

This month, we've been talking to . . . Suzanne Main

Suzanne Main spent the first twenty years of her career working as an accountant in her hometown of Wellington and overseas. In 2011, motivated by a desire to do something creative, and having rekindled her childhood love of children's literature while reading to her own children, she took up creative writing. She completed an Introduction to Creative Writing course with the New Zealand Writers' College, followed by a weekend novel-writing workshop where the idea for her first book was hatched. Her manuscript for *How I Alienated my Grandma* went on to win the Tom Fitzgibbon Award and was published by Scholastic.

We asked Suzanne some questions about herself, and here's what she said...

Where were you born? Where do you live now?

I was born in Wellington and that is where I live now, which sounds very boring. However I did live in Australia and the UK in between times but I've always regarded Wellington as my home no matter where I was. I love it.

Where did you go to school? Did you have a nickname?

I grew up in the seaside suburb of Seatoun and went to primary school there. Until I hit high school I was a quiet studious type who read an awful lot, definitely not the type to attract a nickname.

What were you like in school? What is the naughtiest thing you did?

Sporty, academic, probably a nerd. Then I went to high school and like a caterpillar I transformed into something completely different ... can I plead the 5th amendment in relation to the naughty question? Does NZ have a 5th amendment? Next question please.

What was your favourite book growing up?

I loved the *Famous Five* books by Enid Blyton for the adventures the kids had, even if Julian and Dick were bossy and condescending to poor old George and Anne.

What is your favourite food/colour/movie?

I have lots of favourite foods, which is a bit of a (big) problem! My favourite colour is orange. It's not a movie, but I'm obsessively loving *Game of Thrones* at the moment.

Who is your favourite children's author?

Roald Dahl. Dr Seuss. Both geniuses.

Who inspired you to write?

No one in particular. Writing a book was something that was always on my bucket list (the informal one in my head). I don't think I ever really expected to do it, and then I just sort of did.

How did you get started? How old were you?

I was a late bloomer taking my first creative writing course after a significant birthday (one of those easily-divisible-by-ten milestones). Let's just say I was rather ancient when I wrote *How I Alienated my Grandma*. (Note: my son just tried to edit that to 'extremely ancient' but I've regained control of the keyboard.)

Why did you want to be a writer?

Doesn't everyone who loves reading want to be a writer?

How do you think up ideas?

I'm the sort of person who talks to think. Just ask anyone who has ever had to work in the same office as me! When I am working through ideas I usually talk them through with my husband. If my husband isn't available, or the kids, or a writing buddy, or my mum or dad, or random passers-by on the street, then I'm not above talking to myself.

Do you have a special place where you write?

I have a sleepout/office that looks out over the garden. It is a peaceful place to write away from the bustle of family life.

What is the best thing about being an author?

There is a huge amount of satisfaction you feel when you finish writing a book – it's like completing a 10,000-piece jigsaw puzzle of a picture you've never seen – not that I've ever done that. There is a great and supportive community of authors in New Zealand that I feel privileged to be a part of and I've made some wonderful friendships through writing.

Have you had a funny or embarrassing moment as an author/illustrator?

When Storylines rang to tell me I had won the Tom Fitzgibbon Award for *How I Alienated My Grandma* I was visiting my mother-in-law in hospital. She had just had surgery. After I got off the phone, I was so excited I shrieked rather loudly. Two nurses charged into the room to see what was wrong. I think they were expecting to have to revive someone (and they nearly did – ME!).

What do you do when you are not writing?

I love swimming in the ocean, reading (of course!), travelling, watching *Game of Thrones* and sleeping in. Oh wait, I also work as an accountant.

What would you have chosen to be if you were not an author?

Stunt woman (just kidding – I'm scared of heights, and enclosed spaces, and hurting myself). As a child I harboured aspirations of becoming an actress until I discovered that I suffer from stage fright. Hmm ... I really must deal to some of those phobias!

Which famous person from the past would you like to talk to?

Blackbeard. I'd ask him where his treasure is buried.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

Yes. I'm not good at answering open-ended questions.

Awards received:

Tom Fitzgibbon Award 2014 for *How I Alienated My Grandma*.

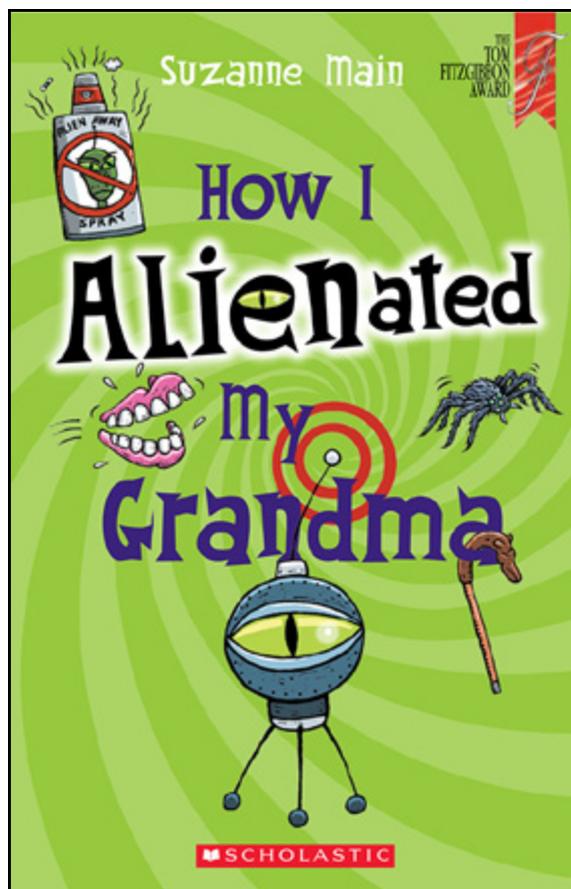
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SCHOLASTIC NZ BOOKS BY SUZANNE MAIN

How I Alienated My Grandma

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| Print RRP | \$17.00 |
| Format | 198 x 128 mm |
| Extent | 280 pp |
| Age | 9-11 years |




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