



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Steve Brown

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

My earliest memories are my mum reading me books at bedtime, but reading books myself, I have many memories, I still have some of my childhood books today, some of my favourite were the Frog and Toad books by Arnold Lobel. I still have my original copy of 'Frog and Toad Together'. I've always loved Roald Dahl, and still have my original copy of 'The Twits' which was my Fave. I used to like reading chapter books called the Gumby Gang, which I still have one copy of. Roald Dahl was always and is an inspiration for me, and Quentin Blake was always a huge inspiration on the illustration side of things.

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

I used to want to be an animator when I was at college, but I got bored so easily and thought that I'd go mad doing that, children's illustration for me was the best area, as I really love character design and I get to do lots of that inventing characters, and the process is a not too long to get and see results.. even though it can take time for the books to be released, I still see the end product quite quickly.

I think the main inspiration for me was having my children, constantly reading to them and seeing all the lovely illustrations in the books, it made me get back into drawing, I was working on the Ambulances (Emergency service) at the time, and I thought if I didn't give it a try I'd end up regretting it if I never tried. Now I have been working full time as an illustrator for 3 years after resigning from the Ambulance service and it's the best thing I've done.

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

For me, I like humour in my illustrations and like to see it in other books, I'm a really big fan of Jim Fields work, I love his varying style of illustrations, adore his character design .. something in it just speaks to me. I like to put lots of silly little details in my work, something that you may not see the first time. I think the text and images need to gel together well, sometimes I've read a book and thought the story is good but I really didn't like the images at all, and vice versa I've adored some images in a book but the story just doesn't do anything for me.

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

Sometimes... depends on what I'm doing, if I'm working on a book for a specific age range I will tailor my style to suit that age, perhaps simplify things and not to make it too cluttered if it's for a very young child as it distracts from the main point of the story/image.

For my own personal work, I'm not sure that I do, I think I just do what I enjoy or find funny etc.

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

I don't think the electronic books will ever replace the physical book. There's something magical about holding a proper book, physically turning the pages and having the images there on the page, I couldn't imagine sitting at bedtime with my kids reading from a kindle or whatever, it would just never be the same, for me it takes all the warmth out of the book and that special moment of reading to your children. I don't read e-books, I only have proper books, I think they have their place but will never replace the original.

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

I do have lots of books, I love reading, unfortunately don't have much free time now with 3 children and work but I do try and find the time to read... never really thought about a special book I'd like.... if I had to choose one, I would really like an early copy of Peter Pan, I've always loved this story.