



Q and A Interview with Hilary McKay

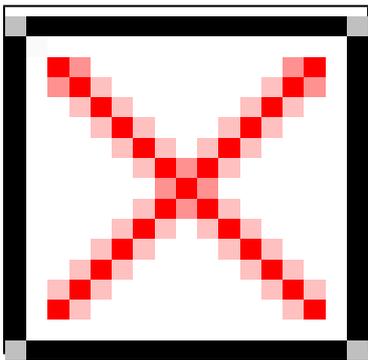
Article Author:

[Hilary McKay](#) [1]

[198](#) [2]

Byline:

Hilary McKay answers questions about her new novel **Binny for Short**



Q. *Binny for Short* is another wonderful family story. How does the Cornwallis family compare to the Cassons, or the families in your other books?

Oh, there is no comparison! The Cassons are a scatty lot, they live in the moment most of the time. They can afford to be like that because they have a solid base - they always have somewhere to live, and their father will always be there to bail them out. The Cornwallis family, on the other hand, have had truly hard times and had to stand on their own feet to survive. I don't they will ever take anything for granted again.

Q. Was there an Aunty Violet in your family

Goodness, I never thought to wonder that myself! But since you ask, yes there was. Or is (she is sitting in the room as I type). Not a full AV, but certainly an AVish way of thinking at times. But I think actually I have a bit of the AV about me myself.

Q. How has being the eldest sister affected your writing, or your outlook on life?

It has made me always very sympathetic to eldest sisters, always the first to do everything wrong! And to be responsible. And to share (I am very bad at sharing). Eldest sister - yes, indeed, the scars are with me yet. I wonder if I will ever write them all away. (Only joking. Of course.) The little ones - there were three in my case ? three - (how I longed for boarding school) were completely adorable. Oh yes. What happened to my shell collection? Where are all my **Famous Fives**? Who broke the legs off my china pony? I'd better shut up.

Q. In our Authorgraph interview in 2003, you said that your childhood ?seems close enough to touch?. Is that still the case? Has watching your own children grow up changed your writing?

Yes it is still the case. Watching my own children grow up (Watching, that sounds a bit passive and leisurely, I wouldn't describe it as watching myself, witnessing, withstanding, enduring maybe) has made me much poorer and rather tired and possibly a tiny bit more cynical than I used to be.

Yep, I suppose it has affected my writing.

Q. Binny for Short starts with a desperate situation: how did you come to structure it in the way you have?

Well, I thought it would be interesting to tell a story backwards and forwards simultaneously. I have become increasingly doubtful re. the accepted linear nature of time. Mind, it's confusing. I admit that, in a book for ten year olds. Probably not wise. Too late now.

Q. Do you plan more adventures for Binny

Certainly. Far too good a character to use up in one book.

Q. Final questions (and these are Binny?s): do you think that ghosts are real?

I don't know, I don't know, but I do know honest people that do. Also a poltergeist once threw something hard at me. That was terrifying but mind broadening.

Q. And how far can you swim?

Well, I am a pretty good swimmer once I make up my mind to get wet. I can chug along for ages, reciting poems in my head. Or otherwise entertaining myself (it doesn't take much).

Page Number:

33

Source URL (retrieved on Nov '19): <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/198/childrens-books/articles/q-and-a-interview-with-hilary-mckay>

Links:

[1] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/hilary-mckay>

[2] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/198>