

Vivian French - as a child

Vivian doesn't remember her schooldays with any affection at all. "I had a nightmarish imagination," she says, "and I could always see exactly how things could go wrong. I ended up scared of everything - games, teachers, lessons - and I was always sick on Sunday nights if there was school the next day. My best times were when I went to stay with my grandparents; they had a huge garden, and I lived a blissfully happy fantasy life in among the trees."

As an adult

Vivian's first job ever was at the National Book League (now BookTrust) where she was always reading children's books. She left to have her first daughter, then joined a travelling theatre company. "My whole life changed," she says. "I loved the acting, and I loved touring. I began to write plays for us to perform, but it never occurred to me to write stories."

As an artist

Vivian has written dozens of books on all subjects and for all ages, including the board book *Lullaby Lion*, the picture book *Polly's Pink Pyjamas*, the non-fiction picture books *Yukky Worms*, *Chocolate and Caterpillar Butterfly*, (shortlisted for the 1993 Kurt Maschler award), the fabulous comic fantasy series *Tales from the Five Kingdoms* and six first experience books about the Buttons family (publishing in 2012). She says, "I like to move between picture books and teenage angst, between fiction and non-fiction, between retellings and new ideas. Someone wise once told me that it's all right to be a free wheeler (at the time I was earnestly searching for a defining label) and I'm happy with that."

Vivian has been writer-in-residence at libraries, schools and festivals, including the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Wordplay, Swansea. She was a regular reviewer for The Guardian for six years, and travels all around the world swapping and sharing ideas with children and adults.

Things you didn't know about Vivian French

1. When she was little she had an imaginary lion called Jesus.
2. She is absolutely no good at cooking at all; all she can make is macaroni cheese.
3. She's written three books under the name of Louis Catt - her cat's called Louis.
4. She once got muddled and told a school that she had five daughters instead of four, and had to make up a whole story about the extra daughter.
5. She hates mince pies, and beetroot with vinegar on it.
6. Her favourite journey is the number 22 bus route in Edinburgh; it trundles along beside the Water of Leith and takes her home.
7. She really likes cars, and would LOVE to have a Mark One Ford Cortina (she used to have one but it fell apart.) If anyone's got one going spare, please send it c/o Walker Books.
8. She is rather nervous of cows, especially when they stare at her.
9. Her favourite food is mango sorbet. Or raspberries. Or both together.
10. She is usually hopeful.