

# Sofie Laguna

## AUTHOR

Sofie Laguna originally studied to be a lawyer, but after deciding law was not for her, she trained as an actor. Sofie began her writing career as an author for children and has written over twenty books for young people. Her work has been published in the US, the UK and in translation throughout Europe and Asia. She has been shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Award, and twice been awarded Honour Book by the Children's Book Council of Australia.

Sofie's second novel for adults, *The Eye of the Sheep* won the 2015 Miles Franklin Award. It was also shortlisted for the Stella Prize, and longlisted for the IMPAC Dublin IMPAC International Literary Award. *The Eye of the Sheep* has been optioned for film.

Sofie's first novel for adults, *One Foot Wrong* released in 2008, was published throughout Europe, the US and the UK, was longlisted for the Miles Franklin Award and shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Award.

In 2017 Sofie released her third novel for adults. *The Choke* won best novel in the 2018 Indie Awards, was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier Literary Awards, the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal Award, the ABIA Award, the Voss Award, and longlisted for the Kibble Award, the Stella Award and the Dublin IMPAC International Literary Award. The Melbourne Theatre Company has optioned theatrical rights.

Sofie's new novel for adults, *Infinite Splendours*, is scheduled for release in October 2020. She continues to write for young people, and in 2021 she will release her next novel for children, *The Song of Lewis Carmichael*, followed by a picture book, *When You Are Older*.

Sofie Laguna regularly presents to both children and adults.

**"Thank You, Sofie was absolutely delightful - warm, passionate and a lovely person - it was a joy to have her here" – Gannawarra Library**



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# Sofie Laguna – Sessions for Students

## Performing Stories (lower primary)

In her presentations for lower-primary students, including kindergarten and preps, Sofie draws on her acting skills; she performs a play based on her book *My Yellow Blanky*. Sofie plays the main character, an energetic and wilful five-year-old, and the children from the audience play the other parts, complete with costumes and props. The show is dynamic and highly interactive, providing the students with an opportunity to understand the connection between text and performance and how exciting it can be. Sofie also uses her successful picture book, *Too Loud Lily* as a tool for interactive performance. With this text students have the opportunity to work together as a chorus, with Sofie in the role of ‘conductor’. These sessions celebrate the relationship between words, sound and action.

**Topics:** The different ways stories can be transformed into performance. The different places we can find inspiration for stories and plays. Finding the right place to express ourselves.

## Bringing Stories to Life (middle & upper primary; lower secondary)

There is also a strong theatrical element in Sofie’s presentations for middle and upper primary students. After speaking with students about the different inspirations for her stories, Sofie plays director and the students act out scenes from her novels. She has found this to be an excellent way of engaging the audience in her work and giving them a deeper understanding of character. Sofie also discusses the inspiration behind her work – from stories about embarrassing parents, to family holidays. She empowers her young audience with the belief that their own lives are rich with material for great stories. In 2004 the Australia Council awarded Sofie a writing residency in New York, at Art Omi in Ghent. It was here she wrote her first novel for young adults, *Bird and Sugar Boy*. The novel was published in 2006, (Penguin) winning Honor Book in the Children’s Book Council of Australia Awards 2007. Sofie uses this sensitive, moving story as a springboard for a discussion with upper primary/lower secondary students about families, best friends and the power of nature in our lives.

**Topics:** The ways stories can be transformed into performance. The places we can find inspiration for stories and plays. That we can use the difficult things that happen to us in our lives as creative inspiration. Doing this not only makes for good stories – it can also make us feel better.

## Character Development

Using her books as a springboard, Sofie discusses the importance of character in her own writing. She examines the different ways we can create strong characters and their importance in building a compelling story. Sofie’s audience learns how to create characters of their own and to develop the stories that lie within them. The sessions end with real life ‘interviews’, where students play the characters they have created. This has proved to be enormous fun, and a wonderful way to understand how characters can be brought to life.

**Topics:** How character can drive plot. The ways in which characters hold the keys to creating compelling stories. The power of detail in successful character development.

## Journal Workshops

Sofie has kept a diary since she was seven years old when her grandmother bought her a blank book as a gift. When Sofie asked why the pages held no words or pictures her grandmother explained that the book was for writing stories about herself. Sofie has been keeping a diary ever since. In her journal-keeping workshops Sofie explores the different ways journals/diaries can function in both our personal and creative lives. She shows her audience the first drafts of her many books all contained within her diaries. Sofie discusses the value of having a private place to be creative and expressive and the ways it has healed and helped her.

**Topics:** The different places we can find inspiration for stories and plays. The healing powers of writing. The ways diaries can help lead to publication.



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## Sofie Laguna – Feedback

Sofie was brilliant. The feedback from teachers, parents and students was that they were thrilled with the content of her talk. She was so natural, authentic and reflective about her writing. She had students from year 5-12, parents and teachers as audience and she pitched her talk perfectly. She was prompt and completely professional. We were so very impressed.

—J. Harkness, Roseville College

We had great feedback from the audience and they were very engaged especially during the Q&A time. Mark and Sofie were very generous with their answers. They were both very warm, professional and generous. Mark and Sofie were both very communicative leading up to the event and punctual on the evening. —N.Koch, Yarra Libraries

“Just awesome!” “Spot on” “Really hit the mark” “She had them (the children ) eating out of her hand.” These are just of the few amongst many comments that the teachers said about Sofie. I have just heard nothing but positive feedback about Sofie. Please let her know how very pleased our teachers and children were about her visit. We highly recommend Sofie!

—T. Stoove, St Mary's Primary School Greensborough,

We thoroughly enjoyed Sofie's visit. Everyone had a fantastic time, Sofie is a brilliant speaker. I will look at ways to continue the collaboration with Sofie.

—R. Nelson, Bannockburn Primary School, Bannockburn

Just wanted to let you know Sophie Laguna finished her workshops today with the 5/6 classes—she was great! Really engaging with the students, and the teachers were very happy with the content. Thanks for the recommendation! —S. Allan, Balwyn Primary School

We have just enjoyed Sofie Laguna's visit here at Corpus Christi. She has certainly inspired the children in their writing and reading. Sofie's presentation was very engaging for all children from Prep through to Year 6. —J. Wilkinson, Corpus Christi

The girls in Prep, Year 1 and Year 2 each had a session with award winning author, Sofie Laguna. During these sessions, she shared lots with us about her writing experiences. Sofie was a big fan of acting until one day she heard a story from a friend, and her life changed forever. She changed from being an actor and became an author! She sent her first story to five publishers, and luckily the last one replied that they would publish her first book. We learnt three important things from Sofie: Follow your dreams, be patient, and don't stop having a go at new things! —Students, Ivanhoe Girls Grammar

Sofie spoke to students in Prep – Year 2. She was very engaging and professional in her delivery. The students were interested in what she had to say and she held their attention for most of the 50 minute session (a difficult feat for prep students). Sofie explained very clearly the role of the publisher, putting it in simple terms and relating it to her personal experience. This is often a difficult concept for the younger students to understand, but Sofie explained it very clearly and simply. She had a lovely warm manner with the students and quickly established a great rapport with them.

We had Sofie visit our school a number of years ago and she was great. Once again, we weren't disappointed. She is a very talented speaker. I would definitely recommend Sofie and we would love to have her back in the future.

—M. Muse, Teacher-Librarian, Overnewton Anglican Community College



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