

Diary of success

Adeline Foo's new book about a boy's diary entries has stayed on the local bestsellers list for 10 weeks

Magdalen Ng

Home-grown writer Adeline Foo is flushed with success. Her latest book, *The Diary Of Amos Lee - I Sit, I Write, I Flush!*, went into a third print run a few weeks ago. Including the book's first run in April, that adds up to 11,000 copies published.

Sales have been good enough to keep her book on *The Straits Times'* bestsellers list for 10 weeks, although other hit children's books by local authors have racked up higher sales figures.

The Mr Midnight series by James Lee, for example, has sold more than 30,000 copies.

Foo's book takes the form of a diary written by 10-year-old Amos. His mother has forced him to start writing it to improve his English, and he writes about the things most children his age are likely to be engaged with, such as food and the painful process of saving up for a Playstation Portable.

If Amos is believable, it is because he is inspired by a real boy. "Twenty per cent of Amos is my son, Benjamin. The remaining

80 per cent would be what I imagine the average kid to be," says Foo.

The 38-year-old author has published 12 picture books and says her writing has evolved as her three children - Benjamin, nine, Tessa, six, and Jeremy, four - have grown.

"My maturity and growth as a writer mirror the growth and development of my eldest child," says Foo. "At nine, he doesn't want to read picture books anymore."

The impetus for her to write a proper book targeted at older kids came late last year, when the Ministry of Communications and the Arts approached her to write a book which could be distributed to children at the Singapore Day held in London earlier this year.

Drawing inspiration from Sue Townsend's famous Adrian Mole series for young adults, she created Amos. While it still contains many illustrations, *The Diary Of Amos Lee* has more text.

Through Amos' "funky and smart aleck-y" voice, Foo could also send lessons to her readers without sounding "preachy like a mother".

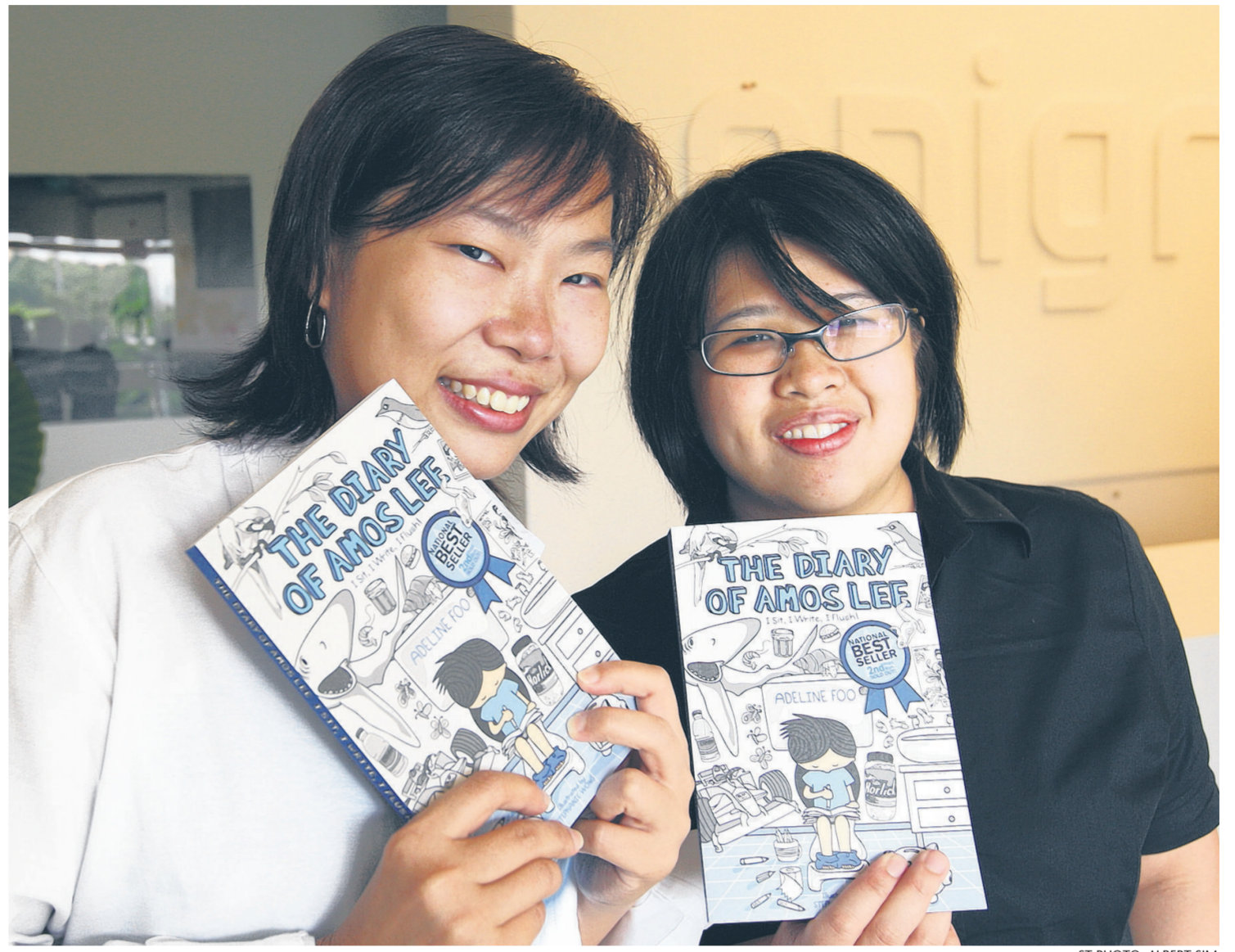
"I wanted to convey the message to children living both in London and Singapore that there is much to be grateful for growing up here," she says.

