

Each month we will focus on an inspiring author based in or writing about Wales! You'll have an introduction to their latest book, what inspires them to write, and any advice they have for young writers!

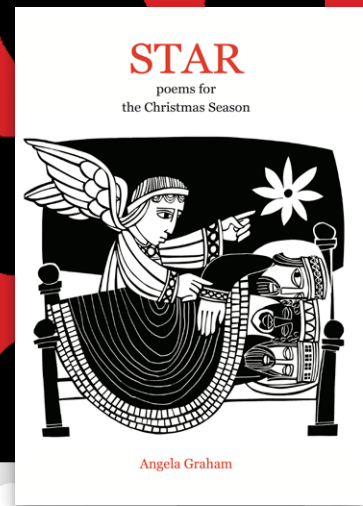
Get to know

Angela Graham



Angela Graham divides her time between Wales and Northern Ireland. She is a distinguished producer in TV and Film. Seren Books published her highly acclaimed debut poetry collection, *Sanctuary: There Must Be Somewhere* (2022) and her short story collection *A City Burning* (2020) which was longlisted for the Edge Hill Prize.

Culture & Democracy Press



Summary:

STAR: poems for the Christmas Season takes readers on a journey as 'everyday Magi' through a wide range of human experience – political power struggles; persecution and flight; the vulnerability of the innocent and of the planet – alongside celebration, wonder

and friendship. At the book's core are *The Three Kings* but also *The Three Queens: women who are brought forward from behind the scenes, to be seen and heard*. The collection is illustrated by powerful and sensitive linocuts from Martin Erspamer.

Tell us a little about your background... your upbringing, education...

I grew up in working-class east Belfast. The local library was a big part of my life as there was no money to buy books. I loved reading and I wrote from an early age. At grammar school I had a wonderful English teacher for the first five years. Every type of writing we read we would then have to write in that style. It was a great training... We also read a lot of the latest local writing which was, in Northern Ireland of the 1960 and early '70s, of world-class calibre. We were taken to hear Seamus Heaney read just down the road. I remember thinking that here was a person like myself. If he could be a writer then so could any of us... This is a great gift to a child, to make clear that writing is for you.

What memories and influences stand out from your childhood?

The Troubles were the framework to my adolescence and young adulthood. From an early age, people such as myself understood from experience how important politics is – something that creates the conditions of life, whether work, housing, transport, education... And I learned early that words have consequences. They foster life or death.

Irish culture, of course, was very important. My mother was a Dubliner and I loved going south to what was then a very different part of Ireland from the North.

Journalism and broadcasting made a big impact because I could see how crucial these were to democracy. I worked as a TV documentary-maker for most of my working life in Wales and taught Documentary Journalism at Cardiff University.

What influences you now?

Politics and poetry, and (with its roots in that early experience of societal collapse in Northern Ireland) the dynamic of confrontation and dialogue which is being played out on a global scale around us now.

I've lived in Wales for 43 years. As soon as I moved here I embarked on learning Welsh, as a mark of respect for the country and because I knew from the experience of Irish in Northern Ireland that language matters. Language, culture, the individual... From Wales I have learned another way of looking at the world, another history. I have access to the treasures of Welsh literature and culture.

Do you have suggestions of how to encourage children and young people to read more for pleasure?

I believe that linking reading to writing is key. It's boring to read only and not try things out yourself. And reading plays is great, and then writing your own, and acting out 'the greats'. Nothing should be presented as too difficult. It's always a horizon that might be reached.



... more Q&As on the website libraries.wales