



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Nicola Davies

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

My earliest memories of books are of illustration. I loved the pictures in a book of Greek myths and legends, and would leaf through to gaze at my favourite ones. My father used to recite poetry to me...Keats and Longfellow. He especially loved 'Hiawatha' and my copy of the abridged version of the poem with illustrations was so well loved it fell apart. Years later when I had children of my own I found a copy of the same book in a second hand shop. I felt as if I'd found buried treasure.

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

I definitely didn't set out to be a writer. At 17 I wanted to be a painter but I thought that only rich people bought art and I didn't want to be dependent for my living on a class of human I then despised. So I followed my other passion, zoology and it's my desire to share that passion that made me a writer, first for TV and then later books.

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

So many different things, in many unique combinations and then the final component of a book is the reader, and every reader is different, so every reading is also unique. What I try to create is connection between my voice, my heart and the heart of my reader, so I think very hard about every word, every phrase, every scene. What I call the choreography of

writing, the ordering and timing of the delivery of ideas, emotions and images is very important for creating that connection.

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

I don't think that's how it works for me. I write from my heart, from the core of who I am and all I've learnt in my life...but as I'm seven on the inside that probably makes my writing accessible for 7 year olds. My aim is to write for everyone, all ages.

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

Well I think the statistics about kindles speak for themselves. They are great for travelling, for reading standing up on the train or carrying g ten things away to read on holiday but books are what people love and cherish. They don't need batteries or recharging, and you can share them with whoever you want.

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

I try not to collect things but if you saw my house you'd see I don't try very hard. I have a LOT of books. The books I'd love to own are a set of the 7 volumes of Jonathan Kingdon's 'East African Mammals'. At the time it was published, I could only afford to buy one – I'd love to own them all. The illustrations are out of this world.