

Inca Author Information Page

Sue Harris

Currently living in: Kingswinford, West Midlands.

Main works: The Contest (published in March 2015, and The Legacy (sequel, currently work in progress)

I started writing because: My desire to write was sudden and overwhelming. When my Mom, a talented pianist, artist and poet, died a few years ago, I wrote a tribute to her in the form of a poem, the first serious poem I had ever written, to be read out at her funeral. As my daughter lives just two minutes away, I decided to get her to check it over for me. My son-in-law greeted me at the door. "Oh, she's upstairs, go on up." I found her sitting on the bed, head bent, reading a piece of paper that had clearly been folded for many years. She looked up at me through teary eyes, handing me the paper. Incredibly, it was a poem Mum had written for her 18th birthday. With no need for words, I passed her the poem I had just drafted. When she had finished reading, tears splashed down her face. She reached out her arms and we hugged, united in our grief and sense of incredulity. Some may say it was coincidence, but I think not. From that day on, writing became an all-consuming passion. I truly believe that as Mom passed away, my own creativity was ignited. She left me something far more valuable than any material possessions - her drive, her determination and above all her creativity. I couldn't imagine life without my laptop. Writing gives me so much pleasure, it is now part of who I am, and I thank my Mum for that precious gift.

My main writing interests are: Currently fantasy fiction, but that may well change.

My sources of research and information are: Definitely the internet

My inspiration comes from: Flashes of inspiration come to me at any time, in any situation, in any walk of life. The Contest, was hatched after taking my two young grandsons to a pantomime. I am also inspired by other authors. Before they could read, I enjoyed reading the brilliant Roald Dahl stories to the boys, which I found particularly inspirational. I first started writing my own short stories, purely for my boys' entertainment.

My stories are planned like this: I wish I could say that I sit down and form a logical plan, but I'm not that organised, it's all a bit haphazard. An idea often comes to me at bizarre moments, such as when I'm out walking the dog or when I'm just about to fall asleep, so I always keep Post-it notes at the ready to scribble down my ideas, even in the car! When I reach the stage where the house is littered with them, I then sit down and put a plan together. However, when I start to write, it usually takes on a life of its own, and the 'plan' becomes plan B, C, D, ...Z!

I have written a series of books based on: Humorous satire around today's obsession with Technology, Reality TV and celebrity culture. My debut novel, The Contest, is a quirky, tongue in cheek version of a modern day fairy tale, set in the Kingdom of Cyberia for both young adults and the young at heart.

My future plans are to: When I have completed *The Legacy*, I intend to pick up other projects that I started and abandoned. I like to think I have developed my technique as a writer (well, a girl has to dream), so will revisit some of those abandoned embryos, to bring them to life.

My own favourite character is: I loved creating the character of Vilelet the witch who, despite being a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Witchcraft with a diploma in Cyber Spells, is a money-grabbing, bossy, dirty, smelly individual. Her witchcraft workshop is chaotic, resulting in errors!

I sometimes find myself thinking like: The main character, Princess Eemay of Cyberia, is a rebellious, wilful young lady. I have always had a rebellious streak, so I guess you could say she is based on the girl I used to be.

I also have a few other books I'd like to highlight as follows: Currently working on *The Legacy* with other ideas in the pipeline.

My advice to new writers would be: When I first uploaded 'The Contest' to Authonomy, (the Harper Collins website for aspiring writers), I truly believed it to be a finished product. Naively, I felt smug and self-satisfied about my achievement. Well, why shouldn't I? I had my A Level English, had written a few poems and short stories and to cap it all, had completed my greatest aim in life. I felt pretty confident and pleased with myself, but as they say, ignorance is bliss. With advice and guidance from more experienced writers on Authonomy, I soon realised there was more to this writing game than just ambition and determination. Like any skill, it has to be learned and honed, so joining a writing community either on-line or writers' group is a great way of learning and honing your craft. You need honest feedback, not just from family and friends. You may well have great ideas, done your research, developed brilliant plots and characterisation, but if your book is badly written, it will come over as amateurish, and you will sell yourself short. My advice, don't ever become complacent or stop learning and developing.

Writing has its ups and downs: Nothing can beat the euphoria of turning all your hard work and determination into a 'proper' book, but the editing process is a killer! However many times you read it through, you can always find something to change - a word, a sentence, a description, so for me it was when to stop and call it a day. I think most writers will agree that you reach saturation point, and have to call time.

When I'm not writing: I like to keep myself fit. I do Pilates, which is great for strengthening the core muscles, Tai Chi for focusing the mind and body, and a brisk walk with my gorgeous cocker spaniel is my daily 'constitutional'. I'm also a crossword addict! My family mean the world to me, we are exceptionally close.

For copy editing and proofreading: I edited *The Contest* myself, which nearly drove me insane. I think it's true to say that you don't always spot your own errors and omissions. Rob Wingfield at the Inca Project kindly proof-read it for me before it was published. I have now enlisted the help of a librarian friend for future proof reading/editing.

I accept criticism from: If I am honest, when negative feedback first began to filter through on Authonomy, I felt crushed and disheartened and took it personally. But I soon realised it was one of the best ways to learn and improve and I soaked up the advice and guidance like a sponge. I also joined various genre groups for feedback, but with so many diverse opinions, I sometimes found it conflicting. In this instance, if the same issue was raised by a number of reviewers, then it was worth addressing. Sadly, Authonomy is closing at the end of September.

My experiences with self-publishing: I don't think I could have self-published without the help of Rob at the Inca Project, to whom I owe a huge debt of gratitude!

I promote my books via: Again, I naively thought that once my book was published on Amazon, it would market itself. Wrong! Social media is the way forward.

My favourite mainstream authors are: Jodi Picoult and Diane Chamberlain are two of my favourite, current authors.

I am currently reading: 'Leaving Time' by Jodi Picoult.

I prefer to read books in: I'm quite traditional in that I still prefer a book I can hold and leaf through. But I do have a kindle, which I regularly use and always take on holiday.

A bit about my other interests: I love Mary Berry recipes, particularly her lemon drizzle tray bake. It is so scrummy that I hide it from the rest of the family, so that I can scoff the lot myself. Then I vow never to bake it again! I also have a phobia of birds, and once had a panic attack paddling through the sea of pigeons in St. Mark's Square, Venice.

My most unattainable ambition is: To run a marathon!

Last thoughts before we go down the pub/club/library/boot-sale/exercise yard: Believe in yourself, don't compare yourself to others and keep developing and writing.

Author Links

Website:

Amazon Author page:

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/susanharris1.sue>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sue.harris.author>

Any other links: