



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Peter Carnavas

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

One of the first books I remember really enjoying was *The King, the Mice and the Cheese* by Nancy and Eric Gurney. I haven't read it for a while but something about it really caught me, particularly the illustrations of all those animals storming the king's palace. My favourite memory of listening to a book read aloud was when my Grade 3 teacher read *Danny the Champion of the World* by Roald Dahl.

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

I was always interested in doing something creative, I just couldn't work out if it was going to be music or writing or art. When I became a primary school teacher, I fell in love with picture books and started to realise that my ideas were quite suited to the medium. So I suppose other picture book authors and illustrators inspired me, and continue to inspire me today.

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

The reader needs to feel some sort of connection to the character, otherwise they won't want to keep turning pages. The connection might be with the character's nature or journey, or even just with the style of illustration. And it doesn't matter how simple or complex the story or illustration is, the important thing is that connection.

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

I tend to be a bit selfish and write for myself. I really just write the story I want to write. If I start thinking too much about what a particular reader or audience needs or expects, I worry that I'll compromise the story I want to pursue. Of course, writing for children means I need to consider certain things to make sure it's still appealing and appropriate but I really just write stories that appeal to me.

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

I have a feeling that ship has sailed. I might be optimistic but I think the physical book (in the children's book industry) has seen off the major challenge of ebooks for the time being. I have no problem with them co-existing, and I think that's probably what we'll see from here - different formats serving different purposes, but still storytelling in some way.

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

I wouldn't call myself a book collector in an obsessive way. I try not to get too attached to things, and I suspect it would be a very expensive business to pursue rare books. That said, anything original or rare to do with Quentin Blake would definitely start me drooling.