

Elizabeth Laird

Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2016

UK Author Nomination



PHOTO: ANNE MORTENSEN

Elizabeth Laird Biography

Elizabeth Laird's life has been characterised by journeys, many of which have inspired and informed her books. Born in New Zealand, she spent her childhood in Britain. Before studying French at university, she worked as a teacher's aide at a girls' school in Malaysia. After graduating, she trained as a teacher and first taught in Ethiopia, beginning a life-long love affair with the country. A writer from childhood, it was here that she first wrote specifically for young people, writing stories for her students because they had so little to read. She was to come back thirty years later to set up the Ethiopian Story Project. Between 1997 and 2001, working with the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and the British Council, she criss-crossed the country collecting tales from traditional oral storytellers. These have been compiled on a website to preserve this unique oral heritage for future generations. And Elizabeth has also adapted a selection of them as English readers for Ethiopian children.

In 1972 Elizabeth returned to Britain to teach, visiting India twice with the British Council in the next two years. There she met her future husband, David McDowall, who was later to make his name as a writer on Middle Eastern history and politics. They were married in 1975 and moved first to Iraq and then to Beirut. Evacuated during the Lebanese Civil War, they returned to Britain and both set out to write full time. They have lived and worked in Britain ever since, although Elizabeth makes frequent visits abroad to research and lecture.

Among Elizabeth's first published books were retellings of traditional Ethiopian stories, expressing an interest in the culture and stories of Africa and the Middle East that was to be one of the strands of her writing for children and young people throughout her career. However, it was

her first novel for older children and teenagers, *Red Sky in the Morning* (1988) that brought her critical attention. A story based on her own experience of living with a disabled younger brother, it is characterised by the empathy, honesty and compassion that she was to bring to all her subsequent work. Whether set in contemporary Britain or other parts of the world, her stories show young people caught up in difficult situations, often not of their own making, which test their understanding, their character and their resolve. *Kiss the Dust* (1991) appeared three years later. It describes the experience of a Kurdish family fleeing from Saddam Hussein's forces and was the first of her books to reflect her experience of living and working in turbulent parts of the world and to show her commitment to human rights and social justice. These books are thoroughly researched, sometimes by Elizabeth visiting the countries where they are set and basing her work on interviews with the children whose situation she describes.

While our selection of books for the jury's consideration highlights particular strands in Elizabeth's work, she is a versatile writer who has also written educational books, picturebooks, and adventure stories for children on a wildlife conservation theme. Her historical novels for young adults are as well researched as her contemporary novels and often explore similar subjects. Although not courting controversy, she has never shied away from stories that she feels need to be told. She has said, "A glance through the subject matter of my novels might lead one to suppose that I deliberately choose to focus on issues such as war, street children, disability or child abuse. This is not really the case. My starting point is themes such as courage, endurance, forgiveness and love. The 'issues' are the settings in which these ideas can be explored."

Elizabeth Laird A Critical Appreciation

With over thirty published titles in the past thirty years spanning many genres and age categories, Elizabeth Laird is an author who is hard to categorise. She can write simply shaped, single narrative short stories for young readers matching her style to their abilities of both reading and comprehension. She can also write complex, many layered stories which reach far beyond the bounds of the story to make passionate social and political comments. In these titles she is sometimes regarded as a polemicist who uses her writing to highlight the desperate plight of children around the world. Her purpose is not only to let the truth be known but also to encourage other children to be more understanding and more tolerant.

In her ability to combine these two strands Elizabeth can best be defined as a subtle and skilful storyteller who understands the power of fiction to move, enlighten and influence. And a brave one too, as she is willing to write stories that matter – even if they may provoke or even give offence.

Throughout her writing career, she has drawn on traditional tales from East Africa and the Middle East where she has lived and worked. Although an 'outsider' Elizabeth shows understanding of the cultural strands of her 'adopted' countries and great empathy with its peoples. Her ability to hold readers' attention with stories of people and animals and the interactions between the two is powerful.

Elizabeth drew on her childhood for her first published novel, which marked her out as an author who was willing to tackle subjects that are perceived as 'difficult'. *Red Sky in the Morning* (1988) is based on her experience of having a younger brother born with multiple and complex disabilities who died when he was only three. Drawing on her memories, this is a tender, painful and compassionate story about how an older sibling feels about this younger sibling who has such great needs. Although praised by many, *Red Sky in the Morning* was criticised by some in the Integration Alliance which was then campaigning for books which

gave a better picture of children with disabilities. Elizabeth was naturally stung by the criticism but rather than being deterred by it, she looked at the need for a better representation of children with disabilities in fiction. In response she wrote *The Listener* (2010), a story about a boy who is deaf and *Secret Friends* (1997)), not a story about disabilities as such but covering much of the same ground, dealing with difference and how it might lead to social marginalisation. In both, Elizabeth displays her ability to empathise with those who are in some ways sidelined or less fortunate.

Elizabeth sharpened her story telling skills with these cleverly told 'domestic' stories. She showed her ability to be sensitive and caring without ever being sentimental and to be balanced in her approach to difficult subjects. Given her experience of living in countries with a challenging political context it is perhaps not surprising that she moved onto writing about such situations. In *Kiss the Dust* (1991), Laird writes superbly about Tara, a teenage girl fleeing from Iraq with her family. Told in a convincing teenage voice which combines refreshing optimism with fear, it tells of the family's fear as the secret police close in, their helplessness to fight back against a regime and their courage in flight as they make their way into the mountains with nothing more than what they can carry. Laird wrote the story after having visited the region and later met Kurdish refugees in the UK whose stories became the underlying strands for her account.

Drawing on first hand experiences – sometimes of major external political issues, sometimes of inner 'family' struggles – and turning them into exciting stories is a thread that links Elizabeth's novels. Behind them all there is a boldness of purpose in speaking out for those who are oppressed in any ways and for exploring disturbing issues which many would like to keep hidden from children. In *The Garbage King* (2004) she writes movingly about the plight of children without families growing up in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Their survival

depends on their ability to support one another as well as their own resilience. As in many of Elizabeth's novels, the 'authorities' do not come out of the story well. No authority likes their problem of street children aired but dispossessed children are at risk the world over and *The Garbage King* is an important reminder of that. In *A Little Piece of Ground* (2003), she tackles a far more contentious issue by writing about the Israeli/ Palestinian conflict. In a story set in Ramallah, she tells the story of the occupation from the perspective of twelve year old Karim, an Arab boy whose childhood is being stolen away as he and his family live in constant fear of shelling and he and his friends are prevented from playing freely by the enforcement of the Israeli curfew. *A Little Piece of Ground* won several awards and was nominated for others. But it was also criticised by some for its portrayal of the Israelis. However, both here and in *Oranges in No Man's Land* (2007), a story set in Beirut at a time of civil war, although Elizabeth deliberately uses the books to make the cases she believes in, she is always careful to retain some balance.

Stepping back from international conflict zones, Elizabeth's writing is just as forceful when she tackles other issues: domestic injustice, as in *Jake's Tower* (2001), a story of family violence and how a teenage boy deals with it; or the mistreatment of young Arab boys, as in *Lost Riders* (2008), her fictional version of the true life experiences of children who are forced to become camel racers; or even with prejudice in the past, as in historical novels like *The Witching Hour* (2009), the story of a fourteen year old who is accused of being a witch in seventeenth-century Scotland.

Elizabeth's writing is infused with compassion for children the world over and with a deeply held belief that the world must be made a better place for them. Although never preachy, all her stories will enrich the children who read them and open their eyes to the need to fight injustice of all kinds.

Julia Eccleshare M.B.E.

