

## MEET AN AUTHOR

# Kevin Crossley-Holland

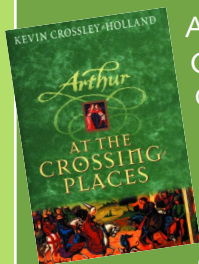
### BOOKS

Kevin Crossley-Holland has already written two books in a trilogy for children, about the young knight Arthur. The third book - King of the Middle March - will appear in 2003.

Arthur – The Seeing Stone  
Orion Children's Books  
hb £10.99; sb £5.99;  
cassette £8.99 (winner of the Tir na n-Og Award, the Guardian Children's Book Award, the Smarties Prize Bronze Award and the Sheffield Children's Book Award and shortlisted for the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year.



Arthur – At the Crossing Places  
Orion Children's Books  
hb £10.99



He also collaborated with Gwyn Thomas and Margaret Jones, the Illustrator, on English versions of tales from the *Mabinogion* which are now out of print.

At the bottom of our garden, there was a disused shed. My father and I cleared it out, and in it I displayed my treasures: fossils, crystals, coins, old keys, potsherds ... and a Saracen shield! I called it my MUSEUM, and I still have the register in which all the visitors signed their names.

That museum! It was a magic place, and I spent hours in it. Who hid this Roman coin? Who dropped this pot? Who and why and when and where and how? Slowly, I began to understand that who I am, and who you are, is determined not only by our own choices but by all we cannot choose (our history, our genes).

What was it like to live in Britain 100

years ago? Or 1000 years ago?

What were the similarities and the differences between then and now? And how do we know?

Some evenings, my father came and sat beside the bunkbeds where my sister Sally and I slept, and played his Welsh harp, and said-and-sang folk-tales to us. All my childhood, I lived in both the present and the past. And, come to think of it, I still do.

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**Name:**

Kevin Crossley-Holland

**Date of Birth:**

February 7th, 1941

**Where were you born and brought up?**

I was born in Buckinghamshire and spent most of my childhood in the Chiltern Hills. But I lived for one wartime year (aged three) in Colwyn Bay.

**Where did you go to school?**

Swanbourne House in Buckinghamshire, then Bryanston School in Dorset.

**What did you particularly like and dislike about school?**

I liked the grass tennis courts, wonderful climbing-trees. I disliked the fact that there were no girls there!

**What did you want to be, as a child?**

First a sports commentator; then an archaeologist. During my 'teens, I thought of becoming a priest.

**What was your favourite book as a child?**

I read very little. The one book I was mad about was *Our Island Story* (retellings of great moments in British history).

**Do you have any hobbies?**

Walking, visiting ruins, playing an occasional game of chess.

**What makes you happy?**

Quality time with my children (two teenage daughters, two adult sons); travelling and discovering new places; the sea.

**What makes you angry?**

Cruelty. And to a lesser degree, inefficiency.

**When did you start to write?**

After reading *Our Island Story*. I wrote my first poem when I was 16.

**Which one was your first book?**

A retelling of a medieval Romance, *Havelok the Dane*. I wrote it when I was 22.

**Do you find it easy to write?**

Planning takes a long time; and revision takes even longer. But I write the first draft very quickly.

**Where do you write?**

For preference, in my little study (second floor, looking north, very light and reasonably quiet) here in North Norfolk. But I travel a lot, and often write on trains, planes, buses, in restaurants and so on!

**From where do you get your ideas?**

From watching people – the way they think, feel, talk, behave; from the landscape; from history, and from traditional tales (myths, legends and folk-tales).

**What advice would you give someone who is starting to write?**

Important question! Begin! Cover ground each day – an entry in a diary, a poem, a story. Play games with words. Make pictures with words, music with words. Get to grips with the basic skills (ask your teacher about a decent book on creative writing). Writing is first and foremost a craft. Read other authors (this is what I never did as a boy, and regret now) and see how they do it. Share what you write with friends who also write. Ask for their comments. Spend a little time each day 'unhurrying'. Look out of the window. Use all your senses. Imagine...

**Are some of your characters based on yourself?**

Yes but no! They're not based on me, but now and then have one or two of my characteristics.

**Which of your books is your favourite?**

Apart from the Arthur trilogy (each author will say his/her favourite is the one (s)he is writing now – in my case *King of the Middle March*), I'm still fond of *The Green Children* (Oxford University Press).

**Which is your favourite character?**

Gatty in *The Seeing Stone*. Also, Annie in *Storm*.

**Is there something you would like to change about yourself?**

Much, but it's too late!

**What is your favourite food?**

Sweet-and-sour. Also, strawberries and raspberries. Summer pudding.

**What makes you laugh?**

The unexpected. Clever wordplay.

