

Date:

Author/Interview subject: **Illustration Slam**

Interviewed by: **Janice Forsyth**

Other speakers: **Eilidh Child**

JF: Hello there, a very, very warm welcome indeed to Authors Live. I'm Janice Forsyth, hello! Yes, I can hear you all and see you all waving out there. I'm your host for this Illustration Slam with three, yes, you heard correctly; I said three talented author illustrators for you to meet today. And as if that were not fabulous enough we also have Scottish athlete Eilidh Child who will be running for gold in Glasgow and she'll be running in here today. No, she might just walk in, in a very casual way, because she doesn't have to run today.

And with me today, because yes, I'm not alone, frankly that would be strange, are a wonderful audience of students from Pencaitland Primary from Tranent in East Lothian!

Aud: Wooow!

JF: I think you can do louder than that! One, two, three.

Aud: Whaaaayy!

JF: That's better. Aren't they lovely? And a huge hello also to all of you out there; hello! You can all shout hello too. Hundreds of thousands of people listening around the world and watching. Hello, hi Blantyre Primary, well done for watching. Hello Kirkhope Primary, hello! So glad to have you along. But those are just two of the many hundreds and hundreds of schools that are watching in the UK. So you know who you are and we're delighted to have you along.

But also today with the help of the royally praised Commonwealth Class, yes, I don't know if you saw that or heard that, the queen herself said that she thought it was great. She gave the royal seal of approval to the Commonwealth Class, that was during her Commonwealth Day broadcast earlier this week. And because of that we are able to welcome, and we're not only able to, we're happy to welcome audiences from all around the Commonwealth to our very own broadcast today.

Now, before we go any further, you out there, you can shout if you know, and people here too; do you know about Commonwealth Day, when it was? Do you know it happened on Monday? Well done you guys! Did you know too? Oh yes you did as well? You're just not letting on. Yes, Commonwealth Day was on Monday.

Now, did you also know that the Commonwealth has its very own flag? Yes, you did? Let me hear you say yes.

Aud: Yes.

JF: Let me hear you say yes. Well done, lovely, lovely. Would you like to see the Commonwealth flag? Well, yes, great, that's good, because I have two volunteers right here who are going to come up to hold it up for us. So on you come up and turn around, there we are. Isn't that beautiful? There is the Commonwealth flag. Isn't it a lovely thing? So what is the flag story? That is a question that we're asking today. What's it trying to tell us? Is it just a lovely pattern or is there a story to this? Well, I have found out that the big gold globe...what do you think that represents? Yeah, it represents all of the people of the Commonwealth. And these, which are the spears, those represent the many ways that the countries of the Commonwealth work together to help one another. And you can also see of course that the spears make a big C, which stands for... Commonwealth! Yes, you're right. Thank you very much, very clever.

And I also think...what do you think of this theory, that the spears look like arms hugging the world, hugging the globe and protecting us. Do you like that idea? I think it's a lovely one. How well did these guys hold up the flag? I think there should be a round of applause. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you.
[Applause]

Right, it's time to find out more about the power of pictures to inspire storytelling by meeting the first of our three illustrators, each of whom comes from a different Commonwealth country. So please welcome from England the award winning author and illustrator of tons of books, including Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse, and the Edge Chronicles, Chris Riddell. A big cheer for Chris Riddell please. [audience]

JF: Hello.

CR: Hello.

JF: Welcome, lovely to have you along.

CR: It's lovely to be here.

JF: And you have brought us a flag!

CR: I have.

JF: How marvellous.

CR: This flag. Now, this is the Kenyan flag and I like this, I like this flag a lot, and the reason I like this is this image in the middle, the shield. And I like the shield. Part of what I do as a cartoonist is I often draw cartoons, political cartoons. And when I draw them I actually think about what things might mean, and I think a shield's a great image on a flag because a shield is about defence, it's about being shielded by something. And I think a country that shields the people who live in it is a nice idea. And I like this flag.

The other thing I like about this flag are the colours, and that's because when I see this flag it's often being worn by athletes, incredible athletes, long distance athletes who run in things like the Commonwealth Games. And I see the green and the red and the black and I think that's a Kenyan athlete, a brilliant Kenyan athlete. So flags can also be really nice to brand achievements as well.

JF: Lovely, thank you very much. You see, a flag, I didn't realise there were so many great stories and ideas behind it. Thank you very much; I'll leave you to fold that, Chris. Thank you very much.

