



This month, we've been talking to . . . Emma Vere-Jones

Emma Vere-Jones grew up in Wellington listening to stories, reading books and making forts in the bush with her brother and her friends. Now she lives in Auckland where she listens to stories, reads books and makes sandcastles and forts on the beach with her kids and her friends. Emma holds a BA in theatre and film from Victoria University and a Certificate in Journalism from Whitireia. Still unsure of what she'd like to do when she 'grows up', Emma has previously worked as a journalist, aerobics instructor, postie, flower seller, bar person, bouncer and tea lady. Her first picture book, *Stan the Van Man*, was the recipient of the 2014 Storylines Joy Cowley Award.

We asked Emma some questions about herself, and here's what she said...

Where were you born? Where do you live now?

I was born in Wellington and now I live in Auckland.

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

I went to Karori Normal Primary School and then to Wellington Girls College. The only nicknames I've had are E, Em and Jonesy (not very exciting!).

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

I was usually well behaved – although my sense of humour occasionally got me into trouble. In Standard 3 (year 4) I played an April Fools' joke on our teacher. We put clear glue on her seat, hoping she'd stick to the chair. Unfortunately she didn't stick and she didn't find our joke funny!

What was your favourite book growing up?

The Brothers Lionheart by Astrid Lindgren, *National Velvet* by Enid Bagnold and *My Friend Flicka* by Mary O'Hara.

Who is your favourite children's author?

Roald Dahl and Astrid Lindgren, and I've very recently discovered the amazing Kate DiCamillo (yes, I still read lots of kids' books!).

What is your favourite food/colour/movie?

I'd like to say something healthy – but the real answer is CHOCOLATE (yum yum yum). My favourite colour is navy blue. My favourite movie is *Toy Story*.

Who inspired you to write?

It started with my love of stories. My Dad, an actor, is an amazing story teller and reader. He read out loud to me and my brother until we were about 13 (he still reads aloud to my mum and she's 74!).

How did you get started? How old were you?

I've only recently submitted work to a publisher (age 40), but I've always written stories. I still have ones that I wrote when I was 8 or 9.

Why did you want to be a writer?

Mostly because I love reading and I love stories. When you're a writer you have a good excuse to spend lots of time reading as well as writing.

How do you think up ideas?

Characters appear in my head. The idea for *Stan the Van Man* came from a discussion I had with my daughter about how hard life would be if you couldn't read. The idea of a postman who couldn't read stuck with me and now, three years later, he's in a book.

Do you have a special place where you write?
I like writing in cafes – they have coffee and chocolate cake and none of the distractions of my house.

What is the best thing about being an author?
You get to make your characters do whatever you want – nobody else does as I tell them!

Have you had a funny or embarrassing moment as an author?
Not that I can think of – but my kids think I'm the most embarrassing mum ever!

What do you do when you are not writing?
As well as writing kids' stories, I'm also a journalist. Other than that, I spend lots of time playing games, reading and hanging out with my family and our three guinea pigs. I particularly love going to the beach.

What would you have chosen to be if you were not an author?
I have had many jobs including an aerobics instructor, postie, flower seller and bank worker. Who knows what I'll try next... maybe mad scientist.

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

Kate Sheppard and Nelson Mandela because they fought so hard for equality, and Virginia Woolf because she was a great writer and I think she'd be good fun.

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

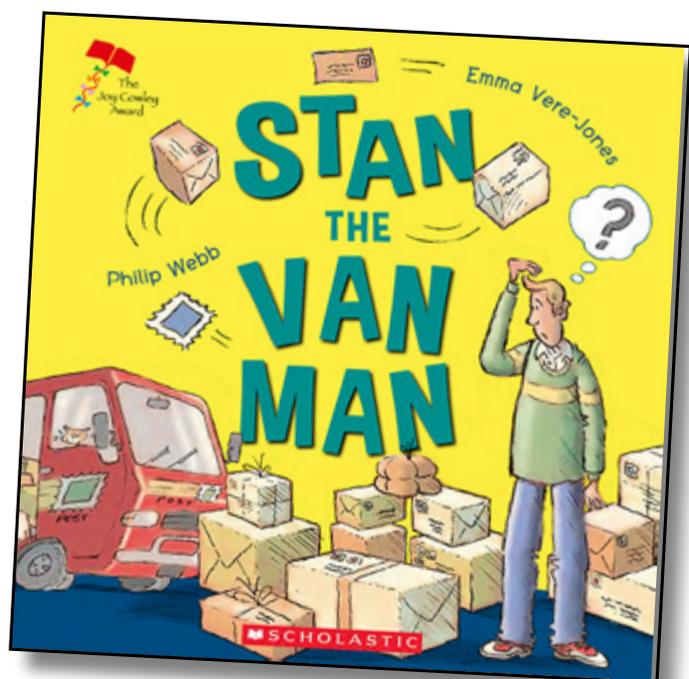
I've met the Queen and had dinner with her doctor. I don't have a middle name. I can write my name with my toes.

Website/blog details:
www.emmaverejones.com

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Stan the Van Man

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