



**Title:** *Drawing with Light*

**Author:** Julia Green

**Publisher:** [Bloomsbury](#)

Emily has no memory of her biological mother and, until a handsome young man enters her life, and her stepmother falls pregnant, she is perfectly happy for it to stay that way.

Francesca left Emily, her father and her sister Kat when they were very young, to run away with a French artist. They have had no contact with her since; no explanation and no idea where she is. Now sixteen, Emily is beginning to question her place within the family: Kat has gone away to university and Dad and Cassy are busy renovating an old house together in time for the arrival of the new baby. Emily feels left behind and left out. So when her art teacher comments about the similarity of Emily and Francesca's photography, she starts to wonder how much of an influence her mother has had on her life, even though she's been absent for most of it. Encouraged by her new boyfriend Seb and best friend Rachel, Emily makes the first tentative steps towards finding Francesca.

Julia is a truly inspirational writer. She tackles complex family issues with a deft hand and subtly deals with all of the ups and downs of first romance. She gets under the skin of her characters and skilfully brings to life the emotional rollercoaster of teenage years. *Drawing with Light* will leave readers feeling uplifted and hopeful.

Julia has written three novels for young adults published by Puffin (*Blue Moon*, *Baby Blue* and *Hunter's Heart*). *Breathing Underwater* is her first book for Bloomsbury. Julia is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University, and is the Course Director for the MA in Writing for Young People. Her students have included prize-winning Sally Nicholls (*Ways to Live Forever*, *Season of Secrets*), Marie-Louise Jensen and Elen Caldecott (*How Kirsty Jenkins Stole the Elephant*, shortlisted for the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize 2009). Julia lives in Bath with her two sons.

Cyprus Well caught up with Julia this week to ask her a few questions about her work and writing and publishing in general.

**Do you have a particular place you write, Julia?**

Today my laptop is on the table in my attic with lovely views over the fields and hills behind my house in Bath, but that's because my sons are home for the summer: when they're not around I move the laptop around the house and write in different rooms. I love writing at

the kitchen table with the back door open. I like to write in my notebook at cafes, or outside. I find that different places affect my writing in different ways.

### **Do you have writing routines - a set number of words a day, for example?**

My writing fits around all the other things I do, such as teaching at University, or being a parent, so I don't have a set routine. When I'm in the middle of a novel I'm more focussed: I try to write 1000 words in the morning. I start the day's writing by reading and editing what I wrote the day before: that helps me get back into the story. On days when I don't actually write, I'm still thinking about the story and the characters. If I'm stuck, I walk somewhere. That loosens up my imagination. Too much direct thinking sometimes gets in the way. I might ask myself a question (write it down in my notebook) and leave the answer to come in its own time.

### **Do you have any tips for aspiring writers?**

Good writers are also good readers; my advice for aspiring writers is to read, every day, and think about what you are reading. It can be very helpful to share your writing with other people at a similar stage – that's the virtue of a course like the MA in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University ( I'm the Course Director). You have to practise. A novel takes many drafts. You won't get it right first time. So you need to be patient and persistent, and to write because it's what you love and need to do. Finding an agent and a publisher is a stage much further down the line.

### **Can you tell us a bit about influences on your own writing?**

I've been influenced by all the reading I did as a child, as a teenager, as an adult. My all time favourite novel, if I have to choose, is *Tom's Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce: a magical, beautiful story with many layers, about the way the past stays alive in each of us. I love David Almond's story *Skellig*, too, and Dodie Smith's *I Capture the Castle*. *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, most of Thomas Hardy's novels, short stories by Alice Munro. Novels by Carol Shields and Anne Tyler... I could go on!

### **Are there particular challenges in writing for kids?**

Writing for children you have to write the very best you can. I think we owe children that. You write for the child you once were, the child inside you, but alert to the changes and challenges in contemporary children's lives. You shouldn't ever patronise or talk down to a young reader. The challenges as I see them come more from the 'gatekeepers': the adults in the publishing, bookselling, education and media worlds who have their own ideas about what children will like.

### **Cyprus Well asks everyone about digital books and what they might mean for the future. What are your views?**

I know people are getting excited by developments in digital books. I don't think any of us know what impact it will have for authors and readers. It might make it cheaper to read a story. But nothing can be more accessible, energy saving, portable and child friendly than a book with paper pages and pictures, as far as I'm concerned.

### **Do you have a particular writing exercise you'd like to share with our readers?**

Here's a writing exercise I like: you do it before you start writing anything else, as a warm up to writing fiction or poetry or whatever. In a notebook, with a pen or pencil, write for five minutes without stopping to censure or edit, without using proper sentences or punctuation, just letting go onto the page all the random, butterfly thoughts that flit in and out of our wonderful minds. You don't even have to write in straight lines. Just let go. Some people call it 'free intuitive writing'. It isn't about making sense, or telling a story, or structuring an idea. It's simply and magically a way of freeing up the imagination and tapping into your unconscious mind, which is the place from which the best writing comes. Try doing the exercise for 5 minutes on the first day, then 10 the next, 15 the one after, and see what happens!

**Thank you Julia!**

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