Our second illustrator is the multi-talented author and illustrator whose books include *No Matter What*, and *Witch Baby and Me*, and she comes from right here in Scotland. So please, a big warm welcome to Debi Gliori! Hello.

DG: Good morning.

JF: Good morning and a very warm welcome.

DG: Well, thank you for that.

JF: And welcome to your fabulous flag. Which flag is this?

DG: Isn't this gorgeous?

JF: Yeah.

DG: This is the flag of South Africa. This is actually also the flag of the next illustrator, but I'm not going to steal his thunder. He comes from South Africa, but isn't this an amazing flag? It's a flag that was conceived of and designed in 1994 and it was to bring together all of the separate people in South Africa, which at the time seemed like an impossible task, but it brought together lots and lots of people

who had not been brought together before, lots of tribes, altogether in one flag. And you can see there's a big Y, if I hold it that way, you can see the flag is a big Y.

And I think at the time it was almost impossible, they thought it was impossible to do it, but the Y is for Yes. Yes, we can. Yes, we can do the impossible. Terrific.

JF: What a lovely story. Thank you very much, Debi.

DG: You're welcome.

JF: I'll let you go and do your folding too. That's the thing about flags, they need folding up afterwards.

DG: They need folding.

JF: Thank you very much indeed. Well, she's given us a revelation about our next illustrator from South Africa. He is the illustrator of Fussy Freya and here we go; Makwelane and the Crocodile. Which translates as Makwelane and the Crocodile. It's not that difficult. Please welcome Piet Grobler. [Applause]

Oh, I've been rehearsing that all morning, how did I do with my pronunciation?

PG: Very well, great.

JF: Thank you, you're very kind. Now, let's check out your flag. Wow.

PG: I've got the flag of Kiribati, a lovely name, is it not?

JF: It is.

PG: It's a group of islands in the Pacific and therefore you get the ocean there and there are 17 islands. If you could hold that for me please, and you will see that there are 17 rays of sunshine there, and there are 3 waves, which is an indication of 3 island groups; the Gilbert Islands, and the Phoenix Islands and the Line Islands. The sad thing about these islands, the average height above sea level is only two metres, so with global warming it's quite a dangerous situation with those people. It's really getting...they're getting their feet in the water there now.

But why I love the flag is the colours. I think red and blue and yellow are my favourite colours, the primaries. And also I like the sea and I love warm places. So they've got the sea, the Pacific. And these islands are almost on the equator, so therefore it's quite warm there. So you get the warm feeling from the red sky and the yellow sun. And the Frigate, that bird, that represents to the people the freedom, the own the ocean, and the sore in the skies there.

JF: Oh, that's fantastic. So you just want to dive straight into that flag, don't you, and go for a wee swim. Piet, thank you very much.

PG: Thank you.

JF: You can do your folding and make your way to your easel in fact. Thank you very much. Well, there you go. I've learnt so much already. Have you? About flags and the stories they can tell. And over the next little while our talented illustrators are going to be thinking up and drawing a picture each that will help inspire a story. So think about that. A story actually inspired by pictures.

Now, Piet has agreed to draw people or maybe I should say beings, that's a big vague, isn't it? That might be the characters in a new story. So Piet's already at his easel. Debi's going to come to hers and Debi is going to be thinking up, well, this is very interesting. Not much of a challenge at all! Debbie's going to be thinking up a new sport. Now, isn't that a challenge? That people might be able to take part in. So that would be the characters of the story, a bit of action for them, the taking part in a brand new imaginary sport. But who knows? Imagination might become reality. It might be in the Commonwealth Games the next time around. Good luck with that.

And finally Chris, Chris is going to be thinking up...he's very good at this though; he does it all the time. Thinking up and drawing the setting or the world which might inspire a location for a story. So a lot to think about, hmm. And they've just got blank sheets right now. So that's fine, isn't it? Nah. I've got one more challenge for these three. Hehe! We're going to make it more difficult for them, what do you think? Yeah? Good.

I would like each of our illustrators to create a flag, there you go, a flag that you think represents your character, sporting activity or world. Easy peasy! So what do you think? Should we let them get at it?

Aud: Yes.

JF: So pens, paints, charcoals, whatever comes to hand, get going! Let the Illustration Slam begin. I think we should have a cheer!

Aud: Woow!

JF: Go! That's good. I'm going to...do you know what I'm going to do actually? I am going to make things even more difficult for them by having a wee chat to them while they do it. Do you think we should do that?

