

# Dick King-Smith: A Biography

## Introduction

Dick King-Smith was born in 1922 and died in 2011 when he was 88 years old. He wrote more than 100 books which have been translated into over 12 languages.

## Early life

As a child, Dick lived in the countryside and that was where he first became interested in animals. After leaving school, he went to work on a farm and then became a soldier during the Second World War. He was injured during the war and went back to farming with his wife Myrle.

Together, they ran two farms and had cows, pigs, goats, hens, ducks, geese, pheasants, budgerigars, tortoises, mice, rabbits and guinea-pigs, as well as cats and dogs. Each animal had a name and was treated more like a pet than a farm animal.

## A new life

Dick loved farming but he wasn't very good at it so he became a teacher. He enjoyed teaching and during one summer holiday he wrote his first book, *Fox Busters*. The story was based on a real event that happened when he was a farmer and the book was an immediate success. Four years later, Dick gave up teaching to become a full-time writer. His most well-known book is *The Sheep-Pig*, which was made into a film called *Babe*.

## A writer's life

Most of Dick King-Smith's books are about animals, told from the animals' point of view. He tried to imagine what animals might say if they could talk. He once said that he didn't plan his stories – he based them on his own experiences. He got ideas from books he'd read, places he'd worked and animals he'd cared for. His advice to anyone who wanted to write was to have a routine: to set aside a regular time to write, to have a comfortable place to write and to try to get something down on paper.

Dick had his own strict writing routine. In the morning he wrote his stories on rough paper or even on the back of old envelopes. Then, in the afternoon, he typed up what he had written. He said the best thing about writing was receiving letters from children, particularly if his books had helped them to become interested in reading. Dick King-Smith once said "writing my books is like handing out presents. Giving children pleasure gives you a wonderful sort of Father Christmassy feeling."



Name: ..... Class: ..... Date: .....

1 When was Dick King-Smith born? Tick **one**.

12     88     100     1922     2011

2 How many books did Dick King-Smith write?

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3 What was Dick King-Smith's wife called?

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4 Why did Dick King-Smith become a teacher?

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5 What is the name of Dick King-Smith's most well-known book?

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6 What jobs did Dick King-Smith have before becoming a writer?

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7 Where did Dick King-Smith get ideas for his stories?

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8 What did Dick King-Smith say writing his books was like?

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9 Why do you think the subheading *A new life* has been given to paragraph four?

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10 How would you have felt if Dick King-Smith had been your teacher?

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