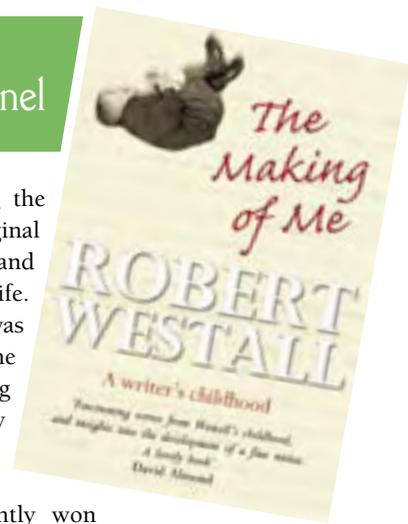


The Making of 'The Making of Me' by Lindy McKinnel

When Robert Westall died in April 1993 many disparate pieces of writing were found amongst his papers. Some of these were autobiographical vignettes. Apart from a ten-page contribution to the autobiographical series *Something About the Author*, for the Gale Research Company in Detroit, Michigan, USA, he had never attempted to write his autobiography, always claiming that he thought his life too dull and that no-one would want to read about it. But I disagreed and told him so and I encouraged him to write about his childhood. He painted word pictures of life in a Geordie family during the 1930s and 40s in a wonderfully vivid and humorous way and indeed, two of the chapters in the book have been previously published as short stories.

So, around 1997, I decided to try and compile some of the writings so that, placed within the chronology of his life, they would read, hopefully, like a book. This wasn't easy. However, I had known him extremely well for a period of 27 years, was familiar with his life history and was able, initially, to set out a complete chronology. Then using the Gale contribution as a basis and finding plenty of material, I set about using additional writings and short extracts,

editing, inserting and dividing the whole into chapters. My original attempt ran to 100,000 words and covered nearly 50 years of his life. For this book, however, it was decided to concentrate on the formative years, going on to explain how he came to write in the first place, and how he subsequently won the Carnegie Medal with his first published book, *The Machine Gunners*. The result is *The Making of Me: Robert Westall's own words* but not his own autobiography.



The Making of Me - A writer's childhood - autobiographical pieces chosen and edited by Lindy McKinnel
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