



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

# An Interview With Jack Zipes

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

*When I was about six or so and lived in Mount Vernon, right outside of New York City, I used to walk to the public library about ten blocks from my house and spend hours in the stacks sitting on the floor and reading dog stories and sports stories. My favorite authors were Jack London and Albert Terhune, among many others. I devoured these books and also fairy tales by the Grimms and Andersen that my mother read to me. I also loved comics and tried to write and illustrate my own stories. By the time I was fourteen and in my first class at high school, I wrote a story for the literary journal which was basically a condemnation of war.*

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

*I can't say exactly what inspired me to become a writer except to say that friends of my crazy very unorthodox family always encouraged me to write because my father and brother and sisters did incredible things that were absurd and grotesque. I refused to write about them, but perhaps it was because I became the black sheep of the family and left my family as soon as I could to protect my soul and sanity that I began to write – out of hurt and a desire to come to terms with a painful youth.*

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

*The more provocative and the more experimental, the better a book or illustration will be.*

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

*I believe that all writers write for themselves, as do all illustrators draw for themselves. If they don't write or draw from their heart and with a critical mind, their books will be artificial and dull. Unfortunately, I think that most writers and illustrators today have been strongly influenced by the culture industry and have transformed art into a commodity. It is sickening sometimes to see just how widespread the commodification of art has become. I write and illustrate to challenge audiences to think about changing a world that has become very perverse.*

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

*The electronic book will only replace the physical book if humans become zombies and electronic robots. We seem to be heading in that direction, but I have faith that the printed book will remain a valuable part of people's lives.*

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

*Yes, I am very much a book collector, and since I value books so much, I have donated most of my collection to the University of Minnesota Library and to other libraries in the States and also Canada. There is no one special book that I desire to own. However, when I begin working on projects that involve neglected or forgotten authors, I search for their works in bookstores, flea markets, and book fairs. I jump for joy when I find their books and sometimes discover other books that need resuscitation.*