



**Dear friends,**

My name's Patrice Lawrence and I've always loved stories. Before I could read myself, I loved people reading me stories or making up stories especially for me. When I did learn to read, I buried myself in books – though I still loved people reading to me! I was the child walking along the street with their nose stuck in a book, trying not to bump into lamp posts or tread in dog poop. It was like books were a warm, dry pocket that I could bury myself deep inside.

I also loved making up stories – and I still do! Now I'm an author and I write books about children and young people of all ages. Some are adventure stories – what if the Great Fire of London was really started by dragons? Some are a little bit silly – what if a swarm of flying toads landed in your village, munched through everyone's gardens and chased your neighbours' cats? And some of my books are bit serious. What if you're feeling sad and lonely and your only friends are your pet rats?

You know how a toad's throat bulges in and out? That's like my imagination. Every croak is a new idea swelling up into a story. (If you could compare your imagination to an animal, what would it be?)

There's another reason why I loved books. I grew up in families that looked different to my other friends' families. Sometimes I wanted to be like everyone else. The books I enjoyed were full of characters that felt that they didn't belong too, but then they went on wild adventures, or solved difficult mysteries. Those stories reassured me. Children like me deserved to have story adventures – and children like me could be excellent story-makers too.

Enjoy your fabulous book pack. Book post is the best post. My friends and I still send books to each other and my heart sings when the envelope thuds through the letterbox. I hope your books bring you joy - and make your imagination swell up like a toad about to eat the head teacher's prize tomatoes...

Best wishes,

**Patrice**