Aud: Yeah.

JF: So let's go and do that. We're going to go over here now and here is Chris first of all, working away. Ah! Now that looks quite basic. He's starting with straight lines.

CR: No, Janice, I'm trying to concentrate.

JF: I'm sorry.

CR: I can't talk at all, no.

JF: I'm afraid you're going to have to talk to me too.

CR: Okay.

JF: It's going to be not easy. But how do you generally start a drawing?

CR: This is how I start, this sounds really literal. But I start by drawing a box, because I like picture frames, I like to frame the picture. And because I've got a little bit of time to do this drawing I'm going to do a frame. Now, the most difficult thing I think is drawing a straight line without a ruler.

JF: Uh-oh.

CR: I'm just about...and trying to talk to Janice at the same time. That's an...Oh, I'm going down a bit.

JF: I think he's doing quite well, isn't it?

CR: I'm getting to the... There! That's the difficult bit down. That's great. Now, I can start to think what on earth I'm going to draw.

JF: But how does it work for you, because this man draws all the time. If you go to his website, he just draws all the time. Is it a case of already you've got an idea in your head, or there you are with the pen on the paper, is the pen leading you into this?

CR: It is a bit.

JF: Is it?

CR: I like to use this pen, Janice. It's a brush pen and it's really nice to sketch with because you can do very thin lines, and then by pressing down a little bit harder you can do nice thick lines, so it's fluid. And really I allow the pen to start to suggest what I might draw. And I'm drawing an environment, some sort of environment. So already I think that might be the roof of something.

JF: Oh yeah?

- CR: I'm not quite sure what it is yes, I'll find out in about three minutes.
- JF: Possibly not, because I'm going to keep chatting to you a bit longer actually, because how often do young get the chance to speak to somebody who's an award winning illustrator while he is doing it. And one of your most recent books I absolutely loved, Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse. Some of you might have seen it, it's an absolutely beautifully illustrated story, and you won a big award for that.
- CR: Magically it's here, Janice.
- JF: Oh, there it is. Isn't that strange?
- CR: There it is. And this book actually looks like a box of chocolates, it's amazing. They've sprayed the edges purple, it's amazing. So I saw all of these in a bookshop and I thought wow, that looks just like a box of Dairy Milk Tray...oh, I said...
- JF: Other chocolates are available across the Commonwealth.
- CR: Other books are available as well.
- JF: Yes, indeed.
- CR: So this is it, Janice.
- JF: It is. It's a beautiful thing and she's a terrific character because she's not wearing pink and being annoying, she's very cool, black and goth and purple. But winning awards, do you still get excited about that? Is that important for you?
- CR: Hugely excited. I'm now drinking coffee again after many years because I won a prize from a coffee place. So yes, it is always lovely.
- JF: Brilliant, lovely. I think I will let you get on now with that roof. How interesting? I'm going to come across and find out what Debi is up to. Ah!
- DG: I wish I knew!
- JF: This looks so different, doesn't it, from what Chris was doing. So he's got his scratchy wonderful brushy pen.
- DG: He has.
- JF: What are you using?

- DG: I'm using a combination of burnt sticks, because I'm actually really an old fashioned girl and I'm channelling my inner cavewoman, and this is what we used to draw with many, many years ago when we lived in caves which was millions of years ago. And I'm using chalk as well.
- JF: So chalk that people...well, I don't know if you have chalk in classrooms anymore, it's probably all whiteboards. But anyway...
- DG: Well, it's classy artist's chalk; this bears no resemblance to the squeaky stuff we used to draw on blackboards with.
- JF: So what have you created already? What is this?
- DG: Well, in common with Chris I've done a box around the outside, that's basically to make absolutely sure I've got room to put my picture in. And so it doesn't go off the edges, because that's really embarrassing when you run out of page and you go uh, oh no; I've run out. I am drawing a volcano.
- JF: Of course.
- DG: As you do.
- JF: It's a sporting activity.
- DG: It's a sporting activity.
- JF: It's going to be a volcano.
- DG: Well, my thinking runs actually in common with Piet's, it's to do with global warming and I reckon in about 100 years' time we will have run out of nice frosty mountains to have our downhill skiing events on. So we'll be forced to relocated to Antarctica and have our downhill skiing events in Antarctica. Antarctica of course is a massive flat plateau, punctuated by quite a few glaciers and things like that. But it also has a volcano called Erebus, and that's a big pointy thing. So I reckon we could have a downhill volcano skiing event.
- JF: You would be wanting to go fast if you thought the volcano might erupt.
- DG: Absolutely, yeah. So I thought I would have a variety of characters from all my various books attempting the downhill volcano skiing event.
- JF: That's a great idea. Downhill volcano skiing; what do you think guys? Yeah, in here?
- DG: Risky, but fun!

