

Catherine Bruton (English Language and Literature, 1991)



Multi-award-winning children's author Catherine Bruton came up to St Hugh's in 1991 to read English Language and Literature. As a student she was heavily involved in the drama scene at Oxford and she was a dedicated member of the St Hugh's Players. She also began to develop her love of creative writing at St Hugh's, joining Avril Bruton's creative writing society in her final year, and participating in Christ Church's poetry competition.

On graduating with first-class honours, she took a gap year and moved to Africa, where she taught in a school. It was there that she wrote her first (unpublished) novel, inspired by the children and all she experienced around her.

St Hugh's has continued to have a profound influence on her writing. Her new book *Following Frankenstein* (to be published in October 2021) was inspired by the idea of text as a vehicle for challenging the reader's thoughts about disability and neurodiversity, which she discussed in her tutorials on *Frankenstein* with Ann Wordsworth. The novel is a sequel to Mary Shelley's classic, which blends Moby Dick, Fenimore Cooper, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Willa Cather, Nathaniel Hawthorne and other literary classics and seeks to challenge the 'ableist' tropes which surround the 'mythology' of Frankenstein. Catherine's book *Another Twist in the Tale* (2020), which tells the tale of Twill Twist, Oliver Twist's twin sister, was inspired by another of her tutors, Professor Isabel Rivers, who encouraged her to think carefully about the portrayal of women's voices in Victorian literature.

Other recent highlights of Catherine's impressive career include her novel *No Ballet Shoes in Syria*, which won the #BooksAreMyBag Award for Children's Fiction in 2019, and the Middle East Book Award and the Cheshire Book Award in 2020. It was also nominated for the Carnegie Medal and was the *Sunday Times* Book of the Week. She is also the author of *We Can Be Heroes* (now a family feature starring Alison Steadman and Phil Davies).

Alongside her writing career, Catherine also teaches English and Drama part-time at King Edward's School in Bath, and she takes a great deal of inspiration from the children she teaches. Throughout her teaching career, she has been committed to providing opportunities for children to try their hand at creative writing, setting up writing clubs and competitions in the schools she has worked at.

Catherine also writes novels under the pseudonym Cate Shearwater.

To find out more about Catherine, visit her website at <http://catherinebruton.com/>.