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Next, New Zealand
01 Jun 2014, by Eleanor Black

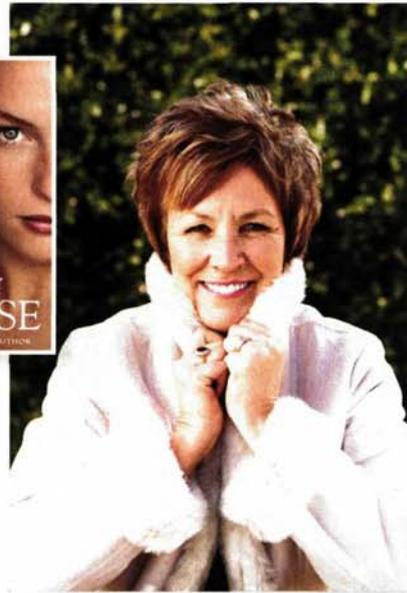
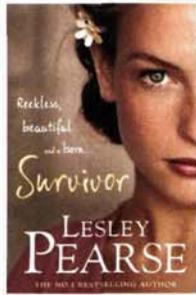
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MEET THE AUTHOR

Mega-selling British novelist Lesley Pearse's latest bestseller *Survivor* (Michael Joseph, \$37) is out now.

This is your third novel featuring Belle, who is sold into prostitution as a teenager, drives an ambulance for the Red Cross in World War I, and must choose between two men. Is she your favourite character?

Yes; she just grew as I was writing her and wormed her way into my heart. I like that she used her wits and her beauty when necessary. I would too! If I had any.

***Survivor* is partly set in Russell, New Zealand. What drew you to use it as a location?**

A friend has lived there for years and used to talk about it when she was in England. So when I got the opportunity to go there, I jumped at it and loved it. I'd live there too if not for my children being in England.

You write across genres, but would it be fair to say you have a preference for historical fiction?

Yes, I think so. I get caught up in the sheer difficulties there were back then, no phones, no email etc, and that liberates me. I like men being men and women being women; there is a lovely kind of order in

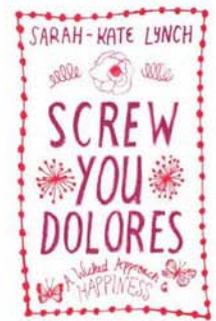
that. Reading the truth about Japanese POW camps, emigrating by sailing ship, or even the diseases they had no cures for back then is mind-boggling, and transferring those facts to fiction - although very challenging - makes good stories. But I can't write historical all the time because the research takes so much time.

You had a tough upbringing. How is your lifestyle different now as a best-selling novelist?

I'm the biggest spendthrift around. But I have lived on very little money in the past, and if push comes to shove I could manage on very little again. I never waste food, I cook economical meals and I'm very good with my hands, be that DIY or gardening and sewing.

Whose work do you love to read?

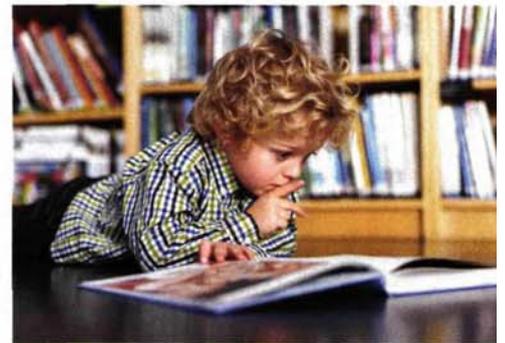
I'm not one of those people who reads everything one person writes. My taste is eclectic. Just recently I have read Margaret Forster, Ken Follett, Deborah Rodriguez, the astounding book *The Railway Man* by Eric Lomax, and Donna Tartt. Really, I read anything and everything, sometimes three books in a week. But my all-time favourite author is Charles Dickens. He knew how to spin a great yarn.



BEDSIDE TABLE

***Screw You Dolores*, Sarah-Kate Lynch**
Random House, \$30

The year she turned 50, Sarah-Kate Lynch decided to indulge in 12 months of celebration and self-discovery, and see if she could figure out the source of happiness while she was at it. There was a lot of travel involved, which will surprise you not at all if you have read any of her delightful travel-lit novels, and a lot of really excellent meals, which ditto. Without giving too much away, self-acceptance and friendship were important parts of the equation, along with the ability to rally in the face of adversity, including serious illness. Margaritas also feature. Fun and inspirational.



BOOK NEWS

Boys and books

Sixty-three percent of men don't read as much as they think they should, and 30% haven't read a book since their school days, according to new research from the British charity the Reading Agency. Women are far more likely to buy books, visit libraries and read books which have been adapted to film. □