



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

# An interview with Richard David Lawman and Katie Williams

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

Richard

*I grew up on a rich diet of Roald Dahl, particularly his rhyming stories. In fact, I have recently just bought an old copy of "Revoltin' Rhymes" to read to my daughters and the memories came flooding back. Now what better inspiration could there be? The connection between a book, a story, characters is still there after 30 years. My Dad used to often make up stories for us when we were little, and I can remember stories didn't always involve books – all you need is an imagination.*

Katie

*I can't remember ever being without books. When I was little I devoured stories and loved to make my own books, usually with pencil and A4 printer paper! My strongest early memories of books are of being read to by my Dad. Particularly "Pip" and "Plum" poetry books by Tony Mitton and later the entirety of "The Lord of the Rings" (with voices). My favourite picture book was "Something Else" by Kathryn Cave, illustrated by Chris Riddell. I still have it on the shelf in my studio.*

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

Richard

*I have to tell stories. I always have. I guess if you want anyone else to read them, you really need to publish them. I began my writing career developing comedy for TV, and I moved into interactive and future-storytelling which resulted in me ending up becoming part of WatAdventure.*

Katie

*Making pictures has always felt like a natural thing for me. I always wanted to be an "artist". It was most difficult trying to work out what kind of artist and how I could turn doing what I loved into a job that paid the bills. On my foundation degree I realised it was always illustration that I found most exciting.*

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

Richard

*I believe stories which provoke children's imaginations can be considered successful, therefore, the writing process is a case of harnessing a grander idea for a slipping it into whichever medium you choose to tell that story. In the case of a picture book, you need to content with a limited word count, a strict rhyming scheme and lots of dialogue in my case. But the challenge is worth it!*

Katie

*Illustration is all about visual communication and I think after looking at an illustration you should always feel as though you've gained something - It could be information, a deeper understanding, a good laugh, or even just an appreciation for the tones and textures. It should make you want to look again.*

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

Richard

*In all honesty, I try to think about what I would have enjoyed as a child. Obviously, any writer who takes their job seriously will consult experts, ensure they are knowledgeable about the books their audience enjoy (and don't enjoy!) to help guide certain ideas to the right point. With WatAdventure in Australia, we have thought about the bright-minded, world-curious child. Age? I don't know. I would hope any child from 3 upwards would be able to follow the story and take some enjoyment from it.*

Katie

*Usually the project dictates the demographic. When working on a children's book you have to make sure the imagery is entertaining both for kids and parents. Adding lots of details that make it fun to look over a page lots of times is important for both of these! In my personal work I don't usually make it with an audience in mind. This makes it quite fun to see what kind of people it attracts online and at fairs!*

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

Richard

*The physical book provides a tactile experience that digital modes of entertainment cannot provide. However, without going into too much depth I think at this point, I believe it's the way in which audience experience stories through the medium of books is what will preserve them for the foreseeable future. In so much as, imagine a way of telling stories in as much depth as the writer chooses, in a portable medium which can be accessed anywhere, which can be shared amongst friends and family afterwards and allow the user to determine the pace at which they digest the story? And then I told you it was a book? So long as books are a storytelling medium which puts the reader in control, they will survive waves of innovation and change from the digital world. Can books interact with the digital world? Yes. That's what we aim to*

*show. Digital technology can deepen the immersivity of books significantly, and can provide personal stories readers will feel part of like never before.*

Katie

*I don't think there's any way traditional books can be replaced by ebooks. We need the option of ebooks. They're great for travelling and space-saving but I don't think they can ever replace the joy of holding a real printed book that you can keep for years, get dog-eared, drop in the bath, fold the corners over to save a page, and read over and over again!*

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

Richard

*Yes I collect books. Do I read enough of them? No. To my great shame, no. Most people I know feel the same – how can you not get enough of them? They're wonderful little paper things that lower your stress levels, take you on a journey and teach you a thing or two in the process! In all honesty, I'm a loyal patron of my local library. I've borrowed dozens and dozens of books down the years (and run up embarrassing fines in the process) – what could be easier? In fact, I need to head there now to return 3 I borrowed a couple of weeks ago. Books I'd love to own: The original Gospel of Luke. Or Where's Wally 16. Once was a seminal work of huge historical importance. And the other was written by a clever Greek dude about the Son of God, a couple of thousand years ago.*

Katie

*Yes... I have growing collection of picture books by my favourite illustrators, old and new. My favourites from these are "A lion in Paris" by Beatrice Alemagna and Shaun Tan's "The Lost Thing". I love browsing in second hand book shops - some of my favourites from these are my Illuminated Medieval Medical Manuscripts book, a Reader's Digest book "Folklore Myths and Legends of Britain" and a poetry book which has been cut and collaged into by the previous owner called "The Moonsheep". I don't know if there's a special book that I want. I have a very early edition of "The Hunting of the Snark" which I found in Wigtown, which is special enough.*

