

Opening Up Picture Books for arts and illustration students

An insight into the process of writing and illustrating a children's picture book



This resource is great for:

Hearing first-hand from top authors and illustrators what goes into creating awesome children's picture books.

Summary:

Art and illustration students will love this insight into the work of Rob Biddulph, Lydia Monks, James Mayhew and Jackie Morris as the author-illustrators share their top tips for creating your own picture book - find out about materials, methods, how to formulate ideas and collaborative working.

Introduction:

Each year lots of picture book creators bring their latest titles to the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Most of their events are for young children, but we know

that older illustration students might be interested to find out what goes into creating a picture book. So we asked young reporters Georgia and Angelina to get the scoop from children's author/illustrators Rob Biddulph, Lydia Monks, James Mayhew and Jackie Morris while they were at the Festival last summer.

Watch the interviews below and then try out some of the suggested activities to help you create your own picture book for young ones.

Activities

Part One - Rob Biddulph

Rob Biddulph is an award-winning author/illustrator whose first picture book, *Blown Away*, won the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize. Several his books have been nominated for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal for illustration and his third book, *Odd Dog Out* was read as a CBeebies Bedtime Story by Tom Hardy. As well as his own books, he also illustrates for other authors including Jeff Brown (the *Flat Stanley* series), Piers Torday and Christian O'Connell. Before becoming a full-time author-illustrator, he worked as the art director of the Observer Magazine, NME and Just Seventeen.

Watch the interview with Rob Biddulph here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ft7_UdxGQB0&t=1s

An activity designed to get your creative juices flowing...

Rob's most recent book, *Kevin*, is based around an imaginary friend. As a group, have a discussion about imaginary friends:

- Did you have an imaginary friend when you were really young?
- What did you do with them?
- Did you ever use them to get you out of trouble?

Talking about imaginary friends can help get you into a good mindset for writing for younger children, taking you back to your own childhood and thinking about how you behaved and what you liked to do.

Whether you had an imaginary friend or not, try to think about the character that you would like to create and start imagining what kinds of trouble they could get a young protagonist into.

In the book, Kevin also lives in another imaginary world. Imagine where your character would live.

Using the character of an imaginary friend that you've been thinking about, write a simple child-friendly story around them. Once you've got your story, create a storyboard of the different scenes. You can then use this to start drafting your own picture book. Remember to use Rob's top tips from the interview to help you!

Part Two - Lydia Monks

Lydia Monks is a bestselling illustrator and author of children's books. She's probably most well known for her collaborations with *The Gruffalo* author Julia Donaldson. Many of their books have become household favourites, including *What the Ladybird Heard*, which has sold over a million copies and been translated into many languages. Lydia's own books including, *Aaarrggh Spider!* and *I Wish I Were a Dog* have won a number of awards and accolades.

Watch the interview with Lydia Monks here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uya8bflqY2s&t=1s>

An activity designed to get you using different materials when creating picture books...

In the interview, Lydia talks about using acrylic paint, coloured pencils and collage to create her picture books. Have a go at experimenting with your own range of materials and using different textures as you build up a story.

Think of an unusual setting in which to place some animal characters - it could be a school like Lydia uses in her *Twit Twoo School* series, or it could be a supermarket or a theatre. Now use different materials to create the characters and setting in your story. Try to experiment with a range of different textures - felt, leather, velvet, bubble wrap. Then, take photos of the characters and settings you have created and build up your story from there, adding text to the images you have formed.

Part Three - James Mayhew & Jackie Morris

Jackie Morris is an author, illustrator, photographer and painter. Her many books include *Tell Me a Dragon*, *The Snow Leopard* and *The Wild Swans*. James Mayhew is an author, artist and storyteller. His imaginative *Katie* series invites readers to step inside famous paintings and his other works feature folk tales and stories from opera and Shakespeare.

Jackie and James have collaborated to produce *Mrs Noah's Pockets* - Jackie wrote the text for the book, while James created the accompanying illustrations.

Watch the interview with James Mayhew & Jackie Morris here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onxHG8JQepw&t=10s>

An activity designed to get you thinking about author/illustrator collaboration...

In the interview, Angelina asks James and Jackie how different *Mrs Noah's Pockets* would have been if they'd swapped roles - so that Jackie illustrated and James wrote the book, rather than the other way around.

In pairs, think of a basic plot for a short story - for example, a little girl has lost her favourite cuddly toy. Each write the text for a short picture book story that follows this plot, imagining the accompanying pictures in your head as you write.

Once you have written the text for your story, swap with your partner. Now, draw the illustrations for their story.

Look at the resulting illustrated stories. Talk about the differences in the way you pictured what it would look like and what has been produced. Talk about how this changes the story.

As the illustrator, are there any decisions or assumptions that you had to make? How does that make the writer feel?
