

# FEATURED AUTHOR

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## JO COTTERILL

DISCOVER THE WORLD OF  
JO COTTERILL

BOOK REVIEWS

AWARD-WINNER



# FEATURING

Jo Cotterill

JO COTTERILL HAS BEEN AN ACTOR, A TEACHER AND A FIREWORKS TECHNICIAN, BUT SHE LIKES WRITING BEST. SHE HAS PUBLISHED OVER THIRTY BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS, INCLUDING THE CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED NOVELS LOOKING AT THE STARS AND A LIBRARY OF LEMONS. SHE WRITES SHORT BOOKS FOR READERS WHO STRUGGLE, HELPED BY HER PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE AS A LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANT. SHE ALSO WRITES THE SUPERHERO PART-BOOK, PART-COMIC SERIES ELECTRIGIRL WITH ILLUSTRATOR CATHY BRETT. WHEN SHE'S NOT READING, WRITING OR OUT VISITING SCHOOLS AND FESTIVALS, JO LIKES TO WRITE SONGS AND MAKE INTERESTING THINGS OUT OF PAPER. SHE LIVES IN OXFORDSHIRE WITH HER FAMILY.

"My background in acting, music and secondary school teaching gave me a thirst for communication combined with creativity. When I was a teenager, I didn't write a lot of stories. Instead I wrote a lot of music."

## CONTACT US

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Content from  
jocotterill.com  
empathylab.uk and  
booktrust.org.uk

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# ALL ABOUT JO

HELLO! I'M JO COTTERILL AND I WRITE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE. SOME RANDOM THINGS ABOUT ME:

1. I LIVE IN OXFORDSHIRE.

2. I HAVE TWO DAUGHTERS WHO MAKE ME LAUGH EVERY DAY AND GIVE THE BEST HUGS.

3. I LOVE CHEESE. AND CHOCOLATE. AND CAKE. CAKE SEEMS TO BE VERY IMPORTANT TO WRITERS. WHEN WE MEET UP, THERE IS ALMOST ALWAYS CAKE INVOLVED.

4. I LOVE THE GREAT BRITISH BAKE OFF AND STRICTLY COME DANCING. WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I STUDIED BALLET, JAZZ AND TAP DANCE, SO I'D LOVE TO HAVE A GO AT BALLROOM ONE DAY.

5. ONE OF MY PREVIOUS JOBS WAS BEING A FIREWORKS TECHNICIAN. I GOT TO WEAR A HARD HAT AND A BOILER SUIT WITH MY NAME ON IT, AND I GOT VERY CLOSE TO EXPLOSIVES AND IT WAS FRIGHTENING AND FUN ALL AT THE SAME TIME.

6. WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER, I DIDN'T WRITE A LOT OF STORIES. INSTEAD, I WROTE A LOT OF MUSIC. AND I PLAYED FLUTE, PICCOLO, ALTO SAXOPHONE, PIANO AND VIOLIN. NOWADAYS I CAN'T PLAY THEM ALL VERY WELL (BECAUSE BEING GOOD AT SOMETHING TAKES PRACTICE AND I DON'T DO IT ANY MORE!) BUT SOMETIMES, I STILL WRITE SONGS.

7. I LOVE TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT BOOKS AND STORIES. THEY HAVE THE BEST IDEAS.

8. I LOVE STARTING A STORY AND NOT REALLY KNOWING WHERE IT'S GOING. FOR ME, THE MAGIC OF WRITING IS NOT KNOWING WHAT'S GOING TO COME OUT OF YOUR IMAGINATION NEXT.

9. ONE OF THE NICEST THINGS ABOUT BEING AN AUTHOR IS BEING FRIENDS WITH OTHER AUTHORS WHO ARE JUST AS BONKERS AS YOU ARE.

10. I HAVE WON THE FOLLOWING AWARDS: THE HAMPSHIRE BOOK AWARD, THE NORTH EAST BOOK AWARD, THE COVENTRY INSPIRATION BOOK AWARD, THE OXFORDSHIRE BOOK AWARD, THE STOCKPORT CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD, THE TOWER HAMLETS BOOK AWARD AND THE FANTASTIC BOOK AWARDS. AWARDS ARE LOVELY THINGS BECAUSE IT'S NICE TO GET PRIZES, BUT THE BEST THING ABOUT THEM IS KNOWING THAT LOTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIKED YOUR MADE-UP STUFF.



## -BOOKS BY JO COTTERILL-

AMINA IS HEADSTRONG AND OUTSPOKEN. THIS SOUNDS HARMLESS ENOUGH BUT AMINA AND HER FAMILY ARE LIVING UNDER A DANGEROUS DICTATORSHIP. THESE ACTIONS ARE SEEN AS REBELLION, EVEN A STRAY SMILE CAN GET YOU NOTICED FOR THE WRONG REASONS SO AMINA CAN'T HIDE HER EXCITEMENT WHEN THE 'LIBERATION' ARRIVES.

SHE IS SURE THAT A NEW LIFE IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER, BUT WHEN HER BROTHER GOES MISSING AND IS FEARED TO HAVE JOINED THE REBELS AMINA AND THE REST OF HER FAMILY GET A VISIT FROM THE OFFICIALS THAT WILL TEAR THEIR LIVES APART.

