



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Ben Whitehouse

Q1. What are your earliest memories of books and reading? For example, did you have a favourite or inspirational book?

I always remember that my favourite books as a child were three pop up books:

Bens box by Michael Foreman. This was like having a book about myself, I was exactly like the child in the book and loved it so much that he shared my name.

Haunted House by Jan Piatkowski. This was packed with so much detail from the beautiful illustrations and haunted house goodness!

Robot. Pop-up book by Jan Pieńkowski. This was just like Jan's Haunted house book but with robots. What's not to like! Wonderful and sometimes odd drawings but I always came back for more.

There were many other books but these three were ones that I think that definitely played into my creativity as a child.

Q2. What inspired you to become an author / illustrator?

I actually fell into illustration while inbetween trying to get work as a stop motion puppet maker.

My background is in animation where I had previously been a character designer and stop motion puppet maker. I was told a few times that I had a very appealing quality to my work that would be fitting to children's book illustration. It wasn't until a few years later that I actually reached out to

Agencies seeking representation. I didn't think I would get any replies but too my surprise I did! Now I am completely absorbed by children books and illustration.

Q3. For you, what makes a successful book or illustration?

I think for me; a perfect picture book is one that draws me back in again and again. I adore fun and silly stories the most as they can be extremely captivating but also convey a good lesson or two at the same time!

Q4. Do you have a specific audience in mind when you write your books / plan your illustrations?

For personal work I tend to just draw for myself and not really think about who its for but the work normally ends up being engaging for a child and can be used for portfolio purposes.

Q5. What future do you think the physical book has? For example, do you think the electronic book will replace the physical book?

I think and would hope that a physical book will never die. Nothing can replace turning a page. I don't know anyone that only buys digital books. Nothing can beat walking into a book shop and plucking something off the shelf and finding a new gem. I know electronic books offer samples but this will never compete with flicking through a physical copy to see if its your cup of tea.

Q6. Are you a book collector? Is there a special book you'd love to own?

Oh, good grief yes! I used to be a very big book collector of "art of" books for film and animation. I have a very big animation book collection but over the last few years I have had to learn restraint and keep myself from buying them. I do also have a very nice Ronald Searle collection and was always on the look out for hard to get books of his. There are too many to mention though!

My children's book collection has now taken over and am currently trying to get reasonable priced copies of 'The Iliad And The Odyssey' and 'The Golden Treasury of Myths and Legends' illustrated by the mighty Alice & Martin Provensen.