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Cut the image out
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collage artwork!

Lauren Child, that's her!

If you are a big fan of either the *Clarice Bean* or *Charlie and Lola* series, you may have wondered how their writer can create such unique and stylish characters. Lauren Child, the creator of these popular picture books, came all the way from the United Kingdom to share with us the story of her complex journey that led to her becoming a household name.

Lauren Child



Not ever never afraid of trying

AUREN Child was in Shanghai last month to attend the sixth Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award Winning Books (第六屆「豐子愷兒童圖畫書獎」) ceremony as a **guest speaker**. It was her first time to visit China, and then Hong Kong. She said it gave her many 'first times' – such as the first time seeing interesting Chinese cuisines like

deep fried duck tongue and steamed hairy crab. It reminded her how Lola, the three-year-old heroine of the *Charlie and Lola* series, reacts to new things, like eating peas for the very first time. It has never been easy for her! Can you recall any of your 'first times'? Did they make you nervous or anxious? *Goodies* interviewed Lauren to ask her such questions.



CC: Catherine Chan

LC: Lauren Child

CC: Did you always want to be a children's story writer when you were young?

LC: No. I wanted to do something that involved drawings and arts. I did write when I was a child, but only when I needed it to draw my pictures. I was interested in drawing.

CC: So, what did you draw?

LC: I drew what happened in our house; I drew our holidays and people visiting our house. I would draw everybody ... It is like in *Clarice Bean*.... it is about family life. I also drew some fantasy things, strange things, houses and castles.

CC: What did you want to be when you were a child then?

LC: The usual things, like an **air hostess** (flight attendant). I wanted to travel to different countries, and I have an aunt who had that job.

CC: What did you study?

LC: When I was 18 years old, I had to make up my mind what I was going to do, and I was really anxious because I really didn't know what I wanted. Everyone seemed to know: 'I want to be a teacher', 'I want to be a lawyer', 'I want to be a designer'. I studied illustration for a year, and

I really hated the course, so I left. I then applied to other courses like fine arts, **textiles**, architecture and **interior design** ... I ended up not doing any of those courses, and I took a year off.

'Children need the freedom to dream and imagine'

- Lauren Child
Waterstones Children's Laureate
2017-2019

CC: Did you eventually go back to study?

LC: Yes, I did a **multimedia** course for three years. I learned how to gild with gold leaf, and how to restore grottos with shells and crystals. I learned about **lacquer**, a traditional decorative art, but at that time I think I still wasn't interested enough.

CC: What did you do after leaving school?

LC: I tried lots of things. I tried to be an illustrator, but I couldn't really get much work. Then I tried to be a children's story writer and illustrator, but nobody was interested either. Then, I did some shop window display works. I hand-painted ceramics, but that was really hard to make a living off of. Finally, I started a company with a friend to make **lampshades**, but it was so difficult to earn money.

CC: So, what happened?

LC: We couldn't go on, but I had all the fabric from the lampshades leftover and they ended up being in my books. You can see them throughout the *Clarice Bean* series. They now have a second life.

CC: You have done a lot!

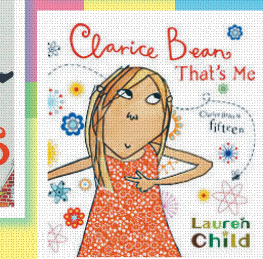
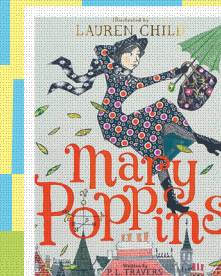
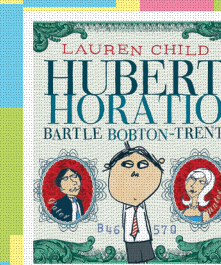
LC: Yes, I have. I have 'tried and failed' for a long time. I just kept working on things. So, as soon as my first book, *Clarice Bean: That's Me*, was published, and someone said 'yes', I gave up everything for it.

CC: Is *The Princess and the Pea* your favourite fairytale, as it is retold in one of your books?

LC: I wouldn't say it is my favourite one, but I wanted to retell the story because it is a very short and very strange story. It seems like it doesn't have a moral message and no struggles by the characters, so I think it's good to work on the story. I have another book about fairytales called *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book?*

CC: Who is your favourite children's story writer?

LC: I have several. One is John Burningham. He is such a brilliant writer and illustrator – there are strong meanings behind his stories, which are wonderful to read to children and are for adults as well, because he talks about a lot of important things. He is incredibly clever, philosophical and emotional. And I also like Florence Parry Heide. She is funny! I like *The Shrinking of Treehorn*, whose illustrations were done by Edward Gorey.



Who is Lauren Child?

LAUREN Child's first book, *Clarice Bean: That's Me*, was written in 1998 and it won a Bronze medal at the Nestle Smarties Book Awards in England. Since then, she has published many bestselling and award-winning books, including *I Will Not Ever, Never Eat a Tomato* and *That Pesky Rat*. Child's illustrations are unique; she uses many different materials, including magazine cuttings, collage, fabrics and photographs, to make images.

