



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With A.A. Wise

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

I enjoyed reading a lot when I was young, and I still do. I read all the Disney books and other stories. I remember especially enjoying The Magic Key books by Roderick Hunt and I liked the way the characters escaped into fantasy worlds. I also liked the Harry Potter books. Having enjoyed that so much, many of my books involve other worlds, or characters from our world going into other realms, like Samuel Blackwood and the Demon's Key, or even Inock Tehan and the Phantom of the Ruins. Another book I have published is Inock Tehan and the Forbidden Clan. I simply enjoy reading and writing fantasy books!

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

I write because I enjoy fantasy stories and so wanted to create stories of my own that others could enjoy. I take inspiration from books I've read, the television, movies, animation, and stories told to me in Uganda when I was young. I was born in Uganda, east Africa. I moved to England when I was a young boy. The stories told to me when I was young involved witch doctors, magic, witches, ghosts, spirits, mythical creatures and warring tribes, which were generally told around the family campfire by my grandparents, mother, aunts and uncles and the local witch doctor. Witchcraft is very common in Uganda, not to mention witch doctors. Witches are even reported on the daily news. I was told stories of all these things, and I have even witnessed some of it for myself; I have incorporated these stories and what I witnessed into my books.

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

What makes a successful book for me is a book that transports me. I like reading books that take me on an adventure, show me magic, show me great and fantastic characters, and have plot twists and satisfying endings. The books I have written have all of these qualities and I just pray my audience will see and appreciate this, and appreciate my hard work.

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

I do have a specific audience; everyone! My books may revolve around children's and teenagers' lives, but they are written for all ages. My books have strange and magical creatures and beings, the plots involve a lot of magic and powers usage, and the characters have fantastic adventures, but the books also have life lessons, deal with many real human themes and have characters such as I have witnessed in my life and from stories told 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 think the physical book is here to stay. There's nothing I enjoy more than opening up a favourite fantasy book and diving in. I of course own a kindle, but it never really feels the same as reading an actual book. Not to mention that most people I ask say they prefer physical books to electronic books.

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

*I am indeed a book collector. I own many fantasy books where children, teenagers or adults have powers or do magic and go on adventures. It is my favourite genre. I also like reading philosophy books. I especially enjoy *Stranger In A Strange Land* by Robert Heinlein, *The Power Of Five* series by Anthony Horowitz - those are really fun books, and I enjoyed *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder, a book on philosophy.*