

## About Chitra Soundar



Chitra grew up in India listening to stories, reading comic books and children's magazines and even Readers' Digest. She read shed-load of books written by Enid Blyton, Agatha Christie, P G Wodehouse, Ruskin Bond and R K Narayan. Her first picture book came as a prize for winning the storytelling competition at school, when she was 7, made her a lifelong addict to reading and writing picture books.

Born in India, Chitra now lives and works in London. She is the author of over 20 books for children, published in Singapore, India, United States and the UK. From riddles to retellings to stories, Chitra's books are varied and diverse and are for different age-groups. She now goes into schools to tell stories and inspire children about writing and imagining.

## Chitra Soundar's School Visits

Chitra's sessions can be tailor-made to schools and current projects in school, classrooms and libraries. Chitra works from Reception to KS-3 in primary schools and up to 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> form secondary. During her visit, Chitra would cover topics on writing and storytelling.

Starting with a large assembly session and following that up with smaller classroom sessions – Chitra would cover some of the following topics in primary schools. The topic would be tailored to meet age and ability levels and would be illustrated with experiences from her books.

Sessions for Reception and Year-1 children would include storytelling and interactive story-making. Stories can be chosen (with adequate notice) in order to align any school projects or themes underway during the visit.

From Year-2 to Year 5 & 6, sessions could be chosen from one or more of the following.

- Idea Blaster - Idea generation and how to brainstorm
- Story-Chains - how to find characters and why they are important
- Story-Skeletons – how to structure the story and how to choose between different structures.
- Blink And the World is Changed - Stealing from the universe using observation
- Storyboard your picture book – learning how to create a picture book and creating a story and a book in the class.
- Writing Riddles – using word-play, the dictionary and an encyclopedia, students would make up riddles and crosswords. Examples will be offered from Chitra's titles Fun with Riddles and Riddles for Smart Kids.
- Writing Tall Tales – Ridiculously improbable tall tales are fun to write and read. Based on Chitra's book "Tall Tales from the Animal Kingdom" and some tall tales from America, children would attempt to make up their improbable stories.

Secondary School session would be initiated with focused structure and props and can be tailored to meet reading and writing ability of the class.

- Hidden Treasures – students would work from a set of objects that Chitra would bring to class. Students would learn to write descriptions, build character and structure conflicts and plots.

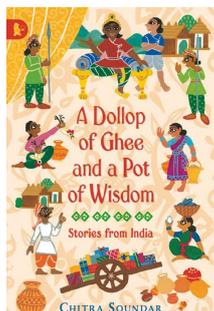
- A Game of Cards – students would pick a random postcard and tell the hidden story in that card. Students would learn to write descriptions, settings, build character and structure conflicts and plots.

The sessions are very interactive and last from 30-45 minutes. They can be extended to accommodate school or library periods and of course goals for specific groups.

The aim of the sessions, whatever the topic is to inspire young people to imagine, read, write and create in their own way and explore the world around them through their creativity. Depending on the workshop, every student would be able to take something back with them – maybe a bunch of ideas, some unique characters they helped create or even a full story that they have written.

Chitra would also be able to offer specific sessions for multi-cultural events like Indian festivals with stories from the Indian sub-continent and encouraging students to understand more about other cultures.

## Chitra's Books



### A Dollop of Ghee and a Pot of Wisdom, Walker Books

Based on traditional Indian folktales, this book contains four stories about Prince Veera and his friend Suku. Tales about dung-dropping, sweet-stealing, luck-jinxing villains. This book brings justice to young readers. It provides the wonderful setting of India and its colour, along with important questions about fairness, equality and justice.

### Where is Gola's Home? Tulika Books

This is a dual-language title available in a combination of English and 5 other Indian languages including Bengali, Hindi and Tamil.

This book was also published by Oxford

University Press, Pakistan in the Urdu dual-language version.



Gola the yak goes on a journey to find its home. The journey takes him to the riverside, the beach, the forests and more until he discovers his home in the Himalayas.

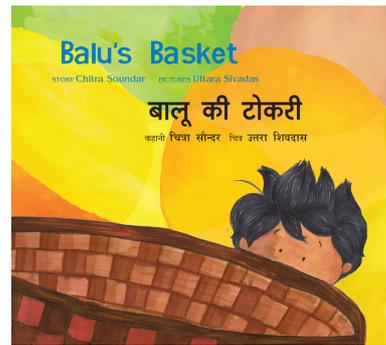
The book has proven to be a great success with Reception and Year-1 kids as they discover the various landscapes and the associated elements. It also jump-starts art activities and learning about habitats.

### Balu's Basket – Tulika Books

This is a dual-language title available in a combination of English and 5 other Indian languages including Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil.

Balu finds a basket and he uses it to help others as he sets off home from school via the market. The book is filled with Indian market scenes and vendors. The story brings to focus many Indian fruits that might be new to children outside India.