Children's Books Editor, *The Guardian*

Elizabeth Laird Conflicts and Controversies: Taking the Flak

Taken from a speech given at the IBBY UK/NCRCCL Conference 13 November 2010 and published in *Books for Keeps* 186 January 2011

<http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/186/childrens-books/articles/other-articles/conflicts-and-controversies-running-into-flak>

We are living through a time of rapidly changing social norms, and a writer has to have her wits about her or she'll stir up a hornet's nest. When attempts to be politically correct are based on empathy, fairness and the desire not to degrade other groups of people, I fully approve of them. When such decisions are taken out of fear, or a desire to appear progressive, I don't approve of them.

My first novel, *Red Sky in the Morning*, published in 1988, was inspired by my little brother Alistair, who had multiple disabilities and died at the age of 3. His life and death had a profound influence on my childhood and I wrote about it as honestly as I could.

In 1995, the Integration Alliance organised a conference with the aim of bringing to the attention of all in the book trade the portrayal of disabled children in children's books. I was shocked when I realised how bad the situation was. In classic tales, good characters are usually handsome and able-bodied, while bad characters are disfigured and disabled. Just think of Rumpelstiltskin, Long John Silver and Captain Hook. In other stories, disabled people are pitiable, like Tiny Tim, or spoilt, like Colin in *The Secret Garden*. They often die, they're excluded from mainstream life, and the focus of a book is often on a self-sacrificing carer.

To my dismay, *Red Sky in the Morning* was held up as an example of bad practice by some members of the Alliance. Attempts were made to have it banned from school libraries. All these years later, I see that it was necessary for the Integration

Alliance to take no prisoners in their battle to improve a bad situation. The good thing, from my point of view, was that my eyes were opened to a real problem. I have included characters with disabilities in several of my books since then. In *The Listener*, for example, the plot turns on the ability of a deaf girl to lip-read. As a direct result of the controversy, I worked with disabled children partnered by authors on a book of short stories. *Called Me and My Electric* it went out of print almost immediately. However, I stand by *Red Sky in the Morning* and do not apologise for it.

Forays into international politics

My next novel, *Kiss the Dust*, was my first foray into international politics. I wrote it with trepidation, expecting brickbats. Set in Iraq, it was written in 1990. The characters are Kurds, who are forced to flee Iraq because of Saddam Hussein's repression, and seek asylum first in Iran, and then in Britain. My editor suggested that I should soften my criticism of the Iraqi government, but I'd lived in Iraq and met many Kurdish people, so I stood my ground, and events soon made her realise that if anything I hadn't been critical enough. I'm still waiting for a Kurd to reproach me for stealing their stories, but this has never happened. In fact, I learned that efforts were being made to discover the true identity of the Kurdish author masquerading under the name Elizabeth Laird.

It's always been a puzzle to me why so many first class children's writers (and indeed adult writers) are still writing about the first and second world wars. The old tectonic plates grinding against each other in Europe have long settled into immobility, and we focus on them at the expense of trying to understand the hugely important forces at play in the 21st century of which many people are woefully ignorant and ill-informed.

Which brings me to *A Little Piece of Ground*, a novel for young teens set in present-day Ramallah. It's written from the point of view of a 12-year-old

Palestinian boy, who is living under Israeli military occupation, subject to frequent curfew. In writing this novel I knew I was courting controversy. The situation in Gaza and the West Bank is a running sore that is having a seriously destabilizing effect on the Middle East and indeed on the whole world. Many people have a life-long emotional investment in one side or the other, and feelings run high. I'm not surprised that some people found the book offensive. If everyone had approved of it, it could not have been truthful.

The decision to write *A Little Piece of Ground* was not taken lightly. Its background was a summer I spent with an Israeli family in Jerusalem in 1968, a year living in Beirut during the civil war in the 1970s, when I got to know many Palestinian refugees, and visits in 2002 to Gaza and Ramallah to run workshops for Palestinian writers, when I was extremely shocked by the conditions I found there. It was then that I met Sonia Nimr, and the germ of the novel was planted. We agreed to collaborate. I went back to Ramallah, stayed with her, and we planned the book together.

In *A Little Piece of Ground* I chose to speak with the voice of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy. People will have different views on whether this is a voice that has a right to be heard. But a consequence of my decision was that the boy's hostility to the Israeli occupiers would inevitably be strongly felt and expressed, and that looking out through his eyes would diminish any chance of seeing the conflict from the other side.

The only Israelis seen by children in Occupied Palestine are soldiers staring at them down the barrels of their guns, holding them up at checkpoints, or breaking in to search their houses. I wanted to include a sympathetic Israeli character. Regretfully, I realised that this would be sentimental and untruthful. Some Israelis are making heroic efforts to end the occupation or at least to control its most harmful effects. Sadly, there are very, very few within the Occupied Territories. But in spite of

the glimpses I have tried to give of the humanity of the occupying soldiers, it is true that the reader's sympathy is engaged on the side of the occupied.

An inevitable controversy followed the publication of *A Little Piece of Ground*. There were some good reviews and some critical reviews. Some friends signalled that they would prefer not to talk about it. My publishers received some abusive emails. American publishers avoided it, until, after vociferous lobbying in California, a small left-wing publisher took it on. The real fall-out for the book has been the timidity of teachers and librarians to read it and recommend it in case they are accused of Anti-Semitism. This is the kind of political correctness of which I don't approve. I think we should encourage children to look at the difficult stuff. Lynne Reid Banks's books, *Broken Bridge* and *One More River*, give an alternative view.

Understand different ideas and points of view

Crusade, an historical novel, rose out of my fury at the folly of the west in invading Iraq in the name of freedom and democracy, repeating the arrogance of the Crusaders a thousand years ago. The novel features two main characters: an English Christian boy, and a Muslim Saracen boy. We follow their lives during the course of the Crusade, and hopefully empathize with both. This seemed a fairly uncontroversial approach, but I received a reproachful email from a gentleman in Cheshire. The book, he said, 'was yet another example of the prevailing fashion of denigrating Christianity and extolling Islam'.

The next story I embarked upon concerned one of the great issues of our day: people trafficking, a horrible trade which affects children from all over the world in many different ways. There are literally thousands of trafficked children living in the UK. Through a contact in Save the Children, I went off to Pakistan to find out about the little boys, some as young as four years old, who are trafficked to the

Gulf to ride camels in races. On the way back from Pakistan I stopped off in Dubai, went to the races and met the head of the camel racing association. The novel that came out of that experience is called *Lost Riders*. I've been bracing myself for a reaction, both from Pakistanis, who might object to my bleak portrayal of rural life and poverty in their country, and from Gulf Arabs, who would certainly dislike my description of the horrors of life for the little jockeys. So far, nothing has happened. But I fear this is simply that the book hasn't crossed the radar of either Pakistan or the UAE.

My latest novel, *The Witching Hour*, is set in 17th-century Scotland, but is in fact an attempt to look at fundamentalist religion working within and against the state: a serious contemporary problem. I was brought up in the Plymouth Brethren, a good experience on the whole, and though I no longer adhere to a closed system of beliefs, I do feel a sympathy with those who need such a creed, so I wanted to look at the problem, as it were, from somewhere near the inside. *The Witching Hour* was inspired by various ancestors: a young woman called Margaret Laird who was arraigned as a witch in 1698, but mercifully was not executed, and several Covenanters – Presbyterians who preferred death, torture and imprisonment at the hands of

Charles II's troops, to submission to the king's will in matters connected to the church. I was surprised to learn that an American publisher is keen to do the book in the USA. I shan't be at all surprised if I get some outraged fundamentalist reaction.

In a sense, all this reaction and counter reaction to the situations I explore in my books is frothy stuff. It's the inner conflict within and between the characters that counts.

