

Tim Wynne-Jones

As a child

I was born in the Wirral, Cheshire, from which I ran away with a tea cosy on my head, if my family is to be believed. At four, I was cruelly snatched away from my pleasant life (and my little white pedal car) by bandits masquerading as my parents -- shanghaied! -- and brought to northern British Columbia, which is right next door to Alaska and not at all like Cheshire, since you asked. Actually, the bandits turned out to really be my parents, after all, so I was stuck without a legal leg to stand on and had to adjust to life at the end of the world. Which turned out to be fun, really, what with hunting with the Indians (true), having black bears scratch their backs on the side of our house (true), boarding a battleship just over from the Korean War (true), and discovering the cure for athlete's foot (not true). I have five siblings all of them either girls or boys. From the age of eleven I wanted to be an architect and studied hard towards that end. I was accepted to Architecture school and was there for three years before they threw me out for the perfectly good reason that, as far as they could tell, were I to design buildings, people would die. So I joined a rock band, which seemed the only alternative. I later went back to school and ended up with a Masters Degree in Visual Art. Finally I was ready for a life as a writer. Life is nothing if it is not surprising.

As an adult

I first studied at the University of Waterloo, in Ontario, Canada. I then received my MFA from York University, which is also in Ontario and not to be confused with the one in the UK. I started writing when I was in my first rock band. I wrote songs that just seemed to get longer and longer so that instead of verses they started having chapters, and the band had usually packed up and gone on to the next gig before I even got to the good part, so they asked me to leave as well. I was lucky enough to meet an actress who thought I was clever because she didn't know better and before she figured it out we had three children. Amanda Lewis (the actress in question) is still with me and we still have three children but they're grown up now and one of them lives in London where she's a dancer. Amanda is the artistic director of a theatre school and my two sons live in Halifax and Toronto. Well, one of them lives in each place, obviously; the younger of them is an actor and the older one is in business. They are all wonderful, of course, as children should be. It's their job, after all. I now live in the countryside an hour from Ottawa, the capital of Canada. But Amanda and I also live in Ottawa where her theatre school is. And we are on the verge of moving to England. My hope is that we're going to live in all three places at the same time, with side trips to Vermont in the USA where I teach in the graduate writing program at Vermont College of Fine Arts. To do this I am working feverishly at my lab in the basement to clone myself. So far all I've got is sheep.

As an author

Presently, I work in a loft at the top of the house I designed in the country. (And despite what my professors at school thought, no one has died in the house, so far.) I like to write early in the morning when there's no chance anyone is likely to phone and it's really quiet. I've spoken to the head of the local chapter of the union of birds and we've come to a collective agreement that they must only sing in lilting, uplifting tones while I'm working. No screeching or arguing. We've lived out here in the country for twenty years so it will be interesting to move back to the city, but we'll keep the country house so that I can run back here whenever I need the quiet. I've written 32 books, including three adult novels, fourteen picture books, three collections of short stories and a whole bunch of middle grade and young adult novels. Several of my books have been published in the UK including *The Boy in the Burning House* and *The Survival Game*, both of which were short-listed for the Guardian Prize. I'm so thrilled that Walker is bringing out *The Uninvited* in England.

Things you didn't know about Tim Wynne-Jones

1. I was lucky enough to read with J. K. Rowling and Kenneth Oppel at the Sky Dome in Toronto. It's the biggest reading ever, according to *The Guinness Book of Records* - 20,000 people!
2. I love crossword puzzles.
3. I love to cook. It's really my favourite thing to do. I especially love cooking Indian, Thai, Middle Eastern and Italian food, but I have yet to meet a kind of food I didn't love. Well, apart from roasted bees, which I'm allergic to.
4. I'm not related to Diana Wynne Jones. We talked about it once to see if maybe we were and decided it wasn't likely because her people hailed from the south of Wales and my forebears on my father side were from the north of Wales. I'm sure I don't need to explain.
5. I have a sister named Diana. I know, it's a very big coincidence. And I am truly allergic to bees.
6. In my first rock band I played the electric baseball bat. I was also lead singer, but there are lots of lead singers in the world and only a very few electric baseball bat players.
7. My favourite book ever is *The House at Pooh Corner*.
8. My favourite member of The Beatles is John.
9. I want to write a novel that's exactly the same shape as Sibelius's fifth symphony.
10. Bees and wasps and mixed vespids - I'm allergic to all of them. And in case you're wondering mixed vespids is not a kind of salad.