



The Letterpress Project

# An Interview With Aaron Becker

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

Ed Emberley's drawing books were a huge inspiration for me. They worked almost like Lego instructions, allowing children to create complex worlds one shape at a time. I created constantly with these books as a template; I doubt I'd be making books today without them.

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

Chris Van Allsburg's *Wreck of the Zephyr* (1983, Houghton Mifflin) captured my imagination in my post-college years when I was thinking of what I wanted to do with my life. His pastel paintings of a flying boat swept me away and for the first time I wondered if it was possible to create books of my own.

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

Instilling a sense of wonder. Picture books differ from the moving picture or images on screens in that they're printed in high detail and don't shift around. It gives readers the chance to sit with them for a while, slow down, and let their eyes wander. There's really nothing like a full page colour illustration to capture that sense of possibility.

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

No, actually. I tend to create for myself and hope that others will find something too. But really, the starting point is my own enjoyment of telling a story with pictures. The rest is all icing on the cake!

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

I believe the technology that runs our lives these days will hit its limits soon enough. We're biological creatures with hundreds of thousands of years of evolution behind our genetic makeup. The idea that we'll totally abandon the physical world in exchange for speed or convenience doesn't mesh with my understanding of the human spirit. I think we'll always need things to hold.

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

I have a shelf of my favourite picture books to be sure. My Calvin and Hobbes compendium is probably my absolute favourite. I never tire of pulling the huge volumes off the shelf and rediscovering Bill Watterson's poignant strip.