



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO,  
on the occasion of the designation of Ms Lauren Child  
as UNESCO Artist for Peace**

**UNESCO, 12 December 2008**

Ms Lauren Child,  
Mr Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to UNESCO Headquarters for the designation of  
Lauren Child as UNESCO Artist for Peace.

Lauren Child is rightfully considered to be one of today's most talented authors and  
illustrators in the field of children's literature.

Since publishing *Clarice Bean, That's Me* in 1999, she has distinguished herself  
both in her native United Kingdom and around the world, thanks to the originality of  
her work and its ability to speak to children everywhere.

Her subsequent works, including *I Will Not Ever Never Eat a Tomato* and *That  
Pesky Rat* were equally well received and earned many publishing prizes and  
millions of fans.

The adventures of her characters, "Charlie and Lola", were adapted for television by  
the BBC and became one of the most popular series on British television. It is now  
aired in 34 countries, in places as far apart as Iran, Finland, Japan and Mexico, with  
an estimated 200 million child viewers. Book sales from this series, just like Lauren  
Child's other books, now run into their millions, in 30 different languages.

More importantly, these books are initiating a new generation into the delights of reading and writing. The advantages that this bestows throughout life are many.

Since its foundation in 1946, UNESCO has been at the forefront of global efforts to keep literacy high on national, regional and international agendas. However, with some 776 million adults lacking minimum literacy skills, literacy for all remains an elusive target.

Literacy is at the heart of basic education for all. It is essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy.

Quite simply, access to free, quality basic education lies at the heart of all development efforts. If we cannot deliver on this basic right, the sustainable future to which world leaders committed themselves through the Millennium Declaration and Education For All Goals will never be achieved.

This is a long term effort. UNESCO is working with its Member States to put in place policies and strengthen their capacity to do so. In parallel, through the Programme for the Education of Children in Need, we are working to make an immediate difference to the lives of the world's most vulnerable group.

Lauren Child was particularly moved by the diversity and impact of this Programme, which gives free rein to children's artistic and cultural talents as a way into education.

Convinced that rather than being the preserve of children in wealthy countries, story books should be used to reach out to under-privileged youngsters everywhere, Lauren Child decided to try make it a reality. With her publisher, Hachette Children's Books, she teamed up with UNESCO to create a special, expanded edition of her much-loved story, *That Pesky Rat*. For a period of three years, all royalties and publisher profits from its sale will support projects under UNESCO's Programme for the Education of Children in Need. Thank you very much for this generous contribution.

Dear Ms Child,

In designating you as UNESCO Artist for Peace, our Organization pays tribute to your commitment to children in need. I would also like to acknowledge your efforts to raise public awareness about the importance of innovative education for excluded children, through the “My Life is a Story” campaign. UNESCO needs talents like yours. Thanks to you, UNESCO has the unique chance to talk directly to children, in a language they understand, with a sense of imagination that matches their own.

As UNESCO Artist for Peace you will join distinguished personalities such as Juan Luís Guerra from the Dominican Republic, Maria de Medeiros from Portugal and the China Disabled People’s Performing Art Troupe, who all work to ensure that the message of UNESCO is heard all around the world.

It is now my honour and pleasure to designate you officially as UNESCO Artist for Peace and to present to your diploma. I wish you every success in your new mission and thank you for having joined forces with UNESCO.

Thank you.