



# Do Boys Read About Girls?

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[Jacqueline Wilson](#) [1]

[108](#) [2]

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**Jacqueline Wilson** discusses.

**Jacqueline Wilson thinks they do ...**

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?I go to lots of schools and libraries to talk to children about my books. I always get asked questions at the end. Sometimes they're pretty direct. One child will ask how old I am or how much money I earn. Another will wonder why I wear so many big flashy rings. I don't mind a bit. These are probably the questions all the adults want to know but are too polite to ask themselves.

There's just one question that makes me pause and ponder. It's simple enough. Why do I write about girls and not boys? There are the obvious answers. I was a girl myself. I don't have any brothers. I have a daughter but no sons. It's easier and more natural to pretend to be a girl rather than a boy when I write my books. Though that won't really wash. I was perfectly happy pretending to be a seventeenth-century magic toad whilst writing **Glubbslyme**. I can be a monster, I can be a dinosaur. So I can be a little boy, can't I?

I can ? but it's all the boys' stuff that defeats me. Football. Computers. Hang *on!* Just as many girls as boys are football fanatics nowadays. *All* kids seem to be tapping away on their laptops in their highchairs. It's time I connected with the 1990s and became a Man U supporter and went on the dreaded computer course. *One* day.

Meanwhile any boys I invent are going to have to hate football and ignore computers. I'm sure Blob in **Double Act** plays a mean game of football and Jamie in **The Lottie Project** is a total whizz on his computer but they can show off these skills outside my plot. I can write about any sort of boy if they're seen through the eyes of my girls. But if my main character is a boy then he and I are going to have to have a few things in common.

That's where Tim comes in. He's the hero of **Cliffhanger**. I love saying that word 'hero' in connection with Tim because he's such a sad, shy, weedy little kid. He might just as well have Tease Me tattooed on his forehead. His Dad sends him off on one of those spartan adventure holidays and Tim *hates* it. I was once a sad, shy, weedy little kid myself. I felt so sorry for poor old Tim when I forced him to go abseiling. He was a lot braver than me. I was supposed to go on a course whilst researching the book, but I chickened out. I got a rock-climbing friend to bring his nine-year-old daughter round to my house and they showed me the ropes ? literally ? and then the little girl got trussed up and abseiled down my bannisters so I could see exactly how it works.

As I gave Tim such a hard time in **Cliffhanger** I felt it important that he have a real friend, so I invented Biscuits. I'm very pleased that most children like Biscuits a lot and think he's pretty special. I particularly wanted a fat boy to be a

popular character. There's no appropriate politically correct word. Biscuits is FAT ? and his shameless passion for food is part of his chirpy charm.

It's no problem for me getting inside the heads of these boys who might be considered outsiders ? so I've written a new book about Tim and Biscuits called **Buried Alive**. I make even scarier things happen to poor old Tim, but he does get to be a true hero at the end.

But apart from these two Tim tales my books are mostly about girls. Luckily for me, boys don't seem to mind reading about Tracy Beaker and Elsa and all the others. I think this is maybe because I write about fierce funny girls who tell silly jokes and muck around and do wicked things. They're not girly girls so the boys don't feel silly reading about them. The books look acceptably unisex too, with Nick Sharratt's brilliant bright covers. I might write about girls but I want to be read by girls *and* boys.?

Page Number:

6

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