The impact of fiction on young readers is incalculable. Older children and young adolescents are starting to position themselves vis-a-vis the world they live in, to try to understand different ideas and points of view, to know what underlies the news that bombards them every time they turn on their computers. I feel a sort of compulsion to weigh in and tackle some old prejudices and modern ignorance. But oh dear, how horribly worthy that sounds! The truth is that I don't know why I write what I write. I just do it. Stuff bubbles up inside me and wants to come out. When outraged of Tunbridge Wells responds, I have to listen and either say, 'It's a fair point, and I'll learn from what you say,' or 'Sorry, mate. I stand by what I've written. If you don't like it, write a book yourself.'

The Ethiopian Story Telling Project 1997-2001

In 1997, Elizabeth began a unique four year project collecting traditional stories across Ethiopia. Below is an article that she wrote describing her experience. The tales have now been collected on a website, www.ethiopianfolktales.com. A separate website, www.ethiopianenglishreaders.com contains 88 of the stories rewritten in simplified English for students, together with comprehension exercises and readings of all the stories.

Extract from *Stories from the Source of the Nile: Collecting Stories in Ethiopia*, first published in *Bookbird 43 (1) Spring 2005*

To begin with a confession. You might suppose, dear reader, that the proper person to collect folk stories would be an ethnologist, an anthropologist or at the very least a folklorist. I am none of these. I was once a teacher of English to speakers of other languages, and, much later in life, became a writer of children's books. Neither of these career paths was an adequate preparation for the amazing project I found myself engaged in, which shall now describe to you.

What was this project? In a nutshell, it was to travel the length and breadth of Ethiopia, visiting as many as possible of the different ethnic groups, in order to collect some of their rich treasures of folk stories. The aim was to rewrite the stories in simplified English, and publish them in readers suitable for schoolchildren in Grades 3 and 4, one or two for most of the fourteen regions of Ethiopia. In this way, Oromo children would learn English using their own Oromo stories, Nuer children would read Nuer stories, Afar children, Afar stories, and so on. A secondary aim was to publish as many of these stories as possible for native speakers of English in Europe and America, in order to showcase this unknown aspect of Ethiopian culture.

Why Ethiopia? The short answer was that Ethiopia was a country I knew well, having taught there in the 1960s, and visited since. The more important answer was the extraordinary richness and diversity of Ethiopian culture.

Ethiopia claims to be the oldest Christian country in the world. Over centuries of isolation, Ethiopian Christianity developed in a unique way, preserving extremely ancient rituals and Judaic practices. At the same time, many parts of Ethiopia have strong Islamic traditions; while in the remoter regions older religious beliefs and practices of different kinds still hold sway.

The visible signs of Ethiopia's fascinating history are evident in her unique, centuries-old rock-hewn churches, her 17-century palaces, her extraordinary fresco art and manuscript paintings. But her less tangible heritage of myth, legend and folk story is much less well known.

Without exception, in every region, the officials concerned entered into the project with great enthusiasm

The story collecting project was initiated by the British Council in Ethiopia, under the aegis of its then inspired director, Michael Sargent. The hard work of organisation was done first by Michael Daniel Ambatchew, then by Dr Solomon Hailu. They worked in close collaboration with the Ethiopian Regional Cultural Bureaux, which operate in each of the fourteen regions of Ethiopia. Before my visit, the regional cultural officer would assemble storytellers, arrange for local translators (there are more than 75 languages in Ethiopia) and oversee all the practical arrangements. Without exception, in every region, the officials concerned entered into the project with great enthusiasm. There were often complications. Many narrators whose mother tongues were minority languages such as Anuak, Haderinya or Afarinya, could not speak Amharic, the lingua franca of Ethiopia. It was often necessary for their stories to be translated first into Amharic before they could be rendered into English.

The stories were taped, first in the mother tongue, and then often in the Amharic translation. I would work on them with the Amharic translator (Michael Daniel Ambatchew or Mesfin Habte-Mariam). After the trip was over, I would rewrite the stories in carefully graded English, so that they were easy enough for new, young readers to understand. The stories would then be returned to the regions for the storytellers to check and approve. The series illustrator (Yosef Kebede, a talented artist from Addis Ababa), would work on the internal artwork, while an illustrator from the region concerned would create the cover. The design and layouts were done in Britain, and the printing was done in Ethiopia. Once finished, the books were returned to the regions for distribution to the schools.

Ethiopians are, correctly, wary of allowing their heritage to be 'patented' by outsiders

To date, nine books have been produced, and eight more are in the pipeline. This complex joint venture was truly

experimental. There is little experience of publishing children's books in Ethiopia, except for school textbooks, which are centrally produced and distributed by the Ministry of Education. Our books were not part of the government funded curriculum, but supplementary, support materials, open to a wider readership. Producing these books has been a new experience for everyone involved. There was a serious hiccup over the question of copyright. Ethiopians are, correctly, wary of allowing their heritage to be patented by outsiders. At the same time, it was important to establish the concept of copyright, without which no publishing industry can work, and to protect the author, illustrators and producers of the books. No copyright can apply to the stories themselves, as they are in the public domain and the property of the Ethiopian people. They can be retold in any version by anyone. The actual words and pictures used in the books remain of course the copyright of the author and artists.

It's impossible, in a short article, to convey any sense of the excitement of those extraordinary journeys, the often slow and difficult expeditions across the vast, magnificent landscape, the thrill of meeting the storytellers, their growing confidence, and the constant surprise and delight in the stories as they unfolded. Some sessions took place in the cool, windswept highlands. The storyteller might be a farmer, a merchant, a schoolteacher, a deacon, a government official, a Coptic nun, and once was the hereditary bard to the long-defunct royal house of Bonga in the southwest.

There were several sessions in the hot town of Assayita in the Danakil region, while the camel market proceeded outside, and the storytellers refreshed themselves with chat, a stimulating herb. In Gambella, in the steamy southwest, our first session was held in the prison, and the second under the mango trees by the banks of the Baro river. Stories were told on the shores of Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile, in towns and villages, homes, schools, offices, under shady trees, or round smoky, incense scented fires.

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There is a perception in the west that folk stories were created for children, and that children are their primary audience.

This has only been the case since they were written down and ceased to be part of an oral tradition. Some tales, of course, are clearly teaching stories, with a clear aim: to impart good manners, to provide moral examples, to advise or to warn. These are obviously aimed at children. But stories in Ethiopia are usually told by adults to adults, and enjoyed by everyone. It's sad that adults in the west no longer listen to and enjoy traditional stories, as many of them have profound and eternal meanings. In many European homes, even the Bible is undergoing the same process of infantilisation. Noah, for example, is treated as primarily a children's story, and often sanitised in the telling, while a Noah's ark is a popular child's toy.

In Ethiopia, adults still own their stories, and often, after a story session, there is a discussion on the story's meaning, which can range widely over questions of morality, politics, history and philosophy. Sadly, this practice is in decline. Increasing literacy, the introduction of radio and, most damagingly of all, television, inevitably sounds the death knell to a vibrant oral tradition. Already, young people are ignorant of their grandparents' treasures of stories. The memories of the literate are short.

Some of the Stories I was told echo Aesop, others have extraordinary resonances with the Old Testament or the Arabian Nights

Rich oral folk canons exist (or once existed) in many parts of the world, but Ethiopia must have one of the most fascinating. The country is a patchwork of different languages, cultures and religions. It lies on the crossroads between Africa and the Middle East. Its early kingdom of Axum formed the farthest limit of the ancient world known to the Greeks, Egyptians and Romans. In the third century CE, the Persian prophet Mani named Axum as one of the four great kingdoms of the earth, along with Babylon, Persia, Rome and China. It's no wonder that some of the stories I was told echo Aesop, others have extraordinary resonances with the Old Testament, while still others mirror fairy stories familiar to us from European collections or from the Arabian Nights of old Baghdad.

