

Street Child

SECTION

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About the book

Street Child is set in the second half of the 19th century and tells the story of Jim Jarvis, a real-life character whose plight inspired Dr Barnardo to set up his children's homes.

The novel charts Jim's search for a home, starting with his family's eviction from their accommodation when his terminally sick mother is unable to pay the rent. In a journey which charts his experiences, Jim meets many characters, some of whom offer support and friendship while others seek to exploit him. Eventually Jim is rescued from a harsh life on the streets by philanthropist Dr Barnardo, and at last he finds the 'home' that he has been desperately seeking. The story is told chronologically, with a short introduction in which Jim is invited to tell his story.

The story is rich in historical detail, illuminating the lives of the street children, the workhouse inmates, the lightermen, whelk sellers, servants and circus performers. For this reason there are strong cross-curricular links with the history topic the Victorians. The book will also stimulate interest in the life of a famous Victorian, Dr Barnardo.

About the author

Berlie Doherty was born in Knotty Ash, Liverpool, in 1943. Her interest in writing was encouraged by her father, Walter Hollingsworth, who was noted among his fellow workers for his storytelling skills. As a child, Berlie was an avid reader. She particularly enjoyed character-led stories such as *Little Women*, *Heidi*, the *What Katy Did* series and Dickens' novels.

After leaving Upton Hall Convent School, Berlie studied English at the University of Durham and then Social Science at the University of Liverpool. She later trained to be an English teacher. Her teaching certificate included a creative writing course, for which she had to write a short story. This short story was later broadcast on Radio Sheffield. The radio station then commissioned her to write for a schools series, and this was the start of a writing career that was to blossom and grow.

Berlie became a full-time writer in 1983. She is a writer of great versatility and has written books for all ages, from picture books such as *Blue John* and *Jinnie Ghost* to junior novels such as *Street Child* and *Children of Winter* and teenage novels like *Daughter of the Sea* and *Deep Secret*. Berlie has also adapted several of her novels for the stage, including *Street Child*,

and has written original radio plays, poetry and libretti for children's operas.

A writer of beautifully crafted prose and thoughtful characterisation, Berlie has attracted critical acclaim with her novels. She has twice won the prestigious Carnegie Medal, for teenage novels *Granny was a Buffer Girl* (1986) and *Dear Nobody* (1991).



Facts and figures

Street Child was first published by HarperCollins in 1994. It was nominated for the Carnegie Medal and shortlisted for the Sheffield Award and the Federation of Children's Book Groups Award. Its popularity saw it abridged for BBC radio in 2000 (see www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/english/streetchild.shtml).

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