



## The Letterpress Project

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

The first book that I remember really loving was *The Paper Bag Princess*, by Robert Munsch. As a sophisticated, literate, monocle-wearing child, I'm sure that I enjoyed its witty inversion of narrative convention and gender tropes in fairy tales. But, perhaps, I wouldn't have expressed it in exactly those terms. It definitely made me laugh.

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

When I was a kid, I think whodunits were a little bit out of fashion - especially when it came to children's books. So, when the idea for Montgomery Bonbon first came to me, I didn't realise that the middle-grade murder mystery had become a thriving sub-genre. I just wanted to write a funny mystery that focused on a (seemingly) impossible crime. So it was only in doing research, after digging some classic locked-room mysteries, that I discovered wonderful newer books, like Robin Stevens' *Murder Most Unladylike* series.

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

I've been a children's author, a stand up comedian, an animator, a video game developer, a filmmaker, a pot-washer in a canteen and a cabin boy on a Napoleonic battleship. I always say, why be unsuccessful in only *one* medium? Making a living out of creative work isn't easy. If you manage to do it at any level - I call that success. (Plus, a quick glance at the mega-successful millionaires in any field is a good reminder that they aren't any happier than the rest of us.)

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

I'm afraid to say that *I* am the target audience for everything I write. The Montgomery Bonbon series is being aimed squarely at ten-year-old me. Which is a terrible idea, really. Ten-year-old ABK is never going to fork out for a copy of the book. I was, after all, a very stingy child.

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

I am an old-fashioned paper book reader. I do prefer paperbacks to hardbacks, because they hurt less when you drop them on your face in bed. And they're cheaper. (I am, after all, a very stingy adult.) But I try not to be judgemental about *how* people read. Whether it's a book, an ebook or an audio book, I don't mind. If someone wants to do a dramatic reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* while streaming Fortnite, they have my full support.

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

I think it's a pity that a groaning bookshelf has become a kind of intellectual status symbol, but I admit that a big pile of books is an object of delight to me. (Unless it's my 'to read' pile, in which case it's a source of terrible guilt and shame.) I try to resist the urge to be overly precious about books. When I was a kid, I read my favourite books until they came apart at the spine, and that's the way it should be.