Books for consideration by the Jury : first five

Secret Friends Hodder 1996

The Garbage King Heinemann 2003

A Little Piece of Ground Macmillan 2003

Oranges in No Man's Land Macmillan 2006

Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings

Frances Lincoln 2014



Books for consideration by the Jury : another five

Red Sky in the Morning Heinemann 1998

Kiss the Dust Heinemann 1991

The Ogress & the Snake: Tales from Somalia

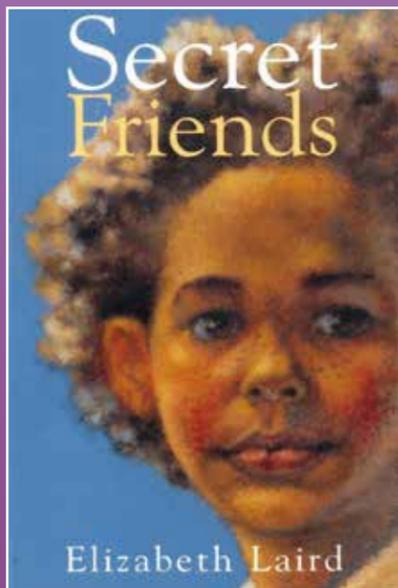
Frances Lincoln 2009

The Prince Who Walked with Lions

Macmillan 2012

Fastest Boy in the World Macmillan 2014

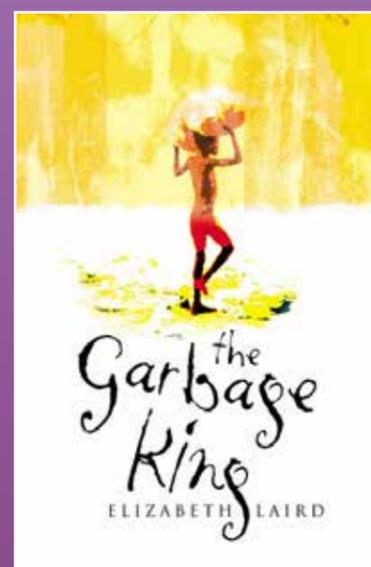




Awards:

CILIP Carnegie Medal shortlist 1997

Red House Children's Book Award shortlist 1996



Awards:

Winner of the Scottish Arts Council Children's Book of the Year Award and the Stockport Book Award 2004

Shortlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal, the Blue Peter Award, the Salford Children's Book Award, the Calderdale Children's Book Award, the Lincolnshire Young People's Book Award, the Stockton Children's Book of the Year, the West Sussex Children's Book Award, the Portsmouth Book Award and the Sheffield Children's Book Award.

Secret Friends

This is a marvellous and moving short novel. On their first day at secondary school, Lucy starts a nervous conversation with new classmate, Rafaella and, without meaning to be hurtful, calls her 'Earwig' because of her big ears. Rafaella then finds herself teased and cut out of social contact at school - not, interestingly, because she is 'foreign' as Lucy thinks of it, but because of her ears. Lucy guiltily joins in this ostracism but outside school she becomes Rafaella's secret friend, meeting her kind parents (so much warmer than her own) and sharing in her excitements. The ending is a shock, delicately and skilfully handled so that the reader is swept up in the drama in the most moving way. This short novel about, among other things, friendship, bullying and betrayal, is beautifully handled, a treat to be enjoyed by readers of all ages and a treat to read aloud - a box of tissues at the ready. It is illustrated with powerful and evocative pencil drawings

Adrian Jackson in *Books for Keeps* 103 March 1997

<http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/103/childrens-books/reviews/secret-friends>

This moving short novel begins when the narrator, Lucy, starts secondary school. Out of nervousness, she gives Rafaella, another new pupil, the nickname Earwig because of her prominent ears. From this moment,

Rafaella is made an outsider by the other pupils, but Lucy, although she shuns Rafaella at school, becomes her secret friend. Rafaella wears the hard shell of one used to being abused at school, but at home she becomes a different person; and it is the warmth of Rafaella's family which impresses Lucy. During the Christmas holidays, Rafaella goes into hospital to have corrective surgery on her ears but dies from a previously undetected heart defect. Lucy is now able to stand up and be counted, too late, as Rafaella's friend, achieving a redemptive closeness with her dead friend's family. This is a convincing first person narrative which simultaneously carries the weight of many themes. There is settling into a new school and finding a place in the pecking order of the popular and unpopular girls. There is the pressure on girls to conform to ideas of the conventionally pretty and the lengths they will go to find acceptance. There is racism. Rafaella's cultural background is sketched in by Lucy but is not specified. There is death and bereavement and the resulting anger, grief and guilt, which Lucy has to work through, while her peers, after the initial shock, simply forget. Lucy learns too late what real friendship is and becomes, perhaps, a surrogate daughter to Rafaella's family. This is an excellent serious novel for a wide range of younger readers.

Extract from a review by Norton Hodges in *School Librarian* 45 (2) May 1997

The Garbage King

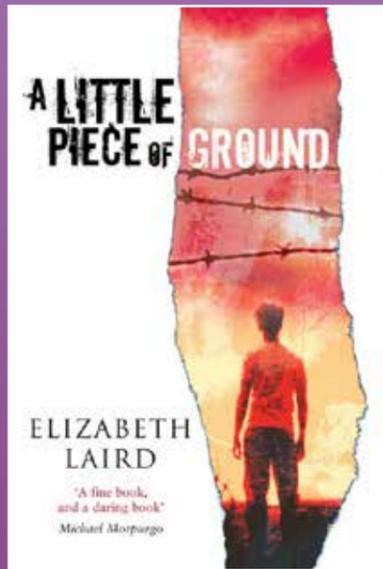
Mamo is a poor, illiterate orphan, while Dani lives in the wealthier suburbs of Addis Ababa, and is failing at school. While Mamo's sister is out looking for work one day, he is kidnapped by a child-trafficker and sold to a farmer as a cattle hand. Dani meanwhile is terrified of his father. Both boys run away and meet up by chance in a cemetery in Addis Ababa. Their only realistic option is to join a street gang, where they must pool their wits and talents just to survive. The Garbage King's main strength is its well-formed, sympathetic and engaging characters. Dani's transformation from spoilt rich kid to gang member is particularly well drawn. Mamo's growing maturity and confidence are heartening, and the boys' increasing reliance on one another is realistically described. Minor characters are also well-drawn and, as the story weaves between the different protagonists, the pace never flags. This book also benefits from Yosef Kebede's evocative illustrations at each chapter heading, which effectively transport The Garbage King readers to Ethiopia. While The Garbage King depicts almost unimaginable levels of destitution and deprivation, the story never lapses into sentimentality.

Máire Ní Dhonechadha in *Inis: The Children's Books Ireland Magazine*, No 6 Autumn 2003.

<http://www.inismagazine.ie/reviews/book/the-garbage-king>

Life on the streets is pretty much the same, whether you are in Glasgow, London or Addis Ababa. Although this story of two runaways, Dani and Mamo, is set in Ethiopia, it has much to say about homelessness anywhere and the feelings of children who have nowhere to go and no one to care for them. When Mamo's mother dies and his older sister doesn't return to their hut from her search for work or some food, what a relief it is to find he has an uncle who will help him to find a job. Only when he is taken to a poor farm miles from his home in Addis Ababa does he realise that he is being sold as a servant. Escaping after some months he finds his way back to Addis, and there meets up with Dani, who is from a very different background. Dreamy Dani, full of stories, is the son of a wealthy man whose lack of understanding causes his son to run away. The author deals with her subject gently but powerfully. The death of Karate, one of street children, says most perhaps by the quietness of his going. The positive ending for most of the characters means that while a serious subject is being explored it does not bow down the reader with gloom. The growing friendship between these two boys and their loyalty to the gang leader who takes care of them is beautifully portrayed. The sense of place is very real.

