



Elen Caldecott

Tell us about the winning book.

It's a historical novel, set in 5th century Britain.

The Romans have abandoned the country and the Saxons have arrived in the east. The story follows young girl called Mai who has to find safety when there's danger on all sides.

Tell us a bit about writing the book.

It took a long time! Four or five years! The important thing to get right was Mai's voice. That took lots of work and thinking and editing. In the end, it took so much work that I got a PhD for it.



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quickfire Elen Caldecott

1. Where did you grow up?

Near Wrexham in North Wales

2. What school did you attend?

Ysgol Min-y-Ddol for primary,
Ysgol Morgan Llwyd for secondary.

3. What was the best / worst thing about your school?

I liked the small classes – there were only six people in my year in primary. It meant we all knew each other really well. In secondary though, we'd outgrown the school site – lots of classes were held in portacabins. That was cold in winter.

4. What did you want to be when you grew up?

I thought I would be an English teacher – I was nearly right!

5. What are your hobbies?

I like to watch films and I go to the cinema a lot. I also walk my dog; I like the outdoors.

6. What was your favourite book when you were young?

I was a huge fan of Roald Dahl, especially *Matilda*

7. When did you consider being an author?

Not until I was an adult. I think I was about 25 when I wrote my first novel.

8. Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?

Yes. There are lots of recurring themes in my books. Mostly around families and working-class lives.

9. What advice can you give to budding authors?

Practice might not make perfect, no writer thinks they are perfect, but practice does make you improve. So, keep writing and don't get disheartened if your stories aren't what you wish them to be – you'll get there.

10. Do you have any rituals when you write?

Not really. Oh, I only like to write in pencil or black ink – never blue ink. Does that count?

11. What's the best / worst part about being an author?

The very best bit is when I'm in the 'flow' and I see what my characters are seeing and feel what they're feeling. It's magic. It's less fun when I'm on the 8th edit and I still have a load more work to do. Keeping motivated over a long project can be hard.

What's your favourite childhood book?

Matilda by Roald Dahl

Who's your favourite character from a children's book?

Stanley Yelnats from *Holes*

Where is your favourite place to write?

I'm happy anywhere.

What's your favourite food?

Tomato, basil and mozzarella salad. It tastes like summer.

What's your favourite film or show?

I still really like *Grease* – the songs are so good.

What's your favourite word?

I like words that are fun to type. With your left hand you can type Edwards, rewards and awards. They're good.

What would be your superpower of choice?

Time travel. I'd love to see Ancient Rome.

Favourite social media network?

I'm a very reluctant user.

What makes you smile?

My dog. My family.

If not an author what would you be?

An English teacher for sure.

What's your advice for budding writers?

Practice makes better.