The bold and colourful illustrations in this book have inspired kids to draw fruits, try balancing a fruit basket on their heads and even make up their own stories of what other uses they can put a basket to.

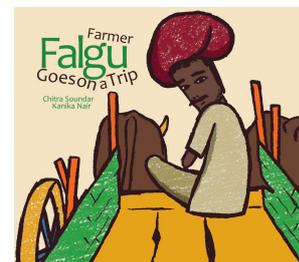


For a short introductory time, with every book bought Chitra will give away a small hand-woven basket too.

Sandhya Renukamba wrote in the GoodBooks review - This simple, yet warmly told tale of a friendly, helpful and playful little boy is certain to appeal to 3-5 year olds. There is the classic ploy of repetitiveness that children this age enjoy, yet each page has something new in it. Children learn about how a village neighborhood would look and work. They would learn about fruits, and counting. They could learn lateral thinking – how something could be used in various and non-typical ways. They could learn about helping, and sharing.

### Farmer Falgu Goes on a Trip, Karadi Tales

Farmer Falgu has had enough of his noisy farm! He needs a break and he's off on a holiday. Craving some quiet, he gets on his cart and goes looking for silence. He meets some interesting characters on his way who teach him the value of joyous noise. The story is joyously complemented by Kanika Nair's unusual, striking illustrations.

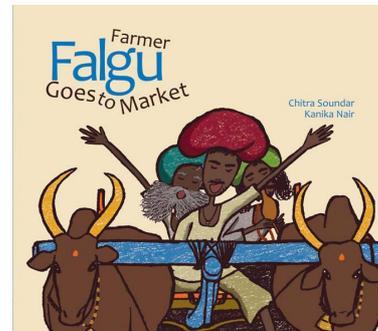


Saffron Tree wrote, “The effortlessly woven-in onomatopoeic words are the real stars of the book. Crystal-clear writing by author Chitra Soundar is a breath of fresh air. Kanika Nair’s vivid and vibrant illustrations capturing rural flavors and colors are an absolute pleasure to behold.”

Watch the Trailer here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5sw8PhVjO4>

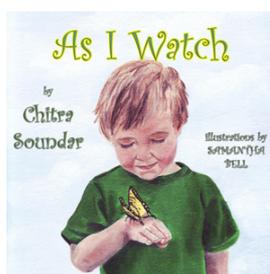
### **Farmer Falgu Goes to Market, Karadi Tales** (To be released in November 2014)

Eggs anyone? Farmer Falgu has a plan. But as usual his plan is turned topsy-turvy. But in the end, Farmer Falgu deals with it in his own way, with wisdom and good nature. Chitra Soundar’s energetic tale radiates with adventure and madness, while Kanika Nair underscores it with minimalistic artwork splashed with just a dab of vivid, striking colour.



### **As I Watch, Guardian Angel Publishing**

Nature watching needs patience. But patience is certainly rewarded. In



this book, every young reader will learn how to watch a butterfly is born from a tiny egg hanging under a leaf. The concept of life cycle is illustrated by the text that brings the reader back to where he started.

Samantha Bell’s beautiful illustrations inspires Reception children to draw and colour butterflies, talk about fishes and snails and make their own book about other animals and insects. A great book to use for spring watch.

## **Recommendations and Reviews**

### **Edwin Macrae, Librarian, London Borough of Lambeth**

*I attended a writer's event at the Clapham Omnibus where a couple of writers had their books on display. Being a Children's Librarian I saw the book FARMER FALGU Goes on a Trip and immediately fell in love with it. I purchased a personal copy hoping to do a read on our next Parents and Toddler Session. Hoping to have my copy signed, I was introduced to Chitra. We got talking and Chitra agreed to give a performance during one of our sessions. To cut to the chase, the session was brilliant, captivating and more importantly held the attention of the kids; we all know what a short attention span under 5s have. It will be our pleasure to have her back with all her wonderful instruments for another session.*

### **Katherine Harvey, PTA member and organiser of Indoor events for the Ravenstone School – PTA Summer Fair in Balham said,**

*We're all exhausted today after such an amazing event. Thank you so much for being part of it. You held the audience captivated with your wonderful and colourful stories - children and adults alike. I was amazed at how you kept the attention of everyone for such a sustained period, even the youngest children. Well done, you added a beautiful extra dimension to our festival. All the best, Katherine*

### **Clare Scurfield, Friends of Dulwich Wood Primary School**

*Thank you so much for coming to the fete with your stories. We all enjoyed the Anansi story with its funny twists and grand, mythical setting. The kids seemed entranced by it, and looked surprised and lulled by turns. Which is saying something given all the distractions going on behind them at the fete! For most of us it was one of the first times we'd had a story told to us, rather than read, so that was a great pleasure. I personally was so happy to be transported for those minutes by your storytelling in our cosy tent. Thank you. The fete was a real success for the school, bringing the whole community together for a while to share. Thank you for supporting us in this, and seeming to understand this, especially in your choice of stories.*