Kathy Lemaire in *School Librarian* 51(3) Autumn 2003



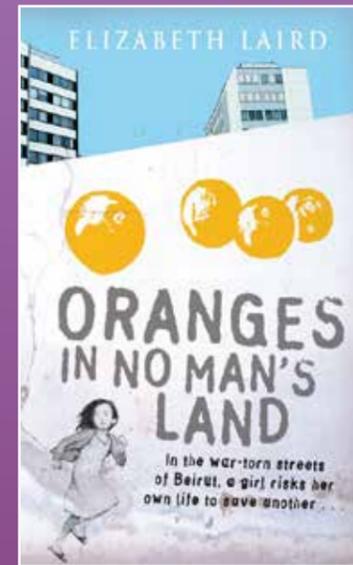
Awards:

Winner of the Hampshire Book Award 2004

Shortlisted for the Southern Schools Book Award

Outstanding International Book for 2007, U.S. Board on Books for Young People and the Children's Book Council

Young Adult Literature Award for 2006 Middle East Outreach Council



Awards:

Winner of the Hull Children's Book Award 2006

Shortlisted for the Canadian Surrey Schools Book of the Year Award and the North East Book Award

A Little Piece of Ground

The Aboudi family in Ramallah, Palestine, lives with the ever present dangers and restrictions of the Israeli occupation. The story gives readers a vivid impression of what it's like to be there: the frantic dash to buy food and medicines when shops are occasionally open; anxiety whenever a family member goes out; a son's shame at seeing his father submit to strip-searching; the burning injustice of being suddenly deprived of the olive groves farmed by the family for many generations; and the pent-up energy of young people kept in small indoor spaces for too long. Joni Boutros and Karim are inseparable best friends, even though one family is Christian and the other Moslem. Karim also makes friends with Hopper from the refugee camp and all the boys use a patch of waste ground for soccer practice. The action rises to a climax during a crisis in Arab-Israeli relations. Tanks roll in, soldiers shoot at the boys and the soccer ground is destroyed. The boys survive though Karim is injured and trapped in a wrecked car for two days. Sadly, the Boutros family decides to leave for Amman. There can be no simple happy ending in such an environment, but the Aboudis have family love, friendship and courage; and the endurance to hang on to their land and traditions. *A Little Piece of Ground* gives young readers an authentic view of how some children have to live. It is also a good adventure story with engaging characters whose interests are similar to children everywhere.

Extract from a review by Lyn Linning in *Magpies* 20 (1) March 2005

Written in collaboration with Palestinian author Sonia Nimr, *A Little Piece of Ground* tells the story of Karim, an ordinary 12-year-old boy, living in Ramallah under the occupation of Israeli troops. This is a novel which allows the reader to fully enter the world of a 12-year-old Palestinian child and how he perceives his situation. The novel focuses as much on the dynamics of families and friendships as it does on the particular political background against which it is set. Laird takes care to show that occupation by force can be also be damaging to those on the side of the aggressor. The Israeli soldiers are not inhuman or entirely monstrous; they are shown to be afraid and capable of tenderness. Although Jamal and his friends resist the might of the Israeli army with no more than stones, those Palestinians who choose a more violent and devastating course of action in bombing cities and public places are not ignored. Karim, angry and confused after witnessing the public humiliation of his father at an army checkpoint, expresses support for the suicide bombers, but his uncle Faisal counters Karim's hunger for vengeance by asking him, 'Does that make it right for us to go and bomb them?' Laird has created a fine piece of work from which readers will be inspired to go on and learn more about Palestine and Israel and in particular the impact of the conflict for all people living there.

Extract from a review by Susanna Coghlan in *Inis: The Children's Books Ireland Magazine* No 7 Winter 2003

<http://www.inismagazine.ie/reviews/book/a-little-piece-of-ground>

Oranges in No Man's Land

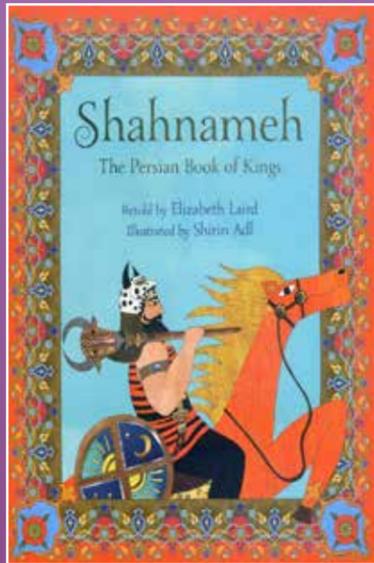
It is 30 years ago, and 10-year-old Ayesha is living near the unofficial Green Line in Beirut that divides the two factions in Lebanon's civil war. She has already lost her mother, and when her grandmother becomes ill she decides to cross over to the other side in order to secure some desperately needed medicine. Told with warmth and understanding by an award-winning author who lived in Beirut during that time, this novel stays in the memory well after it is finished. Inevitably depressing at moments, it is also a tribute to the human spirit. Ayesha meets kindness as well as fear on her forbidden journey, where she could have been shot as a spy. Pretending to be a deaf mute so that her Southern Lebanon accent would not give her away, she is unexpectedly given an orange, a rare treat that also explains the book's title.

Nicholas Tucker in *The Times Educational Supplement* 29 November 2006

<https://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=4001269>

Laird lived in Beirut during the raging civil war in Lebanon 30 years ago, but she does not flood this novel set during that time period with historical detail and commentary. Instead, she keeps the terse narrative true to the viewpoint of one Shi'a Muslim child caught up in the terrifying destruction of the city. Fleeing her home, where her mother is killed in the bombing, Ayesha, 10, and her younger brothers are cared for by their frail grandmother in a crowded room with lots of other refugees. But when her grandmother runs out of her medication, Ayesha braves the hostile checkpoints, crosses the dangerous "no man's land," and finds a doctor on the other side who can save her grandmother's life. As in *A Little Piece of Ground* (2007), Laird writes in clear, sharp prose. Readers will come away with a strong sense of the scary ruins that Ayesha witnesses, the savagery, and the unexpected kindness. There are no messages, only questions: What were they all fighting for?

Hazel Rochman in *Booklist* October 2008



Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings

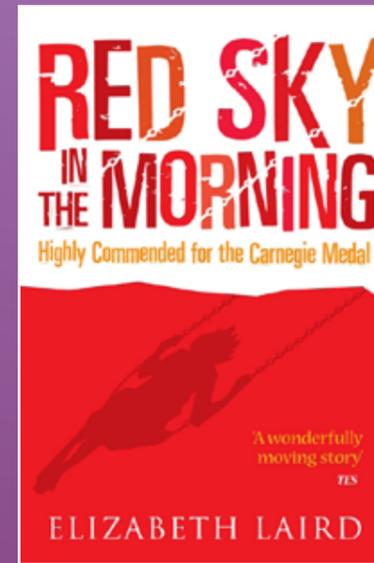
Shahnameh is a collection of stories and myths about the foundation of ancient Persia, its kings and heroes, its wicked demons and faithful horses. They were originally written in rhyming couplets (60,000 of them) by the poet Ferdowsi over a thousand years ago. This is only a selection of the stories, but it contains probably the most famous, the tale of Rostam and Sohrab, his son. Elizabeth Laird has taken sixty of the tales and woven them into a smooth flowing narrative. Her enthusiasm, kindled at the age of ten, brings these stories alive. Generally they are stories strong on action, weak in emotional impact, but the exception of course is the death of Sohrab and Rostam's terrible grief. Dotted through the text are comments in verse. Here, for instance, is the first meeting between Rostam's father and mother: "Never had two great souls fallen so much in love/ Never had such a falcon caught so sweet a dove." Whether this is actually a translation from the original Persian or not, one can feel Elizabeth Laird's own delight in the image in its neat couplet. Every page in this sumptuous book has a coloured border of twining flowers and birds, like an illuminated manuscript. At intervals, drawings - some coloured, mostly black and white - appear enmeshed in the border. Occasionally there are single or double page full colour illustrations, each surrounded by different formal borders. This is a book to treasure.

