked for so much longer, but that's where we're going to have to leave it. Thank you very much, Jacqueline Wilson, and thank you for all your questions. I'm sorry we couldn't get through them all. We tried to get through as many as possible. I do hope you can join us for the next event which is with the author Eoin Colfer. That's on world book day, Thursday 3rd March at 11 o'clock. Huge thank you to Jacqueline Wilson and to our audience, to all of you for watching. Goodbye and happy reading!

JW: Bye-bye. Lovely to talk to you all.

Aud: (Applause)