



The Letterpress Project

# An Interview With Dan Smith

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

I have so many memories of books and reading! I remember giggling with my brother at 'Green Eggs and Ham' and I remember staring wide-eyed at the terrifying illustrations in the Ladybird stories of ugly trolls and wolves that ate all the little kids (they don't tell 'em like that anymore!) When I was a little older, I became a big fan of The Three Investigators series, which had a touch of the Scooby-Doo about it, and I was almost never without a Tintin comic. I also have vivid memories of my older brother reading scary stories to us in the dormitory before lights-out when I was just seven years old.

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

I didn't grow up wanting to be an author. What I really wanted was to live in a story. I've always loved losing myself in a book, and when my friends wanted sport on telly, I wanted a film. In fact, I *love* films, and I think writing is my way of directing, producing, and acting in films of my own. I'd never really thought about being an author until I was a teenager and became a fan of Stephen King's books. That's when I began to wonder if I could have a go at it; maybe I could live in my own stories...

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

Wow, that's actually very difficult to answer. I love all kinds of different books for all kinds of different reasons. Some because the writing is so beautiful that it washes over me, others because the story provokes strong feelings. I can become deeply absorbed in a creepy story (there's something comforting about being scared, right?), I can be carried away by a cool adventure, or I can get lost in a strange new world. I especially love it when a story shows me something new or takes me somewhere I've never been.

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

This might sound selfish but ... it's me! I write books with stories that I enjoy, that I would read now, or that would have appealed to me when I was younger. For instance, *THE INVASION OF CROOKED OAK* is exactly the kind of book I would have enjoyed when I was younger. It's even better that Chris King did such a fantastic job with his graphic novel style illustrations.

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

This was something we talked about a lot a few years ago, isn't it? The physical book still hasn't gone away. It's hard to know what will happen in the future, but my instinct is that people like the physicality of a book. Especially children. It's far more exciting for children to spend their precious pocket money on something they can hold in their hand, smell, and put on the shelf. If they exchange their money for a digital edition that disappears when they turn off the reading device, it's almost as if it isn't there at all.

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

I keep many of the books I read (though I do give some away to schools or to our local hospice), but I wouldn't say I'm a collector. My daughter and son bought me a delicious Folio Society edition of *Lord of the Flies* for my birthday, but other than that, I mostly have shelves loaded with paperbacks. I still have a lot of my old horror novels that I read when I was a teenager, so I take them off the shelf from time to time, flick through the pages, savour their musty smell, and remember the enjoyment of first reading them. I can't do that with an ebook...

