

Shirley Hughes was born and grew up in West Kirby, near Liverpool. She studied at Liverpool Art School and at the Ruskin School of Art in Oxford, before embarking on a career as a freelance illustrator. At first she worked as an interpretive illustrator, but she began to write and design her own picture books when her children were very young. Her first book, *Lucy and Tom's Day*, was published in 1960. Now living in London's Notting Hill, Shirley Hughes has illustrated over two hundred children's books and is renowned as a champion of children's literature.

She has been the recipient of the Other Award, the Kate Greenaway Medal and the prestigious Eleanor Farjeon Award. She was shortlisted for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, which rewards the best in contemporary children's and young adult literature from all over the world, in 2010.

Shirley Hughes won the first ever [Book Trust Lifetime Achievement Award](#) for her outstanding contribution to children's literature.

Book Trust CEO, Diana Gerald, says: *'Book Trust is thrilled that our first ever Lifetime Achievement Award goes to someone whose remarkable, multi-talented contribution to children's fiction spans several generations and continues to this day. Her characters are imprinted on the memories of two or three generations, a recognition of their enduring charm. This evergreen storytelling is something we particularly want to celebrate with this award. 'Significantly, Shirley continues to innovate and create, providing young children with a love of reading that we know will give them a great start in life. We often hear about 'national treasures', but Shirley Hughes is up there with the best.'*

Shirley Hughes, says: *'Being chosen for the Booktrust Lifetime Achievement Award is a tremendous honour which I appreciate more than I can say. I have derived so much fulfilment from my long career, first as an illustrator of other artists' stories and then creating my own. Best of all has been perennially encountering very young children who are learning to look with such rapt pleasure and follow a story visually long before they are able to read.'*

In her own words: As a child

I grew up in a quiet seaside town near Liverpool, in the days when there was no television, only radio, which we listened to a lot. My older sisters and I messed about in the back garden, pored over comics and surveyed the world from the flat garage roof. There were acres of time to be filled in then. We combatted boredom by dressing up and acting out plays to any audience we could press into service (including the cats), making up fantasy worlds and, of course, drawing pictures. There was a good supply of books. Most inspiring were wonderful illustrated classics, with colour plates by artists like Arthur Rackham and Will Heath Robinson. Later, the cinema was a terrific source of glamour and narrative, as were the Victorian paintings in the Walker Arts Gallery, Liverpool. I am pretty sure that having a lot of time to read, to dream or simply mooch about, played a major part in my becoming an author/illustrator.

As an adult

When our quiet, well-conducted suburban childhood was rudely interrupted by World War II, the grown-ups, as luck would have it, were far too absorbed in the war effort to bother much about our academic, social and cultural achievements. With me, drawing stuck. I just went on doing it. I wrote too, but kept that secret. I had a good high-school education, but I got out as soon as I could and went to Liverpool Art School to study costume design, and later, at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford. This theatrical impulse turned into the desire to illustrate stories (another kind of theatre). I got the sketchbook habit, which has stayed with me always. You hang around, observing and drawing real people (especially, in my case, children), then you go back to the drawing board and make it all up. The characters in my stories are not my own children at that age, or anyone else's, but inspired by a combination of both.

As an artist

When I first started doing the rounds with a folio, way back in the 1950s, I got plenty of work illustrating other people's books, mostly in black and white line. It was an excellent apprenticeship. I was married with two small children when I tried my first picture book, *Lucy and Tom's Day*, an unassuming little book about everyday life. I was very tentative about using colour then. It took a long time to acquire the expansive confidence you need to let go and let it flow across the page. Two big breaks for me were *Dogger*, which was my first book to be widely published abroad, and being asked by Walker Books to do a series for very young children, which ended up, via The Nursery Collection, as *Olly and Me*. These books gave me an opportunity to use a very simple, first-person text, in a kind of rhythmical verse form. Recently, I have launched into picture books for older children with more sophisticated themes and artwork. I can't bear hearing grown-ups telling children they can't have picture books any more as they can read! Why remove such a great narrative pleasure?

Things you didn't know about Shirley Hughes

1. At school, I was always the last to be picked for the hockey team.
2. I'm told I was an easy-going baby, but it didn't last.
3. I like birds, but would hate one to come near me.
4. I like ironing.
5. I never travel by underground.
6. I like travelling by bus, especially London buses.
7. Once on Australian TV, I had to hide in a Wendy house then leap out and hug a huge bear.
8. I save elastic bands, paper clips and pieces of string that I find lying about.
9. I jazz about a lot when washing up.
10. I fantasize about having a house by the sea.