



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

## *Baby Blue:* Interview with the Author



Sometimes the unknown can be scary. Having a friend to explore with you can help. Magination Press interviewed author and illustrator, Judi Abbot, about creating *Baby Blue*.

**Magination Press: What inspired you to write *Baby Blue*?**

**Judi Abbot:** I started working on this book from a quick character sketch I had in my mind. It all started from this little blue boy, without a clear identity or story. For sure, what inspired me to create Baby Blue's first adventure came from my experiences as mum, illustrator, and educator. I remember clearly when my kids were little, their biggest fears and how they needed some tools to confront them, and the incredible power a new friendship from two different worlds radiates.

**MP: Why do children need books about exploring the unknown?**

**JA:** When the little kids are confronting the unknown, it's a blast of emotions and worries. I think a book can help them understand this confusion of excitement and worries. Putting illustrations in front of them where they can identify themselves helps them feel a little bit encouraged that they are not alone. And maybe get ready to deal with the unknown in real life.

**MP: Are you curious and adventurous or more cautious?**

**JA:** I'd love to say that I'm adventurous but actually I'm not! For sure I am curious, but a lot more on the cautious side. But having two boys made me confront my worries and fears: I went on a roller coaster (a little one) with my kids a few years ago for the first time in my life!

**MP: What role do you think a friend can play in overcoming a fear?**

**JA:** It's incredible how powerful a friendship can be! A very good friend shares good and bad moments, and this relationship gives both people such energy to face up to everything. And the best part of overcoming a fear with a friend is the feeling left after dealing with it: the joy of succeeding together. It is also

important to understand that what you are dealing with, your worries and fears, are not always just yours, your friend can feel the same. And sharing a worry is the fastest way to get rid of it.

**MP: Tell me about Baby Blue's magic stone. What inspired that? Do you have a special object that boosts your confidence?**

**JA:** When my first kid was little, he was a bit on the cautious side, scared of almost everything new. One day we booked a pony ride for him at a stable, but he was really scared and in distress. There were stones on the site, and we had this idea to pick one, and transform it into a friendly magic stone to give him all the courage to face up to his fears. With the smiling stone in his pocket, he was ready for his new adventure. We had a wonderful morning of fun and not a tear! I do not have any special object to boost my confidence.

**MP: Children are feeling so isolated right now, because of COVID-19, and have had to stay away from school and friends. Their opportunities for exploration and interaction have really been curtailed, and some may even feel anxious about that now. How can *Baby Blue* help?**

**JA:** We are living in such a difficult period, and our children are the ones that are suffering the most. Baby Blue is a simple book, but I think it can help the kids by showing them that what is different is not wrong or bad, that we need a bit of courage and some help to face up to that, but that once we have done it, the outcome creates such a great new energy never experienced before. We will go back meeting friends, we just need to wait for the right moment and fill our day with good memories and hope, and a magic stone! Ready to give it to our best friends when we'll meet them again.

**MP: When you created Baby Blue, did the story come first or the images—or maybe they happened simultaneously? And why did you choose blue and yellow for the characters?**

**JA:** It all started from the color blue, as I really love painting in blue. I love the shades and tones of the acrylic blue when layering it on the paper. And in my portfolio, I always have a lot of blue illustrations. So, I decided, why not make a book mainly with Blue! Then I moved to create Baby Blue, with simple shapes, and slowly a world around him started to appear in my mind. My agent, Hannah, helped me a lot into the process of writing the story, as English is not my first language.

I used to do a lot of children's illustration workshops, and one of my favorites is about the book *Little Blue and Little Yellow* by L. Lionni. I always use it to teach about primary and secondary colors. So, when I was creating this story, immediately the idea popped into my mind to use this creation of something new from the union of the two primary colors, blue and yellow. I'm not trying to compare myself to Lionni, that's well out of my mind. But his work inspired me during my creation process.

**MP: You've created many picture books. What is your favorite part of the process and your least favorite part of the process?**

**JA:** My favorite one is also my least favorite: and that's the beginning! When I'm in front of the white paper and I have no idea how to start, I feel really lost and with an empty mind. I really don't like it. But then I start scribbling with different materials, taking notes, and at the end I have a very messy page but with some little gems here and there. And that's what I like! That's the start of almost all my books: little signs in the chaos of the first white page of my sketch book!

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**MP: What do you like to do when you aren't writing?**

**JA:** When I'm not writing or illustrating, I love to walk (if the weather is not too bad), and London is the perfect city to take big long walks, going to parks, seeing beautiful buildings and so much history. I also love baking, mainly simple cakes and Italian biscuits; I'm a messy baker, but it gives me a lot of pleasure creating sweet nibbles in the white mist of the flour.

**MP: Is there a fun fact about you that readers might not know that you'd like to share?**

**JA:** My real name is not Judi! And also, my surname is not Abbot! I'm Italian, but have been living in London for a few years now. So, when I started working with some British publishers, they asked me if I was ok to find an easier name to spell, as my real Italian name and surname have some tricky sounds. So Giuditta became Judi (same name, different spelling) and Gaviraghi, Abbot! Judi Abbot is the main character of a book I loved when I was young, *Daddy Longlegs*.

**MP: What was your favorite children's book when you were growing up?**

**JA:** When I was really young, I remember I had this big book with all the days of the year, and little stories or poems for each day. It had a big cardboard cover and tape on almost every page to keep it in one piece, as my sisters and I were reading it a lot. It had so many little illustrations on each page. I loved to copy the images, and of course my favorite was the one from my birthday page!

### **This Article's Author**

Judi (Giuditta) Abbot went to art school in Italy. She's since published books that have been translated around the world. Judi's highly recognizable style features simple shapes and bright colors rendered in acrylics, colored pencils, and digitally. She lives in London, United Kingdom. Visit her online, and on Facebook and Instagram.