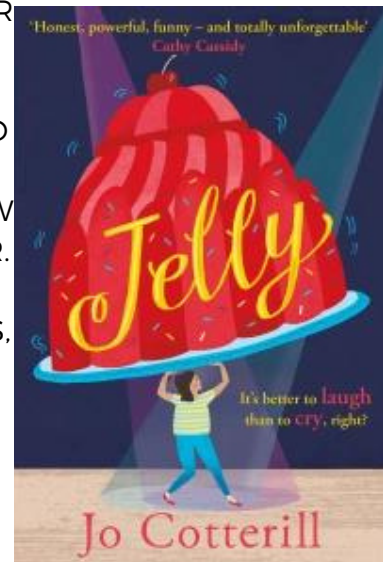
THIS BRUTAL REALITY AND THE TRAGIC STORY ACT AS A SHARP CONTRAST TO THE FREE SPIRIT AND STRONG WILL OF OUR FEISTY HEROINE. AMINA FINDS HER TALENTS IN STORYTELLING, BRINGING COMFORT TO HERSELF AND THOSE AROUND HER IN THEIR DARKEST HOURS. SHE IS HONEST AND BRAVE BUT REMAINS BELIEVABLE IN HER ACTS OF DEFIANCE.



ANGELICA - JELLY FOR SHORT - IS THE 'FUNNY ONE' AT SCHOOL, KNOWN FOR HER CLEVER IMPRESSIONS. BUT BEING FUNNY IS A FINE LINE AND BEHIND ALL THE HUMOUR, JELLY'S HIDING ANXIETIES ABOUT HER WEIGHT. IF THEY'RE LAUGHING WITH HER, THEY'RE NOT LAUGHING AT HER, RIGHT? AND SHE HAS ANOTHER SECRET TOO, A SECRET HOBBY: WRITING POETRY.

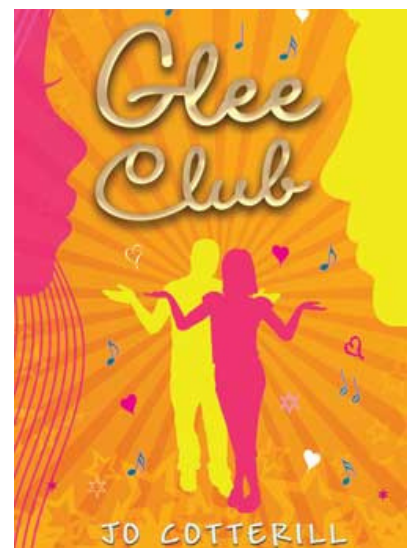
NOBODY KNOWS, NOT EVEN HER MUM, THEN HER MUM GETS A LOVELY NEW BOYFRIEND WHO ENCOURAGES JELLY TO SHOW THE WORLD THE REAL HER. CAN SHE FIND THE COURAGE SHE NEEDS TO STOP HIDING?

PERFECT FOR READERS LOOKING FOR A REAL-LIFE STORY ABOUT ANXIETIES, FAMILY AND SCHOOL, WITH THEMES OF BODY IMAGE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE. JO COTTERILL SENSITIVELY LAYERS TOGETHER THE STORY WHILE JELLY'S CONCERNS - HER FEAR THAT PERHAPS PEOPLE DON'T ACTUALLY LIKE HER - ARE CLEVERLY REFLECTED BY THE SUPPORTING CHARACTERS. JELLY HERSELF HAS A STRONG, POSITIVE AND INSPIRING STORY ARC



DISASTER FOR GLEE CLUB! IT'S ONLY FIVE WEEKS UNTIL THE BIG COMP, AND THEIR COACH IS ILL. CAN MEL SAVE THE DAY?

WHEN BURFORD SCHOOL GLEE CLUB LOSE THEIR MUSICAL DIRECTOR RIGHT AHEAD OF A BIG COMPETITION, CLUB MEMBER MEL STEPS IN.



All available in your Library Resource Centre



## Coming Out of Isolation by Jo Cotterill

Thea sat at her window, feeling the warm rays of the sun on her face, and smiled. Outside, the street was almost empty: only the delivery van bringing essential supermarket produce to customers broke the peace of the day. The birds had multiplied and spread during the lockdown – now the air was full of birdsong all day. The swans ruled the rivers, and dolphins had returned to the canals of Venice. Thea had seen it all on her TV.

Speaking of TV, it was time for the daily bulletin; the latest updated numbers. Thea reached for the remote.

The Prime Minister's face filled the screen; a face admired by some and loathed by others; a man who would never say the right thing no matter what the words. 'The numbers are down again,' he was saying now, 'and this is very encouraging. We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. And whilst we ask everyone to continue in lockdown for the moment, we are finally considering the possibility of re-opening spaces and businesses.'

Thea stared at the TV, aghast. Oh no, no, no...

Her phone rang. 'Thea!' her mum squawked excitedly. 'Did you hear? It's nearly over! We're going to be able to go outside again! Things will return to normal! Isn't it fantastic!'

Thea's throat had closed with fear. Her stomach clenched. No, she wanted to say, no, it's not fantastic. Because in here, I'm safe, everything is fine. Out there – out in the streets, in the big wide world – I feel afraid. Some people love shopping, travelling, open spaces. Me – I can't bear it. I'm anxious even about posting a letter. It's nothing to do with the virus; I've always been this way. And no one has ever understood. Lockdown has been the most wonderful time of my life. No one telling me to 'just grit your teeth and get out there' or 'it's mind over matter; you're just not trying hard enough.' For once, I've been allowed to stay in undisturbed. For once, I am normal.

Her mum chattered on happily, but all Thea could think was: this is the worst news I've ever heard.