



Alumna Kate Cary
Subject BA History, MA Women's History
Graduated 1992, 1989
Place of Work Erin Hunter and Bloodline novels
Role Author

For the past decade Kate Cary has been contributing to the Warrior series under the pseudonym, Erin Hunter. The series follows the adventures of four Clans of wild cats in their forest homes. Kate wrote the first two books in the series, *Into the Wild* reached the Booklists Top 10 fantasy books for 2003, and is about to start her fifth Warrior series of books. As well as contributing to the Warrior books Kate has also been writing under own name publishing *Bloodline* in 2005 and *Bloodline: Reckoning* in 2007.

Great minds go on to great places

Why did you choose to study at Royal Holloway?

I'm a romantic; I fell in love with the building. I imagined myself sitting in a turret, writing scholarly essays. Meanwhile, my common-sense self noticed that Royal Holloway was near London, but not in London, which suited me perfectly.

What is your fondest memory of Royal Holloway?

There are so many! My time as an undergraduate at Royal Holloway was one of the happiest times of my life. I remember toasting bread on the gas fire in my room; lying in the sunshine beside the pond below Founders; the wonderful speech Professor Riley-Smith gave at the start of my course. I still remember his advice – before you start writing anything, THINK! To a young woman who'd spent her life obediently learning and regurgitating facts for exams, the idea that I could form an original opinion was splendidly liberating.

Why did you decide to also study a Masters at Royal Holloway?

I was encouraged by a tutor, Lyndal Roper; she gave me confidence in my abilities and inspired

me to seek a deeper understanding of my subject. I'd been drawn to Women's History during my undergraduate courses and was keen to pursue some of the issues I'd touched on there. I was attracted to the variety of the course. As David Mamet says, "All art is where you put the camera". Studying history from many points of view provided a broad and fascinating perspective on the past.

What is the most important thing that your time at the College has taught you?

You get the most out of anything if you're prepared to take the initiative. If you don't ask, you don't get. Royal Holloway gave me the confidence to ask.

What has been your career path since leaving Royal Holloway?

I found my own way into writing, sending off manuscripts and writing samples to companies until I was commissioned by a packaging firm to write a series of *How To* books. This gave me enough experience to move to a larger packaging company, Working Partners Ltd, where I was asked to try out for a series of fantasy fiction for girls aged 8-12. I landed the commission and wrote a book called *Into the Wild* under the name Erin Hunter, the first

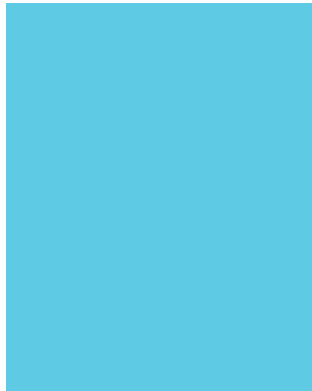
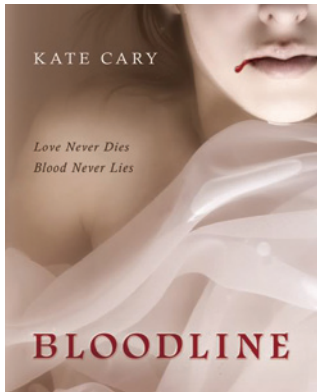
book in the *Warriors* series. Working alongside my brilliant editor, Victoria Holmes, I wrote the first two books in the series. Cherith Baldry joined us to write book three, by which time *Warriors* selling like hot cakes in the US. We've gone from strength to strength since then. We're about to start our fifth *Warriors* series and have a huge following not only in America, but also Germany, France and increasingly China. Erin Hunter titles are now published in 27 languages, and two new writers have been brought on board to keep up with sheer number of Erin Hunter titles. In 2004, I was offered the opportunity to write gothic fiction – the *Bloodline* series, which was published under my own name, and in 2009 I started receiving commissions from other packaging companies. Working for packaging companies has been a fabulous way into publishing, allowing me to improve my writing style, make contacts and learn how the industry works.

What do you enjoy most about writing?

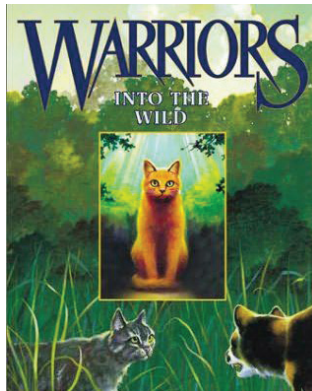
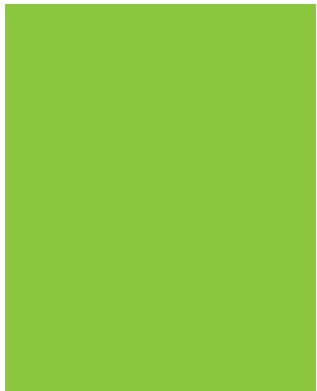
The solitude! And creating worlds real enough to exist beyond my own imagination. For a few hours a day I get to play God. Who wouldn't like that? The Erin Hunter series came about as



people *with* passion



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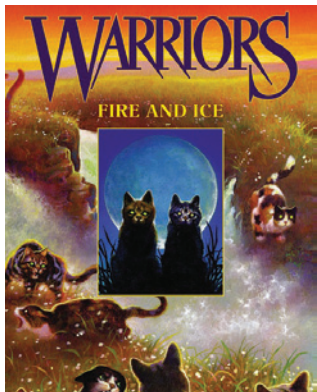
HarperCollinsUS spotted a gap in the market for animal fantasy fiction for 8-12 year olds; they approached Working Partners Ltd who conceived the idea of battling warrior cats, which eventually became the Warriors series. I was the final link in the chain, asked to submit a sample for the project and commissioned as writer because my style most perfectly suited the storyline.

What exciting projects or pieces are you working on at the moment?

The project that currently gives me the biggest buzz is a gothic ghost story I'm working on in my spare time. This is the first time I've tried developing my own story from start to finish; I already have a publisher and two agents interested, but first I have to find time to finish the manuscript.

What advice would you give to aspiring writers?

Don't be daunted by rejection. Read, read, then read some more. Relish any writing better than yours and learn from it. As a writer, you can only ever improve. Learn the business – agents and editors are snarky creatures, well aware of their power as gatekeepers for the publishing industry. Learn their rules and play by them; there are plenty of blogs written by very experienced agents and editors that will teach you all you need to know to get published. Bear in mind that publishing is changing; e-books have made self-publishing a viable alternative for new writers. Of course, the fundamental rule applies: if you want your book to sell, it has to be good. Read your own work critically and rewrite and rewrite until you're sure it's unputdownable.



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