

## Skype interview with Ruta Sepetys 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017

rutasepetys

Offline - Skype

2 Participants

If you could describe Salt in five words which would you use?

Rosalie

Shall we chat via text here so we don't lose time? Thoughts?

Ah okay!

Did you get Rosalie@s question above

Thank you, Rosalie! I would describe STS as...

Harrowing, hopeful, sad, courageous and hidden.

How many languages has the book been written in

Jude

Hi Jude! The book is currently published in 37 countries and 28 languages. 😊

Wow! So it should be

Translators are heroes!

Why did the shoe poet have to die???

Well, to be honest, at first I had planned that the wandering boy would die, but then as I was writing the shoe poet was the one to die.

Sometimes when I'm writing, the creative process takes over

The Shoe Poet was one of my favorite characters

I was crying as I was writing

How long did it take to WRITE after all the research?

I spent three years researching and two full years writing the book.

Sorry that was from Lily

Thanks, Lily!

How many books have you written and is this your favourite

Rosie

Hi Rosie! I've written three books and am hard at work on a fourth book. My favorite book is always my latest book!

How do you create so many amazing characters?

George

Aw, thank you so much, George! History provides the outline for my books and my creativity is with the characters...

I try to give them complexities that feel real...

Real people have flaws, they have secrets, they laugh and cry...

How did you make up Florian

My theory is that if I create a character you love or hate, you will follow them through the story.

Helen

Florian is an interesting story, Helen!

I was on a book tour in Germany and I was visiting a high school...

This very handsome guy asked me to sign his book...

He told me his name was Florian. I said, "Oh, that's an interesting name..."

And he said, "Well, if it's so interesting, why don't you put me in your next book?"

For some crazy reason I said, "Okay, I will!"

Why did you call the book Salt to the sea?

Jude

Ah the title, thanks, Jude!

What was the most emotive story you heard during your research

Alba

The human body needs salt to survive. There's salt in our sweat and salt in our tears. Water evaporates but salt remains and in that way it's eternal. These people, they gave their sweat and tears, they gave their salt to the sea.

That's why I called it "Salt to the Sea"

Hi Alba!

There were so many emotional stories, but one that broke my heart...

Was a man who put his wife and daughter on the ship...

The ship sailed and he traveled on another boat to meet them in Kiel.

Well, the Wilhelm Gustloff never arrived.

The man spent 20 years searching for his wife and daughter

Why did your father's cousin travel on a different boat?

George

He could not accept that they may have died.

The man's extended family shared his journal with me...

In the journal the man said that he hoped that his wife and daughter had floated somewhere and that someone had taken care of them.

And that inspired me to write the ending for Emilia

If you re-wrote the book, would you change anything? Emmie

And to pose the question of "How do the lives of the dead, affect the living?"

Hi George!

So, the day of the voyage, my father's cousin was walking to the port to board the Gustloff.

Her little sister saw the big ship in port and was mesmerized...

She wasn't looking and stepped into the street and was clipped by a car...



She broke her leg and so they didn't board the ship.  
Hi Emmie!  
If I rewrote the book I might only change Alfred a bit.

we hated Alfred!!!



Alfred! Ugh!!!  
I studied young Adolf Hitler to create Alfred.  
When Hitler was young he wrote letters to a girl named Stephanie but he never mailed them

HOW DID YOU BEGIN YOUR WRITING CAREER? AVA



The letters were SO inflated and made it seem like Stephanie was in love with him.  
When Alfred reads the number on his ID tag, in his letter to Hannelore, the number is actually Hitler's birthday  
That was my hint to the reader that Alfred was created from Hitler.  
Hi Ava!



I wrote my first book when I was nine years old. It was called THE ADVENTURES OF BETSY...  
But the parents in my school hated the book and it became a banned book! Such a scandal.

Emilia's death was glossed over too much and seemed inconsequential, it made me so sad. Jack



So I had a bit of a rocky start to my writing career. That episode with Betsy, it stole my courage and I didn't write another book for 30 years.  
Hi Jack!

Your favourite pizza topping? Lily-Rose



Thank you for caring about Emilia! I wish I could have lengthened her ending. The original draft was a bit longer and had more information but my publisher felt it was too much "telling."  
Emilia is such an important character to me.  
Hi Lily-Rose!



I love green pepper on pizza!!  
I did edit a lot. I rewrote the book about 15 times...  
I tell people that I'm more of a reviser than a writer. Ha!

Are you still in touch with any people you met during your research? Cecily



Hi Cecily! Yes, I'm still in touch with many of them. My U.S. publisher is releasing a paperback edition of the book in August and it has a section with bonus content...  
And several of the people I met are interviewed in the book...  
It's very interesting to hear their interpretations and experience...  
Especially the survivors and the deep sea divers

Btw, you are top of our Carnegie Reading Barometer!!



You are so kind!! But I think Railhead is going to win! All of the shortlisted books are so great this year, aren't they?

we only gsve it one vote and you have 13 so far!!!Did you have any other ideas for the title? Grace  
Oh, 14, Christian has just voted!!!

Hi Grace! Another title option was The Cry of the Sea  
Thank you, Christian!!!

Why the barbed wire on the cover?

Lily

rose

What do you think of the missing capital letters in Oktober Bend? Jack

Hi Lily Rose - My UK publisher thought the barbed wire would represent the refugees who felt their futures were held captive.  
Hi Jack - I thought the format was unique! What did you think?

Speaking of covers, the American paperback edition has shoes on the cover!

We have to go now, I have 30 very excited students here. THANK YOU SOOOOO MUCH Ruta 😊

Jack HATED IT

Thank you SOOOOO much! An author has nothing without readers.

The reader is always right. That included Jack!!

BYEEEEEEEEEE 👍