



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview with Tom Moorhouse

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

I think it's fair to say that I've always loved words and communicating in general. I basically never shut up, and writing is sort of an extension of that. I remember Mum having lists of words when I was really young and we used to sit down together and I would go through them with her and memorise them. And I read A LOT as a child. They were usually stories with a fantastical element (e.g. *The Faraway Tree*, *The Dark is Rising*) and I think this has bled into my current career writing animal fiction (which is essentially fantasy set in an alien world, albeit one that actually exists, and with animal rather than human protagonists). So no single book, but a definitely a type!

Q2. What inspired you to become an author?

I don't think authors are inspired to be authors. I think they are authors because they absolutely have to be or they'd be really unhappy. I have a constant urge to communicate the thoughts in my head to people, and I do this through writing. I often say that writing's more of a compulsion (/ disease) than a profession.

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

It's something that doesn't patronise the reader, but rather challenges their view of the world and opens up possibilities and thoughts that they perhaps hadn't considered. The key is to do that with a story and characters that are so engaging that readers embrace the challenge and readily go for the ride with the author.

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

Yes: me. If it doesn't interest me, then it sure as heck won't interest anyone else. Writing for audiences of different ages is a challenge, though, because you have to change the voice you write in. I naturally write for 8-12 year olds, and find that comparatively easy (I can write 1,000-2,000 words in a day, and then edit, edit, edit). I find writing for 7-9 year olds is a massive work of "craft" because it has to be trimmed to the bone: only the most entertaining speech and engaging writing will work. It's like painting a miniature: the details must be excellent or the whole thing will be terrible. If I write 500 words in a day for that age group I think I'm doing well.

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

No chance! Children love books. And in their own way I think kids are very conservative. If they are raised reading books, they'll want to read books. (I hope.)

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

I'm not, really. I have a few favourites that I treasure, and lots I'd happily give away. One of my very favourite books is Tove Jansson's *The Summer Book*. But my real treasure is my collection of *Calvin and Hobbes* books. I love *Calvin and Hobbes* and get very annoyed with anyone who is sniffy about cartooning, and claims that it somehow isn't as artistically valuable as, say, an adult novel – these are usually the same people who look down on children's books, and they're very, very wrong indeed.