

Anne Collins

The author and her work



Anne Collins was born in Harrogate, in the north-east of England, on 25 June 1952. Anne's father worked in the financial department of the Air Ministry, the government organisation responsible for the administration of the Royal Air Force. He was based in Egypt, Cyprus and Aden and his family moved with him. Anne's love of travel and foreign cultures came from these early experiences of life abroad.

After Anne's family returned to England, she attended a girls' school in Guildford, and then went on to London University, where she studied English Literature. Her first job after graduating in 1973, was at a 'frontistirio', a private Greek language school, on the island of Kos. In those days, very few foreigners went to Greece. Anne lived with a very kind Greek family and they helped one another learn their native language.

One year later, Anne moved to Athens, where she worked as a tour guide for a British tourist company. This was a very exciting job, showing tourists historical sites like Mycenae, Delphi and Knossos in Crete. Although it was great fun, after two years Anne decided to return to teaching. She went back to England to obtain a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) at London University. This qualification helped her to get her next job overseas as a Lecturer in English at the King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Anne stayed in Saudi Arabia for three years. It was a very interesting time to be there, because the country was developing quickly and attracting many people of different nationalities for work opportunities. Anne enjoyed being able to work closely with a group of educated Saudi women, who very rarely saw anyone apart from their families.

After Saudi, Anne returned to the UK where she got a job setting up the EFL Department at Glasgow University in Scotland. During this time, she wrote her first Graded Reader – for Heinemann Educational Books. Anne was planning to settle in the UK, but after three years, she met a representative from the Longman Group Publishing Company at a university conference. They were looking for a marketing manager to set up and run their Turkish division. Anne applied for it and was offered the job.

Anne went to Turkey and stayed there for four years. Although she was based in Istanbul, her job involved travelling around the whole country. She visited schools and universities to find out about their educational needs and suggested the best ELT courses for them. The schools ranged from internationally well-known institutions like Bilkent University and the Middle East Technical University, to state schools in small towns. She gave seminars and presentations to Turkish teachers, and also arranged for famous ELT authors such as Donn Byrne, Ingrid Freebairn and Jeremy Harmer to come on tour to Turkey. Anne enjoyed her experiences in Turkey very much and stayed there for four years.

Anne then returned to the UK and it was then that her career as a Graded Reader writer began. For the next few years, she did freelance work. Her first original story was *Island for Sale*, which is about a pop star from California who wants to buy a Scottish island. The idea for this came when Anne was on holiday on the Scottish island of Gigha, which was for sale. To the local people's horror, one of the possible buyers was Mick Jagger from the Rolling Stones.

Whilst she was writing Graded Readers, Anne also took summer teaching jobs at Stirling and Edinburgh universities, and went abroad for short contracts for the Stafford House School of English.

Then Anne saw an advertisement for a job in China, in Chengdu in the Sichuan Province, which is best known for being the headquarters of the Giant Panda Research and Breeding Centre. With her son Leo happily settled at boarding school in Edinburgh, Anne decided the time was right to move again. She stayed in Chengdu for a year, then moved to Ningbo, a city south of Shanghai, where she is currently working for the University of Nottingham. She is involved in their project to provide a British university degree for Chinese students in their homeland. It is a very exciting time to be in China. She finds the mixture of the old ways and the latest technology fascinating. It is a country where nothing seems to stand still and things are changing daily.

Since 1981, when Anne first started writing, she has written almost forty Graded Readers – from Shakespeare plays to modern authors like Ian Fleming, author of the James Bond stories, and Meg Cabot, author of *The Princess Diaries*. As long as there is still a market for Readers, Anne will keep on writing them. Like many people, she has hopes of perhaps writing a novel one day, but she is in no hurry. There are too many interesting stories still waiting to be adapted, and so many readers to enjoy writing first!

See the Macmillan Readers catalogue for a selection of titles which Anne Collins has adapted.