The saga of Amos will continue as the next instalment is likely to be released at the end of the year.

In this new book, a "foreign talent" in class will bring out the competitive streak in Amos.

"He's afraid that his teachers will have higher expectations of him when they find out I'm an author."

ADELINE FOO, on keeping her identity a secret from her son's school



Adeline Foo (left) with book illustrator Stephanie Wong. Foo says her eldest child, Benjamin, was her inspiration for Amos.

ST PHOTO: ALBERT SIM

There will also be more focus on his relationships. Foo says: "Amos might even fall in love some time."

Calling her book the "joint effort" of her family, she says her husband, the executive vice-president of airport management at the Changi Airport Group, would chauffeur her to and from her classes at New York University's Tisch School Of The Arts

Asia, where she is studying for a master of fine arts in dramatic writing, and photography materials for her.

Benjamin would offer jokes for her books.

But she has to keep her identity a secret from Benjamin's school, she says. "He's shy, especially when his friends ask him if I wrote the book."

She adds with a laugh: "He's also afraid that his teachers will have higher expectations of him when they find out I'm an author."

songyuan@sph.com.sg

The Diary Of Amos Lee (\$13.90) is available at major bookstores.

Bookends

Magdalen Ng

Tonight will be Fly Entertainment artiste Chua Enlai's last performance for *The Extraordinary V Conference*, an annual stand-up show by Irene Ang.

The show pokes fun at United States President Barack Obama and Singapore's own Aware saga. But he will be back on stage in *The Hossan Leong Show - an on-stage "TV talk show"* - together with home-grown actress Karen Tan. It will be staged in October.

In November, he is collaborating with Leong again in theatre company Wild Rice's production, *Beauty And The Beast*.

What are you reading now?

I've just returned to reading *We Need To Talk About Kevin* by Lionel Shriver.

Lok Meng Chue, who plays Mama Pearl on *Sayang Sayang*, lent it to me when we wrapped up the filming of the TV series as I was about to spend a week in Cha-am, Thailand.

It is a pretty hard-going but very compelling read. Narrated by a mother whose child had just killed seven of his school mates, it diaries the convoluted aftermath and the bizarre journey of her mental and emotional convalescence.

It's telling of the way society behaves in such tragic circumstances and it is riveting because it speaks from such a distinct yet rarely heard point of view.

Also, to research for a three-week trip through St Petersburg, Moscow, Budapest and Prague, I began reading *Frommer's* guide to the two Russian cities and *Lonely Planet's* guide to Prague.

The former was very informative but somewhat brief on photos. I like guide books with illustrations and colours.

The maps and history of the country were very useful. It proved quite invaluable in a country where very few people spoke English and most signs were in Cyrillic.

It told more with words than visuals, but I prefer getting a glimpse of what I should see.

The *Lonely Planet* book was pretty adequate in that respect.

I'd bought the one specifically for Prague. I thought the handy pocket-book size would be



ST FILE PHOTO

much easier to carry around and I accepted that it would be far more brief.

