

Jill Murphy was born in London in 1949 and attended the Ursuline Convent in Wimbledon. From a very early age she was drawing and writing stories, and was already putting books together (literally, with a stapler) by the time she was six. She enjoyed reading boarding school stories, and together with her experience of convent school life, this provided much of the material and inspiration for *Miss Cackle's Academy* in *The Worst Witch*, which she started when she was 15. Mildred Hubble is very much a self-portrait! She went on to study at Chelsea, Croydon and Camberwell Schools of Art. Jill worked in a children's home for four years and as a nanny for a year, before becoming a freelance writer and illustrator. The *Worst Witch* stories have become some of the most outstandingly successful titles on the Young Puffin paperback list and have sold more than 3 million copies worldwide. They were also made into a major ITV series.

Jill is also well known for her picture books, in particular the stories about the Large Family which detail the domestic chaos of an elephant family. She was commended in the 1980 Kate Greenaway Medal for *Peace at Last*. *A Quiet Night In* was shortlisted for the same medal in 1994. *Five Minute's Peace* won the 1987 Parents Magazine Best Books for Babies Award, as well as being shortlisted for the 1986 Children's Book Award. *All in One Piece* was highly commended for the 1987 Kate Greenaway Award and shortlisted for the 1987 Children's Book Award. *The Last Noo-noo* won the 0-5 category of the 1995 Smarties Book Prize as well as numerous other awards. In 1996 it was adapted as a play and performed at the Polka Theatre, Wimbledon, London. In 2007, Jill received an honorary fellowship from University College Falmouth. She currently lives in Cornwall with her son.

As a child

Jill was born and brought up in London and says that she can't remember a time she wasn't a storyteller/illustrator. "My earliest memory (my mum tells me I was two), is sitting on the kitchen floor surrounded by sheets of drawings." By the age of six, Jill was stapling her own little illustrated storybooks together – her mum kept them all and she still has them today! "It's great fun to see them all these years later," she says. "You can see how my handwriting and drawing improved as time went by." Jill loved primary school, where, she says "I could always draw my way out of trouble if we had a tricky history project!" – but she went to a very strict academic convent which she hated for the first year. "The nuns didn't care that I could draw fantastic pictures," she says. "Where was my physics homework!?"

As an adult

Jill left school at sixteen, and went on to attend both Chelsea Art School and Croydon Art School. Two years later, she finished her first novel *The Worst Witch*, about a little witch who doesn't fit in at her new school – a story she says was heavily based on her experiences at the convent. She sent it off to three big London publishers, who all turned it down, and Jill "put it in a drawer and decided to concentrate on other things instead." After a spell working as a nanny and in a children's home, which she loved, Jill had a phone call from a small publisher interested in *The Worst Witch*. It was printed when she was twenty-four, sold out almost immediately, and Jill knew for sure she wanted to follow a career as an author/illustrator.

As an artist

Jill has written and illustrated numerous books since *The Worst Witch* was published, including three more books about little witch Mildred Hubble. Jill's work has won her numerous prizes and awards; her first picture book, *Peace at Last* was Commended for the Kate Greenaway Medal and she was shortlisted for the same Medal for *A Quiet Night In*, the first of the Mr and Mrs Large picture books about the endearing domestic chaos of an elephant family. The other titles are *A Piece of Cake*, *Five Minutes Peace* (Winner of the Best Books for Babies Award and shortlisted for the Children's Book Award), *All in One Piece* (Highly Commended for the Kate Greenaway Award and shortlisted for the Children's Book Award) and *Mr Large in Charge*. The stories have now been adapted for television. *The Last Noo-noo*, about a small monster called Marlon, won three awards, including the Smarties Book Prize, and Marlon returns again in the acclaimed *All For One*.