



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Rosie J. Pova

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

Growing up in communist Bulgaria, I remember only having a few children's books that I read over and over — Brothers Grimm's tales and *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*. But the book that was most inspirational to me was *The Little Prince* (I'm pretty sure I've read it in French, too).

I also had a vinyl of Cinderella and have played it so many times, I knew it by heart. And since my parents never read to me, that vinyl with a cast of real actors performing the fairytale was very special to me and I loved it!

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

After I had my first child and started reading picture books to her, my love for the written word was rekindled and I've been writing for children ever since! I've always had a passion for writing and have been fascinated with the power of words, so I do believe that this is my calling — I find great joy in what I do, and I'm happy to grow my career as a writer.

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

A successful book is one that touches the reader in a profound, lasting way. Even if it makes them laugh, it still resonates in a way that they remember. It's a book that they'd want to revisit, recommend, and talk about.

Apart from that, a successful book is also one that reaches a huge audience and is appreciated by both the public and the professionals in the field, which is the standard measure of success. And I wanted to add that because no matter how great a book might be, if no one knew about it or read it, then it'd never make an impact, sadly. So, it's important for a book to reach its audience, as it's meant to be read by the mere basis of its existence.

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

I didn't have a specific audience in mind when I first started writing for children, but after my first and second picture books, *If I Weren't with You* and *Sarah's Song* were published, and I started going to author events and doing school visits, and was reading the books over and over, then whenever I sat down to write new stories, I imagined being in front of 300 1st-graders and reading the story out loud. If I thought that I could sustain their interest through to the end, then I felt good about the elements of the story such as pace, tension, dialogue, emotion etc.

Of course, some picture books are meant to be read as a bedtime story by a parent rather than to an assembly of kids, but for the most part, I go by that rule and check in with my imaginary audience of 300 6-year-olds.

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

Study after study shows that the physical picture book is not going anywhere, despite all the modern electronic gadget we now have at our disposal. Young kids — and their parents — still prefer the printed books, the turning of the paper pages, the feel and smell of books. Plus, kids already spend a lot of time in front of screens, and I don't think adults would be encouraging more of that when it comes to reading. So, I am pretty confident that the physical picture book is here to stay and thrive!

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

I am not a book collector, in the traditional sense of the word, but I do like growing my children's book collection of newly published books. However, to answer your second question, I'd love to have the original first edition of *The Little Prince*.