

The low-down



Author **Judy Blume**, 77, on breaking taboos and why it's important to tell children the truth

Honesty is crucial. I grew up in the '50s and adults didn't tell children anything about puberty, money, life or death – it was all very hush-hush. They wanted to protect their kids from everything.

I never thought my books broke taboos. I decided that I was going to write for young people because it was what I knew best and related to, as I was only in my 20s myself when I started. If there was one thing I wanted to do in my books, it was to be honest. As kids, we all talked about puberty, but our parents didn't. My friend had a confusing book that didn't make sense, but we all eagerly read it anyway.

I felt sad and lonely when my books were banned. I wrote many in the '70s, but it was the reaction to them in the '80s that was awful. But once you say you are going to do something about it and stand up against it, your whole attitude changes and you feel better.

Terrible things happen in life, and kids always want to know why. My new book is based on events that happened in my hometown of Elizabeth, New Jersey, when I was 14, when three planes crashed within just a few months of each other. It was such an awful thing and us kids needed some way to explain it. Even now it still seems unbelievable.

You don't sit around thinking about fame. But it's sweet when the UPS guy says: "Aren't you *that* Judy Blume?" If you have to have fame at all, mine is the sweetest kind you can have because I represent people's childhoods.

It's fantastic that kids are still reading my books. If you'd told me 40 years ago that children would be reading them in 2015, I would have been, like: "What?" I love that all the generations of my readers have shared their feelings with me about my novels.

If you want to write a book, just do it. Don't think about it, don't analyse it, just write.

I'm proud of all the novels I've written. But most of the time, I do not know where I get my ideas from. A book takes a lot of hard work, anxiety and stress, but sometimes a scene can just come spontaneously from nowhere. That's the magic of writing fiction. **F**