



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Chris Bradford

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

My earliest memory of reading is curled up in my Grandad's arms reading Captain Pugwash adventures. There is something very comforting in reading and for me I believe that it comes from those happy times. He was involved in the film business, managing a number of cinemas nationwide, and had a huge passion for James Bond. I can remember the bedroom I stayed in at his house in Stratford was lined with bookshelves full of Ian Fleming books – if I close my eyes, I can still picture all the spines lined up, the thrilling titles of each volume and the smell of their pages. Late at night I would sneak a chapter or two, feeling as daring as James Bond as I read a proper adult book!

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

To be honest, I never imagined I would be a full-time author. I spent most of my 20s working as a professional musician and songwriter. It came about by accident (or was it fate?) when I was given the opportunity to write a book on songwriting (Heart & Soul: The Craft of Songwriting). The book was well received and it also made me realise I could actually write. This began my career as a writer. A couple of years and several publishing deals later, I got an agent, came up with the idea for Young Samurai and the book was snapped up a day after my agent sent it out – the author's dream!

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

Emotion. That has to be the heart of a book. If you as a reader are emotionally attached to the characters or the message of the story, then you are inextricably drawn into the book. That's why I try to write action-adventure books with heart, with fully formed characters that appeal to the reader and encourage them to root for the character. Otherwise it is all just action and no soul, and the story falls flat.

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

Yes, I write for readers who love action, thrills and exciting books. In essence, I imagine the book that I would love to read and write that. I don't have a specific age range in mind, since my books appeal to all ages from 7 to 77. My only concession is to make the hero or heroine the age of the specific target market e.g. 14.

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

The physical book will always have a place in readers' hearts, especially for the children's market. There is no greater gift than the gift of reading (or music!). That's why the physical book will continue to reign amongst children, who often prefer a physical book over an ebook as a break from all their screen time. Among adults convenience often takes precedent and this is one reason why ebooks have gained such dominance. But books will still have their place as the best and most relaxing format to consume stories.

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

The spare room houses all my books from various publishers around the world. There are some twenty-five different languages and it is fascinating to compare the covers and varying lengths of translation from super-thin Vietnamese to super thick German editions! My German editions take pride-and-place on the shelf since Germany is a huge market for my books. If there is any book I'd love to own, it would be a signed first edition copy of IT by Stephen King – he is my all-time favourite author and IT the scariest read I have ever laid eyes upon!