

E. Nesbit

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Edith Nesbit



Born: August 15, 1858
Kennington, Surrey

Died: May 4, 1924
New Romney, Kent

Occupation: Writer, poet

Edith Nesbit (married name **Edith Bland**; August 15, 1858 - May 4, 1924) was an English author and poet whose children's works were published under the androgynous name of **E. Nesbit**. She wrote or collaborated on over 60 books of fiction for

children, several of which have been adapted for film and television. She was also a political activist and co-founded the Fabian Society, a precursor to the modern Labour Party.

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Biography

She was born in 1858 at 38 Lower Kennington Lane in Kennington, Surrey (now part of Greater London), the daughter of a schoolteacher, John Collis Nesbit, who died in March 1862, before her fourth birthday. Her sister Mary's ill health meant that the family moved around constantly for some years, living variously in Brighton, Buckinghamshire, France (Dieppe, Rouen, Paris, Tours, Poitiers, Angouleme, Bordeaux, Arcachon, Pau, Bagneres de Bigorre, and Dinan in Brittany),

Spain and Germany, before settling for three years at Halstead Hall in Halstead in north-west Kent, a location which later inspired *The Railway Children*.

When Nesbit was 17, the family moved again, this time back to London, living variously in South East London at Eltham, Lewisham, Grove Park and Lee.

A follower of William Morris, 19-year-old Nesbit met bank clerk Hubert Bland in 1877. Seven months pregnant, she married Bland on 22 April 1880, though she did not immediately live with him, as Bland initially continued to live with his mother. Their marriage was an open one. Bland also continued an affair with Alice Hoatson which produced two children (Rosamund in 1886 and John in 1899), both of whom Nesbit raised as her own. Her own children were Paul Bland (1880-1940), to whom *The Railway Children* was dedicated; Iris Bland (1881-19??); and Fabian Bland (1885-1900), who died aged 15 after a tonsil operation, and to whom she dedicated *Five Children And It* and its sequels, as well as *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* and its sequels.

Nesbit and Bland were among the founders of the

Fabian Society (a precursor to the Labour Party) in 1884. Their son Fabian was named after the society. They also jointly edited the Society's journal *Today*; Hoatson was the Society's assistant secretary. Nesbit and Bland also dallied briefly with the Social Democratic Federation, but rejected it as too radical. Nesbit was an active lecturer and prolific writer on socialism during the 1880s. Nesbit also wrote with her husband under the name "Fabian Bland"^[1], though this activity dwindled as her success as a children's author grew.

Nesbit lived from 1899 to 1920 in Well Hall House, Eltham, Kent (now in south-east Greater London). On 20 February 1917, some three years after Bland died, Nesbit married Thomas "the Skipper" Tucker, a ship's engineer on the Woolwich Ferry.

Towards the end of her life she moved to a house called "Crowlink" in Friston, East Sussex, and later to St Mary's Bay in Romney Marsh, East Kent. Suffering from lung cancer, probably a result of her heavy smoking, she died in 1924 at New Romney, Kent, and was buried in the churchyard of St Mary in the Marsh.

Literature

Nesbit published approximately 40 books for children, both novels or collections of stories.

Collaborating with others, she published almost as many more.

According to her biographer Julia Briggs, Nesbit was "the first modern writer for

children": "(Nesbit) helped to reverse the great tradition of children's literature inaugurated by [Lewis] Carroll, [George] MacDonald and Kenneth Grahame, in turning away from their secondary worlds to the tough truths to be won from encounters with things-as-they-are, previously the province of adult novels." Briggs also credits



E. Nesbit's grave in St Mary in the Marsh's churchyard bears a grave marker shaped like goal posts, giving both her pseudonym "E. Nesbit" and her name "Edith Bland". There is also a memorial plaque to her inside the church.

Nesbit with having invented the children's adventure story.

Among Nesbit's best-known books are *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1898) and *The Wouldbegoods* (1899), which both recount stories about the Bastables, a fictional middle class family that has fallen on relatively hard times. Nesbit's children's writing also included numerous plays and collections of verse.

She also popularized an innovative style of children's fantasy that combined realistic, contemporary children in real-world settings with magical objects and adventures. In doing so, she was a direct or indirect influence on many subsequent writers, including P.L. Travers (author of *Mary Poppins*), Edward Eager, Diana Wynne Jones and J.K. Rowling. C.S. Lewis wrote of her influence on his *Narnia* series and mentions the Bastable children in *The Magician's Nephew*. Michael Moorcock would go to write a series of steampunk novels with an adult Oswald Bastable (of *The Treasure Seekers*) as the lead character.

Selected works

- *Grim Tales* (stories) (1893)
- *The Pilot* (1893)
- *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1898)
- *The Wouldbegoods* (1899)
- *The Seven Dragons* (1899)
- *Five Children and It* (1902)
- *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904)
- *The New Treasure Seekers* (1904)
- *The Story of the Amulet* (1905)
- *The Railway Children* (1906)
- *The Enchanted Castle* (1907)
- *The House of Arden* (1908)
- *The Three Mothers* (1908)
- *Harding's Luck* (1909)
- *These Little Ones* (1909)
- *The Magic City* (1910)
- *Dormant* (1911)
- *Wet Magic* (1913)
- *To the Adventurous* (stories) (1923)

Anthologies

- *Before Armageddon: An Anthology of Victorian and Edwardian Imaginative Fiction Published Before 1914* (1976)

See also

- Category: Works by E. Nesbit

References

1. ^ *The Prophet's Mantle* (1885), a fictional story inspired by the life of Peter Kropotkin in London.

External links

- E. Nesbit at the Internet Speculative Fiction Database
 - Works by Edith Nesbit at Project Gutenberg
 - E-texts of works by E. Nesbit (some illustrated)
 - "The Wouldbegoods" Summer Book Club Online bookclub from "Halfway Down the Stairs" magazine offering activities accompanying each chapter of "The Wouldbegoods".
 - Free audiobook of *Five Children and It* from LibriVox
 - Biography of E. Nesbit
 - Biography: 'The Early Years'
 - My School Days (article series by Nesbit)
 - Melisande by E. Nesbit, a tale similar to Rapunzel
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**British Children's [hide]
and Young Adults' Literature (1900-1949)**

Authors

Representative Titles

Illustrators

Magazines and Annuals

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Categories: 1858 births | 1924 deaths | People from Surrey | English children's writers | 1900-1949 British children's literature | Women of the Victorian era | Female authors who wrote under male or gender-neutral pseudonyms | Polyamory

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