Writing can be difficult, but sometimes it really does feel like a kind of magic. I think that stories are living things—among the most important things in the world.”

—David Almond

David Almond is a Printz Award winner for his novel Kit’s Wilderness and received a Printz Honor for his first book for young readers, Skellig.
I grew up in a big extended Catholic family [in the north of England]. I listened to the stories and songs at family parties. I listened to the gossip that filled Dragone’s coffee shop. I ran with my friends through the open spaces and the narrow lanes. We scared each other with ghost stories told in fragile tents on dark nights. We promised never-ending friendship and whispered of the amazing journeys we’d take together. I sat with my grandfather in his allotment, held tiny Easter chicks in my hands while he smoked his pipe and the factory sirens wailed and larks yelled high above. I trembled at the images presented to us in church, at the awful threats and glorious promises made by black-clad priests with Irish voices.

I scribbled stories and stitched them into little books. I disliked school and loved the library, a little square building in which I dreamed that books with my name on them would stand one day on the shelves. Skellig, my first children’s novel, came out of the blue, as if it had been waiting a long time to be told. It seemed to write itself. It took six months, was rapidly taken by Hodder Children’s Books [in the U.K.] and has changed my life.

By the time Skellig came out, I’d written my next children’s novel, Kit’s Wilderness. These books are suffused with the landscape and spirit of my own childhood. By looking back into the past, by re-imagining it and blending it with what I see around me now, I found a way to move forward and to become something that I am intensely happy to be: a writer for children.”