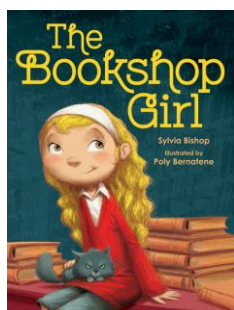
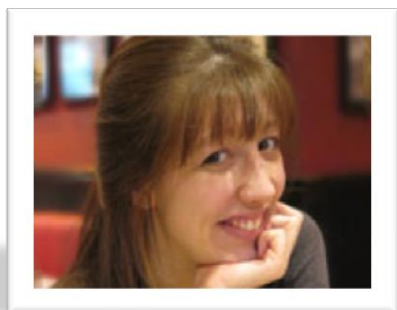


AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT



Sylvia Bishop on *The Bookshop Girl*

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Joneses have just won the Great Montgomery Book Emporium in a contest, and it's every book lover's dream! The pull of a lever calls forth a room full of marvelous wonders—from the Room of Woodland Tales with its squirrels and mice, to the rocket ship in the Room of Space Adventures, and the aquarium ceiling in the Room of Ocean Tales.

But there is more to the Emporium than its thousands of books in extravagant displays. In fact, the previous owner is hiding something that could destroy absolutely everything for the Joneses.

Property Jones has a whopper of a secret too—and it might just be the key to saving her family and their bookshop from the clutches of a nasty villain.

Q: *Where do you get your ideas?*

A: I think ideas are everywhere. We only run into trouble when we worry about finding a good idea, because as soon as we do that, we start criticizing all our ideas before they can even get started. Anything that I find funny or magical or exciting could be a funny, magical, or exciting story, and the trick is to try writing about all of them with an open mind and see what happens.

I think we all see things that appeal to us every day. And if it appeals to you, it will appeal to someone else, and it could be a story.

Q: *Property's secret is that she can't read. Did you love reading as a child? What were your favorite books growing up?*

A: I did love to read, but I think I would still have got on well with Property, because I also liked the books themselves. I liked hardbacks and thick pages and beautiful pictures. I loved the Winnie-the-Pooh books, because they are so funny, and my father would read them to me with all the right voices. Later I loved everything by Diana Wynne Jones, who writes about wonderfully detailed, interesting magical worlds. And *A Little Princess*, by Frances Hodgson Burnett, was a firm favorite.

Q: *Where do you write? Do you have a special place?*

A: I wrote *The Bookshop Girl* at my desk in Oxford, with my red Anglepoise lamp. Now I've moved to London, but the desk and the lamp have come with me, so when I sit down to write it's as though I never left.

That's how I like to write best—at my desk, first thing in the morning or last thing at night. But sometimes life gets in the way, and the wonderful thing about writing is that you can do it anywhere, anytime.

Q: *What do you think happened next for Property and her family?*

A: I don't know, and I think it's very important that I don't know. You, reading the book, have invented a whole new version of Property and Netty and Michael and the White Hart and the Great Montgomery Book Emporium. The version of this story that now lives inside your head is uniquely yours and not quite like mine or anyone else's. So if you want to know what happens next, you have as much right to dream up an answer as I do. That is the wonderful thing about stories.

Q: *Do you have more fun writing good characters or bad characters?*

A: I think I like best the challenge of trying to write people who aren't quite one or the other, or aren't what they seem. In this book, Montgomery did the right thing in the end, but he messed up at first—oh, but for good reasons, poor man! I think readers will disagree about how well we should think of Montgomery. And I enjoy that. That's how real people are—confusing! And it's fun to try to capture that in writing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sylvia Bishop spent her entire childhood reading fiction, dreaming up stories, and pretending. She then tried very hard to get to grips with the real world by studying politics and going into social science research. Now, Sylvia lives in London where she's returned to writing her stories, preferably by lamp-light with tea.