



Andrea Abbott (nee Kullin) was born in Durban in 1954. She matriculated from Danville Girls High and enrolled at the then University of Natal to study toward a B.A. degree, her chosen subjects including English, Speech & Drama, and French. After two years though, having grown bored at University, she headed for London where she temped for an employment agency for six months. Abbott travelled to Belgium where she took on a position as an au pair for nine months. Dissatisfied with her work, she returned to South Africa. Here, she worked as a Radio News Reporter for the SABC for two years resigning in 1977 when she married and went to live in England with her husband, John. The couple returned to South Africa in 1981 with their son, Ross.

Abbott completed her Bachelor of Arts degree through UNISA in 1982, majoring in English and Linguistics. In 1985, she gained an Honours degree in Linguistics, also through UNISA.

From 1985 to 1999, she taught part-time at UKZN in the Department of General Linguistics and Communication. She began her full-time professional writing career in 1999 when Working Partners Limited in London started commissioning her to write children's books. She wrote around 30 titles in the Animal Ark, Safari Summer, and Nine Lives series under the pseudonym Lucy Daniels and in the Puppy Patrol series under the name Jenny Dale.

In 2011, her first South African children's book, *Desert Prisoner*, was published by Tafelberg under her own name. *Desert*

Prisoner

received a warm reception upon release. A

[review](#)

on Drum Digital awarded the book a 3/5 rating, describing it as “

great read for young and old”.

Jay Heale praised

Desert Prisoner

for being a “magnificent” if improbable story.

Writing for the

Mail and Guardian

, Pat Schwartz

[felt the book](#)

called for a “

considerable suspension of disbelief in a whole variety of ways”. However, he noted that it was an “engrossing, well written” read that “evokes beautifully the alien landscape in which it is set”.

Tshepo Tshabalala

[also questioned](#)

its believability but considered

Desert Prisoner

a “fast-paced and suspenseful” effort that had plenty of “twists and turns” to keep a reader intrigued.

The novel earned a small award from the Namibian Children’s Book Forum in 2012. The Afrikaans translation, *Woestyngewangene*, [was also nominated](#) for a 2012 South African Translators' Institute Prize in the “Translation of Children’s Literature” category.

In 2015 Abbott participated in the first Durban Book Dash. Her book, *I Will Help You*, was selected by Nal’ibali to be distributed to 35 000 children by newspaper.

As a journalist, Abbott writes regularly on a wide variety of topics for several South African magazines most notably *Country Life*, *Skyways*, *Food & Home Entertaining*, and *The Crest*.

She has also written three full length features for

Contributoria

– an independent journalism network with links to

The Guardian

newspaper in England.

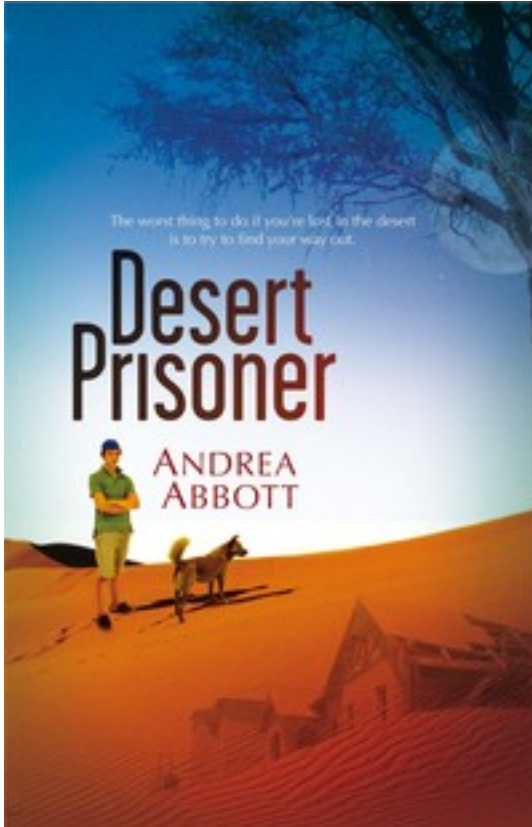
Although her journalism work keeps her fully occupied, Abbott is working on her next children's novel.

A “jack-of-all-interests”, Abbott enjoys almost everything from Astronomy to Zoology. However, she has a special concern for the environment and biodiversity, in particular the notion of rewilding the planet, a topic on which she has written several features.

Abbott currently lives in Everton with her husband and two very indulged cats, Ed and Nearly Ours.

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Selected Work



Excerpt from *Desert Prisoner* (2011:127):

Treasure could hardly believe what was happening. Out of the blue, the dog she'd glimpsed earlier leapt at the man, knocking him down. Now the animal stood his ground while the man rushed at him, flailing his whip.

At the very last moment, the dog sprang up at the man again. With an aim that was straight and true, he grabbed the whip handle and wrenched it away. Twisting once in mid-air, he landed on all fours to face his adversary once more.

The man kicked out at him, but the dog darted to one side and glared at the bully. Whip-man lunged at him again. This time the dog streaked off, taking the weapon with him.

"You brilliant, wonderful animal!" Treasure cried.

She saw that Leo had seized his chance and was running away too, half-carrying, half-dragging the small boy.

"Over here," Treasure yelled to him but realised he still couldn't triumph. The ambush had only slowed the men a little. They were running again, catching up with the two exhausted boys. To the south, the other boys ran toward the dune. Treasure could hear the rhythm of their feet pounding over the desert.

Pounding feet? In soft sand? No, that's impossible. The noise was loud – too loud to be coming from such a distance away. It was from behind her, coming closer, sounding louder, like the hooves of a herd of stampeding animals.

Bibliography

2011. *Desert Prisoner*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Translated into Afrikaans by Kobus Geldenhuys as *Woestyngewangene*.

2015. *I Will Help You*. Book Dash Publication. Illustrator: Olivia Villet. Designer: Fathima Kathrada.

The book can be downloaded [here](#) .