

## Q&A with author Fleur Hitchcock

### **Describe your book in about 15 words.**

Athan inherits an invention but it brings death and danger. Will he, his friends and his adored family survive?

### **Q. How do you get the ideas for your books.?**

Ideas come in like passing swallows, swooping through, and sometimes vanishing almost as soon as they arrived. They can come at any time and go before I can record them, and they are usually only tiny fragments that need to be woven together. They come when my mind is idle, staring from a train or maybe in the shower. It's an unpredictable process.

### **Q. Why did you want to write this book?**

This story has been lurking for an age. The settings were there while the story was half formed, but once I had Athan and his family I knew I wanted to let them free and I badly wanted other people to meet them.

### **Q. What is your favourite children's book? Both right now and when you were a child. Why?**

Oh! Impossible to say. I can remember the feeling of reading *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* - and loving the mix of adventure, fantasy and mystery. I also remember wanting Dido Twite as a friend. She popped up in several of Joan Aiken's books, and I adored them. And now? I might choose *Sky Hawk* by Gill Lewis. It's a much bigger hearted book than many, character driven and with a satisfying conclusion, but I also love *Framed*, by Frank Cottrell Boyce. It's a mystery, of sorts, but family based, and warm, and funny.

### **Q. Why are books important to you?**

I don't think anything else provides such escapism or relaxation. I can't sleep at night without reading. I always travel with a book. I work in a bookshop. I married a man who reads. They are essential to me.

### **Q. Are there any key influences on your work/the book?**

One of my favourite books is *Vanity Fair* which is set a little later than *The Boy Who Flew*, but which has an atmosphere that leeches from its pages and stays with the reader forever. Because of that book, I've read others from the period and collectively they form 'an influence'. Equally, *Black Hearts in Battersea* by Joan Aiken has hung around in the wings, and I definitely owe it a debt.

### **Q. Was the process of making a book as you expected? Were there any surprises?**

I've had more than 10 books published in the 10 years since I embarked on this book but I'm still always surprised by the skill of the editorial team. A good editor really can work wonders with something that has given a writer sleepless nights. It's transformative.

### **Q. What do you hope young readers take from the book?**

I hope that the characters and the world become real to them. I hope they remember them, just as I will forever remember some of the fictional characters that I met as a child.