



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Michelle Maiden

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

I have so many early memories of books and reading! As an only child, picture books in particular offered a nice escape to different places and an insight into ways of behaving in various scenarios. One particular favourite of mine was *Corduroy* by Don Freeman. I always got completely immersed in the journey he went on to find his lost button. Others included the *Frog and Toad* series by Arnold Lobel, and *Curious George* by Margret Rey. All of these stories had an emotional aspect to them that helped me connect with the characters.

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

I was lucky enough to grow up in a very creative household. My mother was an artist and my father always wrote poetry in his free time. I liked watching my mother drawing and painting and could hear the tapping sounds from my dad's manual Royal typewriter. My childhood was often chaotic so I turned to drawing as an escape, although I probably didn't realise that at the time. I also enjoyed making illustrated stories in tiny booklets I folded, especially ones that depicted happy scenarios.

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

I especially enjoy books and illustrations that have some kind emotional layer to them, in terms of characters and/or relationships. I also prefer them to be more on the quiet, gentle side rather than the opposite. 'Less is more' works for me because it helps me to focus on what's most important and meaningful.

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

I generally try and aim for children aged 3 to 6 years with my books.

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

I wouldn't have thought that the electronic book will ever replace the physical book, as it would be such a shame! I don't feel that digital books offer the same kind of immersive, sensory experience as physical books. With the latter, the child is able to feel and even smell the book! I think it's far more engaging being able to turn actual pages.

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

I do enjoy collecting picture books that I can dip in and out of when I'm looking for inspiration. It's always interesting to see what sort of new techniques illustrators are using as well.