Extract from a review by Moira Robinson in *New Books* 4 September 2012

In this adaptation of the Iranian epic, finished in the 11th century by Ferdowsi, the tragic tale of Rostam and Sohrab takes centre stage. The chronology of Persian kings at the beginning is difficult to follow, with many names to master and innumerable battle scenes, but as the great hero Rostam enters the story, events begin to slow down. His exploits are described in detail. Years later, his son Sohrab, never having met his father, seeks him out on the battlefield. He is deceived by Rostam, who does not realize that Sohrab is his son. Sohrab's death at the hands of his father, ignorant of the relationship, is emotionally engaging. Laird's language is hyperbolic, as befits the description of mythological heroes, but it is always accessible, despite the occasional introduction of couplets reminiscent of the original poem. The illustrator uses elements of Persian miniatures in her naïve style, melding painting and collage. Handsomely produced with flowery borders on each page and intense colour, the single- and double-page spreads are full of movement. Less successful are the smaller black-and-white vignettes, which are sometimes intertwined with the attractive borders. Although there are many stories omitted in this version, this is an excellent starting place to encounter the ancient heroes of Iran.

Extract from *Kirkus Reviews* August 29 2012

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/abolqaesm-ferdowsi/shahnameh-laird/>



Red Sky in the Morning (USA title, Loving Ben)

Anna's little brother, Ben, is born with hydrocephalus. He is profoundly disabled. But from the moment she sees him, Anna loves him, far more than she could ever have imagined she would love anyone. She spends every moment possible with Ben, cuddling him, comforting him, even teaching him to kiss. However, at school, Anna keeps Ben's disability a secret. It fills her with shame and she is too afraid of prejudice and mockery to face up to the reactions of her classmates. Until, inevitably, it is forced upon her. First published almost twenty years ago, *Red Sky in the Morning* isn't dated at all. It's absolutely and unrelentingly honest. And yet it's also subtle and finely observed. Children will love *Red Sky in the Morning* because of the many chords it will strike. Its powerful statement calling for the inclusion of the disabled will appeal to their fledgling sense of justice and its candour will win them over. I think adults should read it too - any parent struggling with an "impossible" adolescent might gain some insight, might even remember how it was for them. Laird has a way of sifting through the compromises and alighting upon simple truths that many adults will find incredibly refreshing and even comforting. For everyone, it's a sensitive study of family stresses and responsibilities.

Extract from a review by Jill Murphy on *The Bookbag* website October 2006

http://www.thebookbag.co.uk/reviews/index.php?title=Red_Sky_in_the_Morning_by_Elizabeth_Laird

Awards:

Highly Commended for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 1989

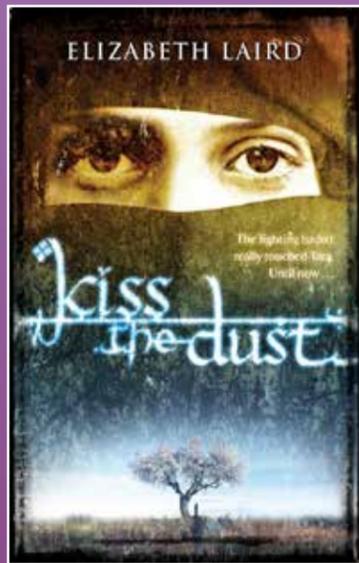
Shortlisted for the Red House Children's Book Award

Winner of the Burnley Express Book Award

An unusually perceptive first novel. Ben is hydrocephalic, destined to be a very slow learner, yet charming, happy, and well-loved—especially by his doting mother and by Anna, his older sister, who is 12 when the story begins. A prickly, strong individual, Anna is a loner who tends to put down her little sister despite their underlying affection for each other. Initially, the family conceals Ben to avoid the inevitable callous remarks; yet when Anna's classmates (long alienated by the chip on her shoulder) find out about him, they respond with friendship. After Ben's death, at three, Anna's grief is again complicated by other's assumptions: that his loss is a blessing and that her mother is the one who mourns. Anna's own sorrow is lessened when she volunteers to care for a four-year-old Mongoloid child, Jackie. In the process of showing Jackie's family that Jackie, like Ben, can take joy in learning, Anna happens on some truths about herself. This beautifully balanced, well-told story was a runner up for the Carnegie Award. Unfortunately, in its American edition, the British setting has been suppressed with inconsistent, unnecessary revisions; leaving a sort of generic family set nowhere real. Happily, however, most of its appeal is intact.

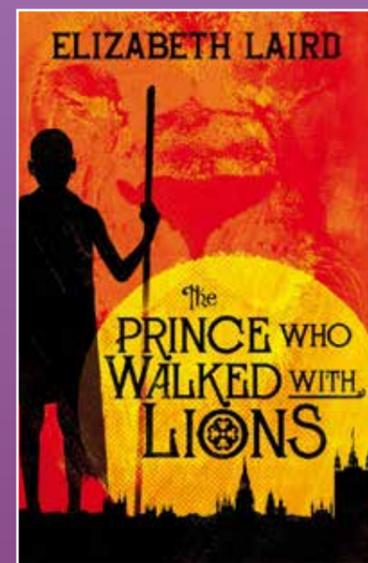
Extract from a review in *Kirkus Reviews* October 2 1989

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/elizabeth-laird-2/loving-ben/>



Awards:

Winner of the Red House Children's Book Award 1992, the Sheffield Book Award 1992 and the Royal Dutch Geographical Society Glass Globe Award 1992



Awards:

Shortlisted for the Scottish Children's Book of the Year Award 2012

Kiss the Dust

Laird weaves compelling facts about the conflicts between the Arabs and the Kurds into her gripping tale about one family's escape to freedom. After witnessing a teen's brutal murder and meeting a wounded revolutionary, 12-year-old Tara begins to realize the extent of persecution in her native Iraq. When her Kurdish father is sought by the secret police, Tara and her family abandon their home and head north to the mountains. Their refuge is short-lived, however; bombs begin to drop and they flee across the Iranian border to a primitive refugee camp. Stripped of their dignity and still not out of danger, the family plots to leave the continent, despite slim chances of asylum. The author personalizes the Kurdish experience by sensitively portraying Tara's feelings of loss, degradation and uprootedness. Although some readers may find the girl's initial naiveté as hard to swallow as her abrupt awakening to violence, most will overlook these minor weaknesses as the story's tension rapidly mounts. Even those familiar with political problems in Iraq and Iran may be shocked by the graphic depiction of tyranny—and may sense that despite their hardships, Tara's family fares better than many people who risk their lives for independence.

