



# Katherine Paterson

CITY OF BIRTH

**Quig Jiang,  
Jiangsu**

COUNTRY OF  
BIRTH

**China**

CURRENT CITY

**Barre**

CURRENT  
STATE/PROVIDENCE

**Vermont**

CURRENT  
COUNTRY

**United  
States of  
America**

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“The old idea was that you have to live an exciting life to write good books,” says Katherine Paterson. “I believe that you have to have a rich imaginative life. You don't have to fight dragons to write books. You just have to live deeply the life you've been given.”

Katherine's “deeply lived” life has taken her all over the world. Her early childhood was spent in China, where her father was a missionary. During World War II she

was evacuated with her family. They came to live in North Carolina, where Katherine's odd clothes and unusual British accent made her an outcast. As a result, she became an avid reader with a very vivid fantasy life.

Many of Katherine's books deal with very difficult subjects. Kids often ask her how she feels when she's writing about things that are sad or frightening. Katherine answers, "It rips me up. If something terrible happens to my characters, I'm in agony."

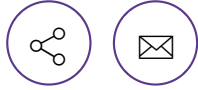
A sixth-grader once asked her: "If it's so painful to you, why do you do it?" Katherine answered, "I'm not quite sure why, except that I think the books I've loved the most are the books that make me experience the entire spectrum of life. They make me laugh and cry and worry. They frighten me. Everything that a person would normally experience in a lifetime is encapsulated between the covers of such a book. That's the type of book you love."

"When we moved from Maryland to Virginia, our youngest child was throwing up, she was so upset. She told me, 'I never had any practice moving.' That's what books do for you. They give you practice doing difficult things in life. In a way, they prepare you for things that you are going to have to face or someone you know and care about is going through. They sort of help you know how it feels — though not exactly. It is the remove that gives you a deep pleasure rather than a total pain."

Not all of the sad or painful parts of her books reach all kids. "One of the wonders of books is that the reader gets what she's ready to get when she's

reading it." But often children will tell Katherine, "I didn't get it the first time, but when I read it again. . . ." That makes Katherine beam. "What a compliment!"

**Visit Katherine Paterson's website!**  
**(<http://www.terabithia.com/>)**



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