



This month, we've been talking to . . . Sherryl Jordan

Sherryl Jordan is the internationally successful author of a wide range of Young Adult fiction including *Rocco*, *The Juniper Game*, *Tanith* and *Winter of Fire* as well as award-winning *Finnigan and the Pirates* and the hilarious *Denzil* books for younger readers.

Sherryl lives in Tauranga where she is raising her grandson. We asked her some questions about herself and her writing, and here's what she said ...

Where were you born?
Hawera.

Where do you live now?
Tauranga, in a little wooden cottage not far from the sea.

Where did you go to school?
In Hawera mostly; my final year was at Tauranga Girls' College.

Did you have a nickname?
Shez. (My sister couldn't say Sherryl, and her attempt at it stuck.)

What were you like in school?
Unbearably prim and proper, once I decided school wasn't so bad.

What is the naughtiest thing you did?
I hated school when I first started, and I remember a male teacher having to drag/carry me through the school gates every morning and into my classroom. I kicked and screamed the whole time. In the end my parents let me stay home; I started school when I was six.

What was your favourite book growing up?
It was *The Princess and the Goblin*, by George MacDonald. I loved it because it terrified me, and filled me with awe and admiration for the hero. I 'saw' the book like a movie in my head, rather than as words on a page. To me, 'seeing' a story, experiencing it as real, is still the sign of a great book.

Who is your favourite children's author?
Oh, that's a hard one. C. S. Lewis, Geraldine

McCaughrean, Orson Scott Card, T. H. White, Rosemary Sutcliff ... to name a few, all equally loved.

What is your favourite food/colour/movie?
Sushi. Purple. *Waking Ned Devine*.

Who inspired you to write?
I've wanted to write books since I was four. I don't know why; I was just born that way.

How did you get started? How old were you?
I made my first book when I was four – a picture story about a mermaid. I wrote my first novel when I was at primary school. At intermediate, the principal sent my books to a publisher, but my work wasn't good enough (surprise!) to be published. I wrote many novels over the years. My first published book was *Rocco*, which was my thirteenth novel, and it was published when I was about 40 years old. It took me a long time to get it right! I'm glad I never gave up.

Why did you want to be a writer?
I started out as an illustrator, and was not happy. I really wanted to write. When I finally had a picture book accepted, someone else illustrated it. However, over the past few years I have done small drawings for chapter headings in novels, and I loved doing the artwork for *Finnigan and the Pirates*. Writing is my bliss.

How do you think up ideas?
Usually ideas hit me over the head. Sometimes I read something, or discover it on the Internet, maybe see it in a movie – and some fragment in what I've discovered intrigues me, and grows

into an idea for a story. The book I'm writing now, about slavery in the 1600s, came from something I read on the Internet while researching pirate costumes for the *Finnigan* book.

Do you have a special place where you write?
Yes, I have a beautiful studio.

What is the best thing about being an author?
Daydreaming all day, and being paid for it.

Have you had a funny or embarrassing moment as an author?

Many funny moments. One of the reasons I loved the *Denzil* books so much is that He was one of those characters who just raced off in a frenzy doing his own thing. I didn't think things up, for Denzil – he just did things, making me laugh so much sometimes that I could hardly type.

Several characters have been like that... it's one of the surprising, funny, amazing things about writing. There have also been many wonderful moments, reading letters from readers, or meeting young people who love my books. It's very humbling.

What do you do when you are not writing?

Sleep, eat, do Tai Chi, see friends ... But if I could, I'd write every waking moment. Living in a lighthouse would be marvellous, with no interruptions. As it is, I write whenever I can. Some days it's only for an hour or so.

What would you have chosen to be if you were not an author/illustrator?

An astronaut.

Which famous person from the past would you like to talk to?

C. S. Lewis. Only I think I'd be so awe-struck, I'd make a fool of myself and not say anything. But then, he'd have enough wisdom to speak for both of us.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

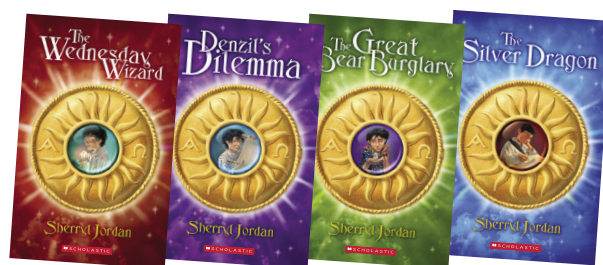
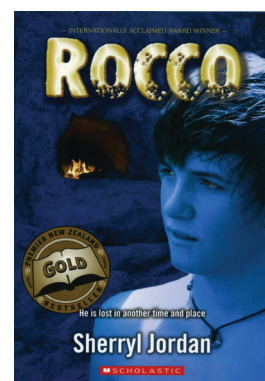
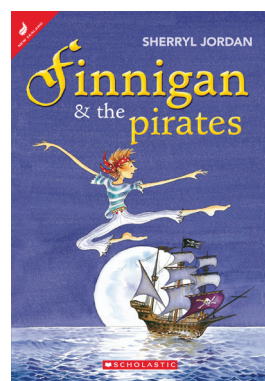
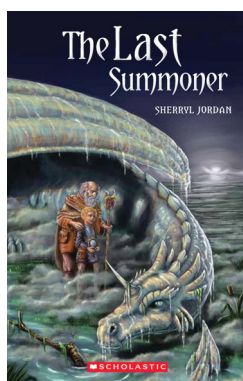
I'd love to travel. I'd love to go to Italy, back to Ireland, to Alaska, to Greece ... I'm busy raising my grandson, Kael, so won't be able to travel for a while. One day, maybe. In the meantime, I just travel in my head, in the places I write about. At the moment, it's Ireland, and the Mediterranean.

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