



This month, we've been talking to . . . Chris Gurney

Chris Gurney is the author of twelve Scholastic New Zealand picture books, a large number of them part of the popular *Kiwi Corkers* series, which retells well-known tales with a New Zealand flavour. Chris lives in East Auckland with her family.

We asked Chris some questions about herself and her writing, and here's what she said ...

Where were you born? Where do you live now?

I was born in Hamilton, grew up in Whangarei and now live in Auckland.

Where did you go to school? Did you have a nickname?

I began my schooling at a little country school at Whananaki. There were two classrooms. I didn't want to start school so my mum had to bribe me to go. I was called Chrissy when I was a good girl and CHRISTINE when I was a naughty girl.

What were you like in school? What is the naughtiest thing you did?

I was shy and quiet when I was young. However, according to my High School reports I was 'scatty' and 'could do a lot better'. (Around about the time I discovered boys, I think.) Probably the naughtiest thing I ever did was skip classes I didn't like.

What was your favourite book growing up?

I loved all the classic series like Heidi, Pollyanna, Anne of Green Gables. I also adored any story that had magic in it (I had a black cat who was my best friend and I thought I had magical powers and that fairies lived at the bottom of the garden).

Who is your favourite children's author?

Roald Dahl.

What is your favourite food/colour/movie?

Nothing beats my mum's big family roast dinners. Blue is my favourite colour. My dad took me to my first movie, *Mary Poppins*, and I so wanted to be magical like her.

Who inspired you to write?

My family have always encouraged me. Then one day my son Jase and I were looking at a children's picture book and he said "Mum, YOU could do this." And I thought *Maybe I could!*

How did you get started? How old were you?

I was an only child until I was nine; we lived on a farm and had no TV. I had to use my imagination and make up games and stories to amuse myself. I wrote my own little stories and poems and kept doing that as I grew up.

Why did you want to be a writer?

Because writing makes me very, very happy!

How do you think up ideas?

It's fun thinking up different ways of telling an old story, as in the *Kiwi Corker* books. Most of my other stories are based on things that I've experienced in some way. Then you add a lot of imagination and exaggeration and 'hey presto!'

Do you have a special place where you write?

I write in my computer/sewing room, which used to be my son's bedroom before he grew up and moved away. Sometimes I get mixed up and sit down at my computer to sew, or my sewing machine to write!

What is the best thing about being an author?

Can I have three best things?

1. Finishing a story I really love;
2. Getting that story accepted for publication;
3. Holding that now-published book in my hands for the first time.

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

Lots of embarrassing ones, which usually involve me being very nervous in front of groups of people. Because nobody told me that when you were published you couldn't just hide at home and make everyone else promote your book!

What do you do when you are not writing?

Read! Oh and I take care of my family, which includes the very important job of being Lady-in-Waiting to Princess Nicole (my disabled daughter).

I'm a good shopper! I like doing creative things. I love going to the beach to visit my parents or to Wellington to visit my grandbabies.

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

A breeder of exotic cats.

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

Dr Seuss. I'd like to see if we could have a good conversation all in rhyme!

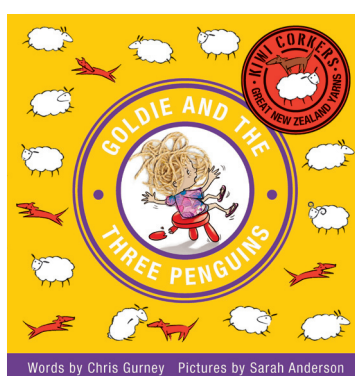
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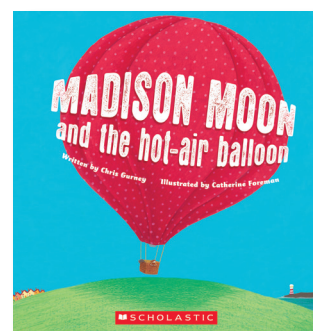
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