It's about context, I guess. It was detailed with facts but did not recount much about the country's history.

If your house were burning down, which book would you save?

I would save my box of scripts which contain great works such as Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping And F***ing* and Oscar Wilde's *The Importance Of Being Earnest* because I'm a hoarder and they are personal to me.

I feel like I've really had a journey with these plays and most of them contain my copious notes and irreverent doodles.



We Need To Talk About Kevin (Profile Books, 2005, \$25.15) and *Lonely Planet Encounter Prague* (Lonely Planet, 2007/2009, \$21.94) are available from Books Kinokuniya. *Frommer's Moscow & St Petersburg* (Frommers, 2008, \$19.33) is available from Amazon.com

bestsellers

Fiction

- (1) *The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger
- (3) *Twenties Girl* by Sophie Kinsella
- (2) *The Associate* by John Grisham
- (4) *Starting Over* by Tony Parsons
- (5) *Alex Cross's Trial* by James Patterson
- (6) *Best Friends Forever* by Jennifer Weiner
- (-) *206 Bones* by Kathy Reichs
- (7) *A Good Woman* by Danielle Steel
- (8) *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult
- (9) *Once In A Lifetime* by Cathy Kelly

Non-fiction

- (1) *Outliers: The Story Of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell
- (2) *Criminal Intent* by Wong Kim Hoh
- (3) *The Mile Hi! Club* by Janet Chew
- (4) *The Miracle: The Epic Story Of Asia's Quest For Wealth* by Michael Schuman
- (-) *Investing Against The Trade* by Anthony Bolton
- (5) *Instant Turnaround* by Harry Paul
- (6) *Who Killed Change?: Solving The Mystery Of Leading People Through Change* by Ken Blanchard
- (7) *Impressions Of The Goh Chok Tong Years In*

- Singapore by Bridget Welsh
- (-) *Secrets Of Forex Millionaires* by Yeo Keong Hee
 - (-) *Way Of Ping* by Avery Stuart Gold

Children's

- (-) *The Secret Of The Sphinx* by Geronimo Stilton
- (-) *The Discovery Of America* by Geronimo Stilton
- (1) *Thea Stilton And The Mountain Of Fire* by Thea Stilton
- (4) *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid #3: The Last Straw* by Jeff Kinney
- (2) *A Fabumouse School Adventure* by Geronimo Stilton
- (3) *True Singapore Ghost Stories #19* by Russell Lee
- (9) *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid #1: In The Beginning* by Jeff Kinney
- (5) *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid #2: Rodrick Rules* by Jeff Kinney
- (7) *Twinkletoes 3: Master Of The Game* by Thomas Koh
- (10) *Thea Stilton And The Dragon's Code* by Geronimo Stilton

This is LifeStyle's compilation of the week's bestsellers lists from Books Kinokuniya, Borders, MPH, Page One VivoCity, Popular and Times bookstores. The numbers in brackets are the previous week's positions.

www.timesbookstores.com.sg

The BOOKS WAREHOUSE

ATRIUM BOOK FAIR
@ Open Plaza, Plaza Singapura
14 Sept -20 Sept | 10am - 9.30pm

- Magazines
- Chinese books
- Value buy stationery
- Electronic dictionaries
- Christian books
- Colouring products
- Toys & educational games

Up to 80% off

SIGN UP FOR A 2-YEAR TIMES PRIVILEGE CARD @ \$15 & GET A GOODIE BAG* WORTH \$20!
*While stocks last

Supported by: **active**

Visit Us @ The Books Warehouse too!
438 Ang Mo Kio, Industrial Park 1, Ang Mo Kio Ave 10
SBS Buses available: No 45, 55 (55 from Bishan Interchange), 261 (from AMK Interchange) & 548
Open Daily, Mon - Fri: 11.30am - 8pm
Sat & Sun: 10am - 8pm

BESTSELLERS

1. *Photographer's Field Guide*
2. *The Advertising Concept Book*
3. *The Photographer's Eye*
4. *Great Escapes Asia*
5. *Perfect Paper*
6. *Complete Color Index*
7. *Understanding Shutter Speed*
8. *150 Best Loft Ideas*
9. *Showflat Design Express - Oriental Charm*
10. *Cool Hotels Asia/Pacific*

1 Harbourfront Walk #02-41/42 VivoCity Tel: (65) 6272 0822

every book begins with **PAGE ONE**