Publishers Weekly April 2015

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-525-44893-8>

Kiss the Dust is based around the story of a Kurdish family living in Sulaymaniyah, a city in Iraq in 1984 – the time of war. All her life Tara's been protected by her family and been ignorant of her surroundings, but when she sees a boy her age get shot she becomes more conscious to what's around her. Soon enough she's dragged deep into the war as her uncle and brother join the Pesh Murga and the secret police come hunting her father. Her dreams and hopes to live a normal life and go to school are all ripped from her as she's forced to move to the mountains with her family to hide. Tara is forced to outgrow her childhood and take on the responsibility of looking after her sister Hero and caring for her whole family when her mother falls deeply ill. This book has many themes within it but the main idea is on family, loyalty and courage. *Kiss the Dust* by Elizabeth Laird is an exquisite book that digs deep into the emotions of the reader making them feel what Tara does every step of the way, making this book memorable. This has been my favourite book since the age of 14 when I first read it. Even though this book was first released in 1991, it's re-publication makes it even more special as it emphasises its timelessness. It still has the same effect of utter astonishment on how powerful it is.

Extract from a review by Kanwal Parveen in *Voice* 21 Sandwell Youth Magazine June 14 2013

The Prince Who Walked with Lions

Like so many of Elizabeth Laird's wonderful novels, this story is firmly based on real places, real times and real people. Young Prince Alamayu is lying on his sick bed at Rugby School during the reign of Queen Victoria feverishly recalling his past. His father, Emperor Theodore of Abyssinia, now called Ethiopia, provoked a war against the forces of the British Empire which lead to the massacre of his people in 1868. Prince Alamayu, being left an orphan, was brought to England to attend Rugby Boarding School. This is the story of a young, proud prince, torn from his homeland, and brought to a country where few had ever seen a black person. Striving to become a young British gentleman, he becomes the object of fun and racism amongst his peers. Elizabeth Laird is a skilled author who has the ability to let us see beyond the historical dates and facts into the hearts and minds of the individuals involved. She makes history come alive. Can the prince that walked with lions and stroked their manes show that he has the courage and boldness of lions which he will surely need in order to establish a new life for himself amongst insensitive strangers in a foreign land?

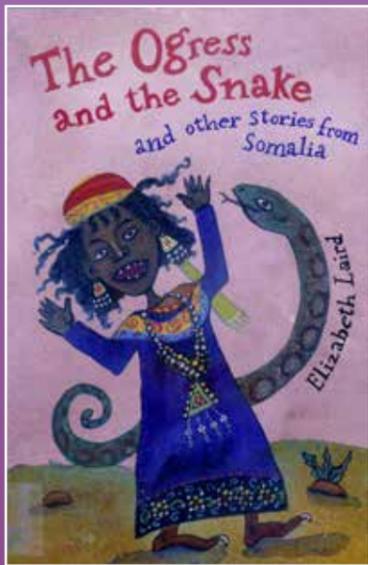
Martin Kromer in *Carousel* 51 June 2012

Few failed Sandhurst cadets would have caught the personal attention of Queen Victoria, even if they died as tragically young as the real life subject of this fascinating novel. Prince Alamayu was the son of the Emperor of Abyssinia and, as the only heir, might himself have been

an Emperor. Instead, carried off as a child by the victorious British, Alamayu was brought up as a middle class English boy, attending Rugby school before Sandhurst military academy. When he first came to England, he lived for a time on the Isle of Wight and there was introduced to the Queen at Osborne House. She seems to have followed his youthful progress at a distance with interest and affection. Estrangement is at the heart of the novel as Alamayu, on his feverish sick bed at Rugby, relives his childhood and remembers his parents, the coming of the British and his first years in Britain. Laird is at her best (and that is very good indeed) as the teenage Alamayu recalls the downfall of his dynasty and his younger displaced self: part proud prince, part lost child. This affecting novel, told in the clear, quiet, entirely convincing voice of someone who no longer knows who he is or what he will be, tells us something about the gains and losses of living between cultures and about the curious nature of British imperialism: its fascination with other ways of life, its sense of fair play, its arrogance – the unchallengeable assumption that British is best – and its deviousness in defending its own interests. That's a lot for a book which can be read by a ten-year-old.

Extract from a review by Clive Barnes in *Books for Keeps* 194 May 2012

<http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/194/childrens-books/reviews/the-prince-who-walked-with-lions>



The Ogress and the Snake: Tales from Somalia

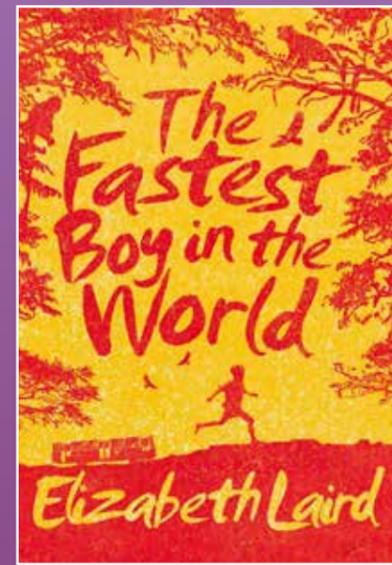
This satisfying anthology gathers eight traditional stories, collected from living tellers in a Somali region of Ethiopia. The title story shares some elements with “Hansel and Gretel” as five daughters are left to starve in the bush because their new stepmother doesn’t want to care for the girls, and in the last story, a princess bravely agrees to wed “The Miraculous Head,” a man born with no body but plenty of brains. In between are pourquoi tales and trickster tales, for a pleasing variety. Laird has heard the stories herself, although they were translated for her by a local expert, and smoothly retells them for a young audience. The black-and-white illustrations are child-like and include details of dress and everyday objects that set the stories in their homeland. An introduction about the author’s experiences in Somalia and Ethiopia and the short rhyme traditionally recited before a tale begins set the stage for an experience that too many readers do not have anymore—the enjoyment of oral story that teaches and gives pleasure to the ear and the mind at the same time.

Kirkus Reviews December 1 2009

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/elizabeth-laird/the-ogress-and-the-snake-and-other-stories-from-so/>

One of the great strengths of African storytelling is the number and cleverness of its animal tales. While teaching us the distinctive characteristics of animals, they also bring out the forces that motivate human beings. One of the eight Somali stories in Elizabeth Laird’s new collection tells how the cat became woman’s friend, and another how the dog became man’s friend. The latter starts with Adam. When dog comes as a messenger to find out if this newly created creature is going to be their friend, Adam assures dog he wants to live in peace. Barking joyfully, dog runs back to report but, misinterpreting the barking, the other animals run fearfully away without hearing the answer. Dog is left alone with man and lives with him ever after. Others of the stories take place among princes and princesses, tea sellers and merchants. They exhibit all the wiliness and wit of folktales the world over. Laird first visited Somalia thirty years ago but since Somalia is now too dangerous to visit, she made this collection from Somalians in Ethiopia, a country she knows well. It adds considerably to the evocation of atmosphere to hear the circumstances of hearing the stories, whether sitting under a tree in the grounds of an old Koranic School, visiting a group of midwives or settled on magnificent carpets in the old Emir’s palace.

**Mary Medicott in *School Librarian* 57(3)
Autumn 2009**



The Fastest Boy in the World

Elizabeth Laird is an old hand when it comes to writing stories in Third World settings, and this one is well up to her usual high standards. It tells the story of eleven-year-old Solomon, an Ethiopian village boy visiting his capital city Addis Ababa for the first time in the company of his grandfather. They are on a mission to recover a mysterious treasure that the grandfather refuses to discuss, and there are many adventures before the secret is finally out. But while the plot is good and pacey what stays in the memory are the various details Solomon picks out for himself when trying to make sense of the bustle of city life. An over-crowded bus journey is followed by a street robbery, but the boy wins through in the end while also starting off on his future career as a long-distance Olympic runner. The author’s knowledge of and love for Ethiopia shines through on every page of this charming and heartening story about a life British young readers will find so very different from their own.

