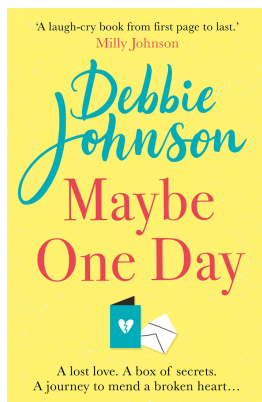


MEET THE AUTHOR

Best selling author **Debbie Johnson** on reading and writing books and what inspires her



If there was one book you would recommend to a friend what would it be and why? A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles. I actually bought this book by accident, and it was a very happy accident. It sounds a little dull – a historical tale set in Russia during turbulent times, about one man essentially imprisoned in a hotel – but it is actually incredibly uplifting, heart-warming and interesting. It shows you a fascinating period of history through our hero's eyes, and is ultimately all about how the human spirit can overcome the most difficult of times. Plus hardly anybody else I know has read it, and I'm always keen to persuade people so I can then discuss it with them!

What was the last book that made you laugh? I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day by Milly Johnson

Which was your favourite book as a child? As a young child, 101 Dalmations by Dodie Smith, and as a teen the Belgariad series by David Eddings

What book are you reading now? The Blade Itself by Joe Abercrombie

Whose biography would you like to write? Marcus Rashford's

Which book have you read that surprised you and why? Gone Girl, for the twists and turns and the sudden and unexpected change in narrator, never knowing who you could trust.

What inspired you to want to write? I always loved reading, escaping, hiding away in different worlds – I was never happier than when in an imaginary land! I had quite an unsettled childhood and books were always my safe place. That translated into creating my own imaginary lands, and eventually into being honoured enough to write stories that provide escapism, relief and hope to my readers.

What are your top tips for people wanting to write a book? Read a lot, and see what works and what doesn't – learn from the successes and mistakes of other authors. After that it's simple – just do it! There is no perfect time to start, no perfect way to do it, and no two writers have the same methods or processes – you have to find one that works for you, and the only way to do that is to throw yourself into it. Be prepared to make mistakes, but be determined.

Do you have a message for our NHS front line staff? They say life is stranger than fiction – and it certainly is right now. Thank you so much for everything you do in your working life – and wishing you peace and relaxation at home.

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