

# A CONVERSATION with the CREATORS

KATHERINE PATERSON

*What did you find compelling about *The Flint Heart*?*

It is a wonderful, whimsical story that asks the reader to think about the abuse of power. It's my considered opinion that Tolkien read it. There are many echoes of *The Flint Heart* in *The Lord of the Rings*.

*Why did you want to work with your husband on this specific project?*

*The Flint Heart* was John's passion, but he likes to collaborate. On Roberto's Trip to the Top, he worked with our son John, but John was very busy in his real job and said he really couldn't do *The Flint Heart*. I thought the project would be fun. We've done four books together now and have always enjoyed the process. Besides, he needed my typing ability.

*What did you most enjoy about writing *The Flint Heart*? Did you run into any surprises or unexpected challenges on the way?*

It was perhaps the most fun I've ever had on a writing project. The characters, the setting, the story—all are simply delightful. I think the big surprise was that at the big scene when the Marsh Galloper is being tested, Charles is outside the Pixie Holt. My editor pointed out that Phillpotts had fallen down on the job there, so we had to invent a reason to keep Charles offstage and still make it plausible.

*Bedrock Studios and Arcady Bay Entertainment are developing a feature film adaptation of *The Flint Heart*. What elements of *The Flint Heart* are you most excited to see on the big screen?*

All the armies of fairies will be a delight to see, but how will they do the hot-water bottle? Or the magnificent Zagabog?

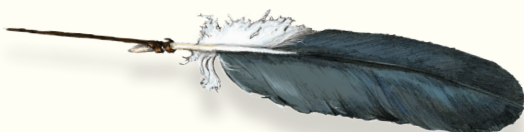
*Why do you think fantasy has remained so popular for over a century? Has the appeal changed over time? What are some of your favorite fantasy novels?*

To be honest, I prefer realistic fiction to fantasy. Sorry about that. John is not here at the moment, but to tell the truth, I think *The Flint Heart* is the only fantasy I've seen him passionate about. I think, however, that the element of wonder in fantasy appeals to us all. I'm still haunted by Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising*. I read Lloyd Alexander

along with my children and loved the humor and fantasy elements there. I thoroughly enjoyed *Harry Potter*, but John never read any of those. I think until *Harry Potter*, fantasy was a bit out of fashion, but it is all the rage now, though mostly in the vampire and werewolf veins. I guess that's how the appeal has changed. Now fantasy is closer to what I think of as horror rather than magical wonder. I find that sad. I do hope young readers will love *The Flint Heart*. It is such a vibrant, heartening, funny story, and that final chapter is filled with wonder. We all need this kind of healing experience as readers.



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JOHN ROCCO

*Were you familiar with the original 1910 version of *The Flint Heart* before working on this project?*



I must admit that when Candlewick contacted me about illustrating *The Flint Heart*, I had never heard of the original version of the story. What I did know was that John and Katherine Paterson were involved and that it would be published by Candlewick, so I was immediately intrigued.

Not only was I familiar with the works of Katherine Paterson, but I also recently had the pleasure of being an audience member during one of her moving keynote speeches. Her love of children's literature and her absolute joy about reading were an inspiration. The opportunity to collaborate with her and her husband on this book is an honor I do not take lightly. The icing on the cake was having Candlewick as the publisher. I have been an avid collector of children's books for over two decades and have always been thrilled with the quality of books published by Candlewick. Their innovations in publishing and their attention to detail have helped solidify the importance of the physical book for children in this ever-growing digital age.

*How did you create the illustrations? Can you walk us through your process?*

My process for creating the illustrations for *The Flint Heart* was very similar to my process for illustrating book jackets and picture books. First I read the entire text several times to get a general feel for the story and its characters. Then I begin a series of sketches, trying to work out what some of the characters and environments look like. Once I have a feel for what the illustrations are going to look like, I begin sketching out all the different scenes in the book I would like to illustrate. Luckily I have a lot of wall space in my studio, which I quickly cover with blown-up prints of my sketches so I can rearrange them and make notes on them.

For *The Flint Heart*, I worked with the folks at Candlewick to decide which scenes would work best for the book, then began the process of creating the final paintings. My process consists of creating a tonal

pencil drawing based on the sketch, which I then scan into my computer and paint digitally using Photoshop. Painting the colors on the computer allows me to have greater control over the overall palette of the paintings, and, let's face it, allows me to easily fix any mistakes. As I work through each painting on the computer, I tend to go back to earlier paintings and adjust them so that by the time I start to get near the end of the project, I am really working on the book as a whole, which allows me to have a greater consistency.

*What did you find most appealing about illustrating this story? Was there anything especially challenging?*

Illustrating *The Flint Heart* was an absolute dream come true for me. It has fairies, goblins, children, talking animals, and even an anthropomorphic hot-water bottle from Germany as its characters. The original story was beautifully illustrated in black and white by Charles Folkard, and for those of you who are familiar with his work, you know those are some big shoes to fill.

The basic challenge for me was to create characters that felt like they all inhabited the same world, as well as adding a more modern twist to the Edwardian imagery that the story evokes. For this challenge, I decided to create different levels of realism for the characters. On one end of the spectrum would be the more realistically illustrated characters (humans, non-talking animals), and on the other end of the spectrum would be more stylized characters (fairies, talking animals). This spectrum of style is narrowed as the characters become more enmeshed in each other's worlds.



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