

# Lizzie Huxley-Jones

## Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Rhuddlan, a village in north Wales that has its very own castle, which is kind of neat.

## Where did you go to school?

For primary, in Rhuddlan – we had that castle on our school jumpers which was kind of cool. As a teenager, I went to school in Abergele where the *I'm a Celebrity* castle is, so it was a very castle-heavy childhood.

## What was the best / worst thing about your school?

In primary school, I got to be one of the people in charge of the little library we had, so sometimes I'd get to go and tidy it up. I can still remember how that room smelled of fresh books, and the warm heat coming off the radiator.

## What did you want to be when you grew up?

Well, I wanted to be a vet! That was what I was going to do right up until my late teenage years when I realised I was probably going to not get in to vet school, and decided to study Zoology instead. I didn't know you could just be an author, and I didn't do English Literature or Creative Writing at university at all, though I loved doing it all through high school.

## What are your hobbies?

I love video games, particularly any RPG with a good story, and I love playing board games with my friends. Mostly, I love cooking and going out to eat at new restaurants. Naturally, I also love reading and I'll read anything: novels, manga, graphic novels, poetry, non-fiction. I love to listen to them on audiobook especially, while I'm baking cookies.

## What was your favourite book when you were young?

I had a few because I was a Matilda-type kid with a stack of books at the library all the time. But the books that really stuck with me were *Northern Lights* by Philip Pullman, *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman, and *Sabriel* by Garth Nix.



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They were all, in part, about people challenging their understanding of the world and trying to change it for the better.

## When did you consider being an author?

Not until I was in my mid-twenties. I wrote all the time as a kid, but I grew up in the 90s and early noughties when we barely had internet at home, so I didn't really know how someone even became an author, and I'd never met an author, so I just didn't think it was something I could do. It was only when I realised that working in offices really didn't work for my various disabilities, so I quit my job to become a bookseller. It was only then that I started to think about being an author as a long-term goal, and so I set about teaching myself to write books. That was about eight years ago.

**Are there any themes that appeal to you in particular?**

A found family always makes its way into my writing. I was a really lonely kid, because I didn't know I was autistic and had been bullied by different people. But as an adult, I've got a great group of people who I absolutely adore, and I always want to reach back and say you'll find your people, I promise.

**What advice can you give to budding authors?**

Read, read, read. Not just in the genre you want to write in but read bits of everything, because you'll learn all sorts of things and it'll make you come up with lots of ideas for your own writing. Reading thrillers helped me think a lot about plotting and tension, while reading poetry makes me think about beautiful ways to say things in not many words. The other thing is you have to write, and the blank page can be intimidating, but you can't edit nothing! Writing is humbling – the first draft will always be rubbish and not quite what you were going for, but that's where editing comes in. Take a second look at it: what can you improve? How can you get this idea closer to what you were trying to say?

**Do you have any rituals when you write?**

Yes! I write books for adults and children at the same time, and often need to swap between books very quickly. I realised that my very strong senses, thanks to being autistic, could be harnessed to help me feel immersed in the book. Each book has a playlist that I play when I want to write that book, and I have smells that I associate with each book – perhaps a candle, or a perfume.

My other ritual is having a packet of jellybeans or white rabbit candy on the go all the time for when it's a hard writing day.

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

The best part is getting to meet young readers and talk about the stories that we love. I wouldn't say it's the worst part so much as the hardest, but writing books is a marathon, so it takes a lot of time and effort to get a story from a blank page to being book-shaped. It's all worth it though; I absolutely love my job.

**Quick Questions****What's your favourite childhood book?**

*Sabriel.*

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

Lyra Belacqua.

**Where is your favourite place to write?**

British Library.

**What's your favourite food?**

Cake.

**What's your favourite film or show?**

*The Owl House.*

**What's is your favourite word?**

*Sglodion.*

**What would be your superpower of choice?**

Healing.

**What makes you smile?**

Nerys, my dog.

**If not an author what would you be?**

Studying Welsh.

**What's your advice for budding writers?**

Keep going!