Nicholas Tucker in *Books for Keeps* 207 July 2014

<http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/207/childrens-books/reviews/the-fastest-boy-in-the-world>

Awards:
Shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal 2014

Elizabeth Laird has written a magnificent book, full of joy and excitement, sadness and pride and with the ring of truth around it. Set in present day Ethiopia, eleven year old Solomon is growing up in a rural area, a day’s bus journey from Addis Ababa. His father is a farmer and his grandfather lives with the family in their simple mud hut. Solomon’s grandfather says very little but demands respect and good manners from his grandchildren. When Grandfather announces that he and his grandson will walk to Addis Ababa the next day, Solomon’s parents are naturally concerned. It is such a long way for an old man and a young boy. Dismissing their worries, the couple set off and they arrive that night, exhausted, in Addis Ababa where they go to stay with relatives, a shifty eyed cousin and his sharp-eyed wife. The author has created intensely believable characters and her writing is full of perceptive insights. Seen through the eyes of a young boy, a wonderful story of friendship and camaraderie emerges. The recent history of Ethiopia is the backdrop to the plot. Ethiopia has long been recognized as the natural home of marathon runners and *The Fastest Boy in the World* will appeal to everyone interested in the sport – and possibly to many more who have never been up until now.

**Clare Morpurgo in *School Librarian* 62 (3)
Autumn 2014**

Elizabeth Laird Awards

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|---|---|
| <p>1988 <i>Red Sky in the Morning</i>
Burnley Express Children's Book Award winner. Carnegie Medal highly commended. Red House Children's Book Award shortlisted. UK Key stage three National Curriculum reading list</p> <p>1991 <i>Kiss the Dust</i>
Red House Children's Book Award winner. Sheffield Book Award winner. Glass Globe Award of the Royal Dutch Geographical Society winner</p> <p>1993 <i>Hiding out</i>
Smarties Prize 1994 winner</p> <p>1996 <i>Secret Friends</i>
Carnegie Medal shortlisted. Red House Children's Book Award shortlisted</p> <p>1997 <i>Jay</i>
Lancashire Book Award winner</p> <p>1997 <i>The Listener</i>
Nasen Award shortlisted</p> <p>2001 <i>Jake's Tower</i>
Carnegie Medal shortlisted. Guardian Young Fiction Prize shortlisted</p> <p>2003 <i>The Garbage King</i>
Scottish Arts Council Children's Book of the Year winner. Shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal, the Blue Peter Award and seven other British book awards</p> | <p>2003 <i>A Little Piece of Ground</i>
Hampshire Book Award winner. Shortlisted for three other British book awards</p> <p>Outstanding International Book for 2007 U.S. Board on Books for Young People and the Children's Book Council. Young Adult Literature Award Middle East Outreach Council.</p> <p>2006 <i>Oranges in No Man's Land</i>
Hull Children's Book Award winner. Shortlisted for the Canadian Surrey Schools Book of the Year Award, and the North East Book Award</p> <p>2007 <i>Crusade</i>
Shortlisted for the Costa Children's Award, the Carnegie Medal, and five other British book awards</p> <p>2012 <i>The Prince Who Walked with Lions</i>
Shortlisted for the Scottish Children's Book of the Year Award</p> <p>2014 <i>The Fastest Boy in the World</i>
Carnegie Medal shortlisted (winner to be announced June 2015)</p> |
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Elizabeth Laird List of Titles

Novels for teenagers and older children	
Red Sky in the Morning	Heinemann 1988
Kiss the Dust	Heinemann 1991
Hiding Out	Heinemann 1993
Jay	Mammoth 1997
Forbidden Ground	Hamish Hamilton 1997
Wild Things (series)	Macmillan 1999/2000
Jake's Tower	Macmillan 2001
The Garbage King	Macmillan 2003
A Little Piece of Ground	Macmillan 2003
Secrets of the Fearless	Macmillan 2006
Oranges in No Man's Land	Macmillan 2006
Crusade	Macmillan 2007
Lost Riders	Macmillan 2008
The Witching Hour	Macmillan 2009
The Prince Who Walked with Lions	Macmillan 2012
The Fastest Boy in the World	Macmillan 2014
Dindy and the Elephant	Macmillan 2015
Novels for younger children:	
Crackers	Mammoth 1989
The Pink Ghost of Lamont	Heinemann 1991
Stinker Muggles and the Dazzle Bug	Collins 1995
Secret Friends	Hodder 1996
The Listener	A & C Black 1997
A Funny Sort of Dog	Heinemann 1997
The Ice-Cream Swipe	Oxford University Press 2003
Where's Toto	B Small Publishing 2009

Retellings of Traditional Tales

The Miracle Child: a story from Ethiopia	Collins 1985
The Road to Bethlehem	Collins 1987
When the World Began	Oxford University Press 2000
A Fistful of Pearls and other tales from Iraq	Frances Lincoln 2008
The Ogress and the Snake and other stories from Somalia	Frances Lincoln 2009
Pea Boy and other stories from Iran	Frances Lincoln 2009
Shahnameh, The Persian Book of Kings	Frances Lincoln 2012
Two Crafty Jackals: the animal fables of Kalilah and Dimnah	Aga Khan Museum 2014

Short Story collections

Hot Rock Mountain	Egmont 2004
Why Dogs Have Black Noses	Oxford University Press 2010
When a Cat Ruled the World	Oxford University Press 2010
Picture Books include:	
Happy Birthday with Satomi Ichikawa	Collins 1987
Chunky Bears series with Carolyn Scrace	Carnival 1989
Sid and Sadie with Alan Marks	Collins 1988
Zippi and Zak series with Peter Lawson	Heinemann 1989-91
Rosy's Garden with Satomi Ichikawa	Heinemann 1990
Rosy's Winter with Satomi Ichikawa	Heinemann 1997
Beautiful Bananas with Liz Pichon	Oxford University Press 2004

Series for younger children

Writer/deviser with Peter Lawson of the Toucan Tecs, ten picture books, series animated by S4C, sold to TV stations worldwide.	Heinemann 1987-1989
Writer/deviser with Colin Reeder of The Little Red Tractor Series	Collins 1988

Adult books

Arcadia	Pan/Macmillan 1990
The Lure of the Honey Bird: the storytellers of Ethiopia	Polygon 2013

Elizabeth Laird Translations

The Fastest Boy in the World (2014)	France, Japan
Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings (2014)	Persian
The Ogress & the Snake: Tales from Somalia (2009)	Korean
Where's Toto (2009)	France, Spain
Lost Riders (2008)	Korean
Oranges in No Man's Land (2007)	Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain
Red Sky in the Morning (2006)	Japan, Korean
Secrets of the Fearless (2006)	France, Russia
The Garbage King (2004)	Italy, France, Indonesia, Japan, Germany, Sri Lanka, Sinhala language, Korean
A Little Piece of Ground (2004)	Greece, Germany, Portugal, Korea, Indonesia, Italy, Portugal, Netherlands, Spain, Croatian and Slovak, Japan, Indonesia, Arabic
Beautiful Bananas (2004)	France
Secret Friends (2002)	Germany, Japan
Jake's Tower (2001)	China, Netherlands, France, Italy, Japan
Things (series) 1999,2000	China, Estonia, France, Hungary, Russia, Thailand
Jay (1997)	Netherlands, Portugal
Kiss the Dust (1997)	Denmark, Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Norway
A Funny Sort of Dog (1997)	Italy
Hiding Out (1993)	Netherlands, Norway
Rosy's Garden (1990)	Germany
Crackers (1989)	Germany
Red Sky in the Morning (1988)	Arabic, Denmark, Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden
The Little Red Tractor (Series) 1988	France

Acknowledgements and Thanks

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The dossier was designed by Andy Thomsen:

www.arthomsendesign.co.uk