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Lucy Hawking talking to her fans at the Hay Festival, Dhaka.

Lucy Hawking is the creator of the George's Series, a series of adventure stories to explain science to the young readers in an entertaining way. She has been working with her father Stephen Hawking and other renowned scientists to make science entertaining for young children. In this year's Hay Festival, Dhaka she talked about her works and experiences in a couple of sessions. Lucy Hawking talks to *the Star* about her writings, ideas, challenges and future projects.

**You have been writing science fiction for children but your creative writing started with a different genre. Could you tell us how it happened?**

I went to Oxford University and studied modern languages which were French and Russian, the languages of literature. Then I completed a professional course in journalism and I worked as a

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journalist for a period before I wrote two very lightweight novels. It was quite a long time ago and I don't call myself a journalist now. After that I had the idea of writing science books as a series of adventure stories for young children.

**How did you get the idea of writing adventure stories for children to explain science?**

The idea of explaining complex science to children as a series of stories came to my mind during my son's birthday party. The kids were very excited to see my father when he appeared in the party. They all

gathered around him and they had many questions to ask him. One of them asked him, "Stephen, what will happen to me if I fall in a black hole?" My father took a few minutes to type the answer as he has to speak through a computer and so he has a computerised voice. But the children didn't budge and they stood there around his wheelchair, waiting for the answer. Then my father replied, "You would be ripped into spaghetti." The kids were thrilled and said, "Ooo spaghetti!! That's great!!!" Seeing these kids' excitement and enthusiasm I and my father started to think that there was something we could do; we could tell a story to these enthusiastic kids where science was accurate. This is how I got the idea of writing adventure stories for children where accurate science has been explained in an accessible and entertaining way.

**Your George's series has been translated into 38 languages and published in 43 countries. Could you tell us the storyline?**

The story starts with a little boy called George whose parents are anti-science and technology. They think that science and technology are causing all the problems in this world. One day George finds their new next door neighbour Eric who is the world's greatest living scientist and his daughter Annie, a little girl who befriends with George. Eric has a super computer called Cosmos which has a personality of its own. Cosmos looks like a small laptop but actually the most powerful super computer of the world and Eric always keeps it secret. One day when Eric was out, George and Annie, the two curious kids find it and opens the computer. The specialty of Cosmos is, if anyone programmes it and inserts a command, the Cosmos will draw a doorway made up of light. Wearing a special suite, if the operator jumps into the doorway, he/she will find themselves in the space, anywhere they want to go in this universe. Seeing the doorway, Annie tells George to wear the space suit and both of them jump through the door. In a whirling move, they see the door closing behind them and suddenly they land on a comet. Thus the cosmic adventure of little boy George begins.

**Do you find it challenging to maintain accuracy of complex scientific terms besides making it accessible and entertaining for small children?**

For these adventure stories I always work with my father and that means I am not allowed to break the laws of physics. For example I am not allowed to write that George and Annie have met with aliens in the space because we have not found yet any intelligent life force like aliens as far as we know. We do work incredibly hard to ensure as much accuracy as possible regarding the information we are providing in these books. Of course there are fantasy elements too in it. The super computer Cosmos and the two children's visit to universe using it, of course, that is fantasy. But it's a metaphor for knowledge; it's a metaphor for what we know about the universe.



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**What kind of questions have you been facing from your young readers and fans?**

Lots of amazing questions; every kinds of question you can possibly imagine. They ask me about life on other planet, about meeting aliens, talking to aliens, questions about the size of the universe, what happens inside a black hole, about time travelling and even one of them asked if he could travel in the space with his dog. The thing is the children of that age can go simply with their minds. They don't have any blockers in their mind. They think about space, universe in the purest sense which is actually very similar to the way the physicists think.

**Finally, what is next for you?**

Well, currently I am working on the fifth and final volume of George's series. It is called George in the Blue Planet. That is the end of the series. In future I would like to work for a couple of charity projects and I have also some ideas to write about. But I think George's series will be finished in its fifth volume.