

Anne Fine Extended Biography

A past Children's Laureate, and a multi award-winning author, Anne was awarded an OBE for services to literature in 2003.

"When I was young, it never occurred to me that I might be a writer. I think I must have thought that books were born on the library shelves," Anne recalls. So how did she end up as one of the best-loved and best-known children's authors of our time? Amazingly, Anne claims to owe her beginning to bad weather.

"One January there was such a blizzard I couldn't get to the library and so sat down and began a book of my own." This kind of gentle humour has become a trademark of Anne Fine's work. "I still adore funny books," she says. "And since I write for the reader inside myself, I always end up with the kind of book I would have loved to read (if only someone else had bothered to write for me)."

It seems that many other readers have the same taste in literature as Anne. One of her most recent titles, *The Jamie and Angus Stories*, wryly recounts the adventures of a boy and his toy Highland bull. The collection won enthusiastic reviews and has already become a staple for bedtime rituals and classroom read-alouds. *Publishers Weekly* said, "The breezy, often humorous repartée . . . plus the authentic interplay of boy and toy keep the narrative moving at a sprightly clip."

Although many readers find themselves giggling aloud as they read Anne Fine's writing, her books can be deceptively weighty. "A lot of my work, even for fairly young readers, raises quite serious social issues," she admits. "Growing up is a long and confusing business. I try to show that the battle through the chaos is worthwhile and can, at times, be seen as very funny."

In 1994, audiences around the world had the opportunity to experience this unique combination of humour and realism in the hit movie 'Mrs Doubtfire', inspired by Anne's *Madame Doubtfire* and starring comedic genius Robin Williams.

Anne is the author of more than fifty books for children and her books have been translated into nearly thirty languages. Twice chosen as Children's Author of the Year in the British Book Awards, Anne Fine was named Children's Laureate for 2002.

As a child

Anne was born in Leicester. When she was three, her mother had triplet girls, so Anne was sent off to school early. She says she can't ever remember not being able to read. When she reached the top of infant school, she had to wait a whole year until the junior school would take her, so spent the year reading the piles of books in the headteacher's office. "I loved that year," she says, "and since the practice for being a writer is reading, reading, reading, it was an excellent start. People who read a lot get to know, without even having to think about it much, exactly how writing works." In secondary school, Anne learnt French and Spanish. She tried to learn Greek and Russian too, but could never get her head round their different alphabets (so she has a special sympathy for dyslexics). It was rather a strict girls' school. Anne says she enjoyed the peace and quiet in the classrooms, the sense of order and fairness and the very interesting work.

As an adult

Anne married at twenty, which seems very young to her now. She had two daughters and she and her philosopher husband, Kit, began a series of moves across Britain, America and Canada. "Moving is hard work," says Anne "especially with young children. But the nice thing is that you can change as you go along, leave old bits of yourself behind and be different, without forever having old friends and family around to insist, 'You're not like that.'" In the end, Anne came back to Britain, where her children went to secondary school and university. Anne has a big hairy dog called Henry, lives in a stone house by a river and enjoys walking and reading - especially walking on the flat along the river - and reading in the bath.

As an author

Anne writes in absolute silence (apart from her own curses and mutters). She never lets herself be hurried to finish anything too fast and she thinks that's why so many of her books have won her prizes, here and abroad. She starts off in pencil and gradually moves on to typing up. When she starts anything, she knows exactly which age she is writing for, "Myself at five, myself at nine, myself at thirteen, myself at forty-four." She says, "Write a book you'd love to read, exactly as you'd love to read it. Then hope you're not too much of a weirdo!"

Things you didn't know about Anne Fine

1. Anne loathes shopping and wears her clothes till they fall off her.
2. Anne has unrivalled clutch control.
3. Anne wears her watch on her right hand.
4. Anne still bites her nails till they bleed.
5. Anne detests cats (not frightened of them; just detests them).
6. Anne reads for hours almost every day.
7. Anne always goes to see films in the day, because it's quieter.
8. Anne never shows anyone her writing until it's finished.
9. Anne hates people who sniff in public.
10. Anne is bored rigid by anything to do with sport.