

Mary Pope Osborne Doctor of Letters

Mary Pope Osborne is dedicated to the idea that all children should have the opportunity to develop a passion for reading. Once ignited, she believes, that passion can be a fierce motivation for changing their lives for the better. Osborne's first book, "Run, Run, As Fast As You Can" (1982), was a semi-autobiographical story of a young girl growing up in a military family. When Osborne was 15, her own military family settled in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where her father retired. There, she became involved in the Fayetteville Little Theater and her imagination took flight. Osborne enrolled in Carolina, earning her B.A. degree in dramatic art and religious studies in 1971. After traveling all over the Middle East, living in a cave in Crete, enduring an earthquake in Afghanistan, and surviving blood poisoning in Nepal, she settled in Washington, DC, and later married Will Osborne, another UNC alumnus, whom she met while he was acting in "Diamond Studs." Osborne moved to New York City, where she began an extraordinary career as an author. Her most successful work has been the "Magic Tree House" series, in which a brother and sister, Jack and Annie, discover a tree house filled with books near their home. As they read the books, a wish transports the children to each book's time and place. To date, the series includes 50 fiction titles, plus 25 "Fact Tracker" nonfiction companion titles. The series has been published in more than 35 languages and has sold more than 100,000,000 copies. It is the most popular series of children's books of all time. Will Osborne has created a full-scale musical adaptation, "Magic Tree House: The Musical," that premiered in 2007, and his "Magic Tree House: Space Mission" plays daily at the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center here in Chapel Hill. Osborne's honors include the Ludington Memorial Award from the Educational Paperback Association, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Random House Sales Force, and the presidency of the Authors Guild (1993–1997). Osborne is a leading advocate for literacy on a global scale, working to provide access to books for children in need throughout the world. As a gift to educators and their students, in 2012, Osborne created Mary Pope Osborne's Classroom Adventures Program, which provides lesson plans and other resources free of charge to teachers, and Mary Pope Osborne's Gift of Books, which donates collections of "Magic Tree House" books to underserved schools around the country.

For outstanding accomplishment in the field of literature, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is pleased to confer on Mary Pope Osborne the degree of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*.