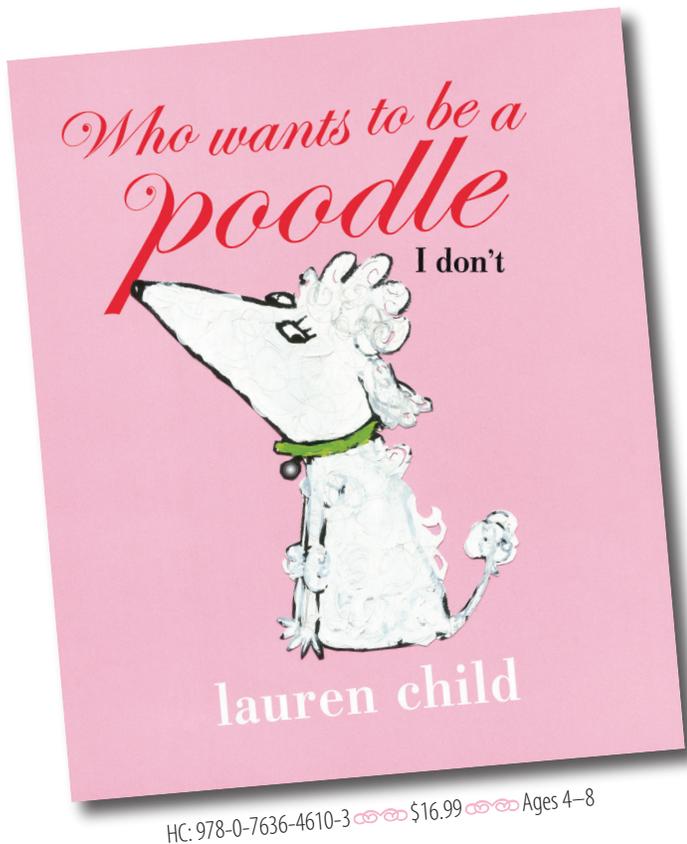


# A Conversation with Lauren Child about Her Picture Book

## *Who wants to be a poodle I don't*



**Q** Both Trixie Twinkle Toes and Mademoiselle Verity Brulée are such unforgettable characters. What inspired them? Which character came first?

**A** The story was inspired by my friend Verity, who used to have a little Burmese cat. Verity was always wanting to dress the cat in little bonnets and jewelry, and I couldn't help wondering how the cat might feel about this—she didn't look like the clothes-wearing type. I had already written a book called *That Pesky Rat*, about a neglected street rat who has nothing, and I thought it would be interesting to write about a pampered poodle who has everything. However, all the poodle really wants is to catch sticks and splash in puddles like real dogs do.



**Q** Do you have any dogs or other pets (or have you ever)? Did they affect the story in any way?

**A** No, I have no pets. When I was a child, we had sixteen guinea pigs, a rabbit, a tortoise, three hamsters, various goldfish, and many stick insects. As much as I love animals, this experience may have cured me of my need to own a pet.

**Q** Besides being a very funny and fetching story, there seems to be an underlying message in *Who Wants to Be a Poodle I Don't* about being true to yourself. Did you know from the start that that lesson would be a part of the book, or did it evolve as you worked on it?

**A** No, I never really write a book with a moral or message in mind, I just write about something that means something to me. A theme or idea begins to evolve as I write and illustrate the story. I am happy for people to read things into what I have written, because this is one of the wonderful things about books: they mean something different to every reader. For *me*, this book is about how sometimes we don't truly listen to other people, and as a result we often have a hard time understanding them and what it is they need.

**Q** What's your "inner dog"?

**A** My inner dog is probably a cat.



**C P**  
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