



Author Spotlight with **Jane Sutcliffe**

What inspired you to write about the creation of Michelangelo's *David*?

Short answer: David did.

A few years ago my husband and I traveled to Italy on vacation. In Florence (the photo above was taken on the train to Florence) we went to the Accademia Gallery to see the *David*. Along with a dozen or so other tourists I stood there awe-struck and open-mouthed. Our wise guide asked two simple questions: Do you like *David*? (Heads bobbed.) What do you like about *David*?

The answers varied. Some liked the imposing size, others the physical perfection of the statue. I looked at David's face and was struck by the story that face told. I could see the whole story of David and the giant in the expression on David's face, and I marveled at the artist's ability to express so much vitality with cold, lifeless stone. I wanted to know more.

What was the most interesting thing you learned during your research for *Stone Giant*?

Of course I learned quite a bit about the life and work of Michelangelo, but I also discovered fascinating information about his contemporary Leonardo. The great painter had little use for the sweaty physical exertions of sculpture, and famously wrote that while the painter may remain well-dressed and clean as he produces his works of art, the sculptor as he works is floured with marble dust so that he looks like a baker. What a marvelous image! It's in *Stone Giant*.

How did you realize you wanted to be an author, and more specifically, an author of books for young readers?

I've always enjoyed writing, but as a child I didn't know any real authors and none ever came to my school, so becoming an author seemed too fanciful to me. I might as well have said I wanted to be a princess or a pirate.

The possibility took hold when my two sons were born. I read to them a great deal and developed a deep interest in children's literature. I decided to try writing my own and began with what I had always been interested in reading as a child—nonfiction.

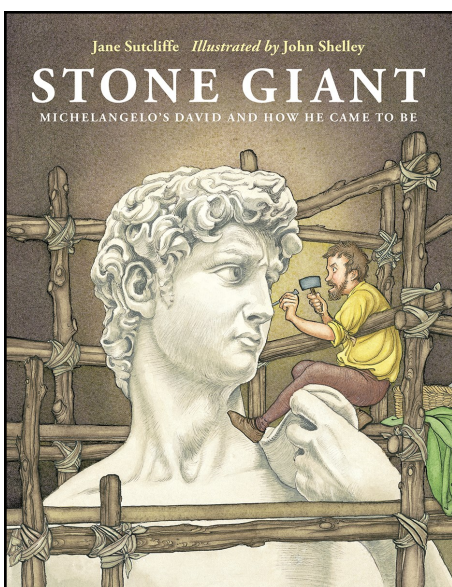
You've written several other nonfiction books for children—many of which are biographies. What is it about this genre that appeals to you?

I am endlessly fascinated by the small choices people make—especially as children—that lead to great deeds. I love finding out what interests, pastimes, or talents people have that, when cultivated, blossom into amazing lives. How would those lives be different had the subject chosen to do something different, or lived in different circumstances?

Stone Giant is no less a biography—it is simply a biography of the sculptural David rather than the biblical one. Many artists took a look at the giant block of marble. If one of them had completed the statue instead of Michelangelo, what would be standing in the Accademia Gallery now?

What other projects are you working on at the moment?

I'm so glad you asked. I am putting the finishing touches on another nonfiction picture book. *Will's Words: How William Shakespeare Changed the Way You Talk* is a humorous look at Will Shakespeare's contribution to the modern vocabulary. It is truly a labor of love and, if I do say so, rather funny. It will also feature the wonderful illustrations of John Shelley, the illustrator of *Stone Giant*.



By Jane Sutcliffe
Illustrated by John Shelley

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Full-color illustrations

 *A Junior Library Guild Selection*

Correlated to Common Core State Standards:
Reading Informational. Grade 2. Standards 1-4, 6-8, and 10.
Reading Informational. Grade 3. Standards 1-4, 7, 8, and 10.

No one wanted the “giant.” The hulking block of marble lay in the work yard, rained on, hacked at, and abandoned—until a young Michelangelo saw his David in it.

This is the story of how a neglected, discarded stone became a masterpiece for all time. It is also the story of how humans see themselves reflected in art.