- JF: Yeah, we like risk and fun, don't we? And generally with your books, because I know lots of people watching will be fans of the books; is this how you generally start? You've got your frame, but with these sorts of materials?
- DG: Well, no. This actually, I've only just done this recently. I did this book, *Dragon Loves Penguin* in chalks and I've never actually done a book in chalk before. Before that I did watercolours with little tinny-weenie brushes. But my eyesight is beginning to pack in because I'm getting quite old, so it's much easier to...
- JF: I know the feeling.
- DG: I'm just being vain, I actually can't see what I'm doing, but I can't bear to wear glasses. So actually it's much easier to draw with chalk and charcoal if your eyes are beginning to turn into some flat things that don't work.
- JF: And I know also that lots of people watching and people here love drawing. Are you like Chris? Do you start and the pen or the chalk or the burnt stick takes you on a wee journey of its own or do you have a set idea before you start?
- DG: I have a fairly set... I am a real control freak as my poor...
- JF: You're organised.
- DG: Well, my five children would all attest to me being a total control freak. Organised, yes, that's a much nicer word for it.
- JF: It's a better word.
- DG: I like to have a plan before I begin but I also quite like letting the drawing take over, because you have to allow it room.
- JF: Of course. Well, I'll let you continue with this marvellous new sport, which we look forward to seeing, not in the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, but maybe a future one. Let's move over to Pet. Oh! Now, this is looking very bright, very colourful. Not surprising with the flag that you showed us and indeed your extraordinary colourful shirt, congratulations on that.
- PG: Yes, I like colours.
- JF: What is going on here, Piet?
- PG: That's a bird. I haven't thought of a name for the bird yet, but this is Winifred, she's an opera singer. I'm going to work on her wig still, I think bright orangey ginger, she's ginger, not natural. And she's going to a flag there and that will be in her garden.

- JF: And I see your bird doesn't look like the normal bird.
- PG: No, it had an accident so it's going on one wheel in order to make... It can go quite fast and it can still fly, the wheel is light enough. But it's there to help it walk. It had an accident with a cat, Winifred's cat.
- JF: Is she singing at the moment? She's an opera singing.
- PG: She's singing.
- JF: Mouth wide open.
- PG: Yeah, she's singing.
- JF: Singing. But she's keeping an eye on that. I think she's keeping an eye on the people who are watching at the moment.
- PG: Yeah. She's very self-conscious. She pretends to be self-conscious but she's actually very...she pretends to be coy but she's very aware of her audience.
- JF: Good. Oh, there's so much in that simple drawing already. Sorry, I don't mean simple, but you know what I mean. Now, we have a question for you in fact, Piet, are you happy for that?
- PG: Yeah.
- JF: From this young lady here. Hello.
- Girl 1: Hello.
- JF: What's your question?
- Girl 1: What is your favourite thing to draw?
- JF: What is your favourite thing to draw, Piet? Good question, thank you.
- PG: I love to draw animals but most of all I think birds. I just think birds...they're up there, the angels are really high up and they can see everything, the birds are a bit lower than them; they can still see a lot, they eavesdrop on what we say and what we do. They have a bird's eye view. They know more than we think they might know and they're free, they can just go... Beware of cats though, but I love birds.
- JF: Aha, there you go. Great question, thank you very much. And here we have this bird. I think I've tried to draw birds in the past and find it very difficult. But maybe I've gone for too much detail. You're doing much more of a...

- PG: I will still work on the tail and the frame of that...
- JF: There's a lot...
- PG: It looks like an ugly bird still, a bit like a fish, but it's getting there.
- JF: And back home in South Africa, illustrations, children's books, is it a big business? Are kids really into reading there as they are here?
- PG: Kids love it, yeah, they do. The industry is not as big as here; there are less people who could probably have the money to buy picture books. But in schools it's quite possible to make a living as perhaps an illustrator and do other stuff as well. Quite a number of my friends teach and they do picture books as well.
- JF: Oh, that's a nice way to make a living. Well look, clearly you've still got a lot to do, so I will stop interrupting you and let you get on with it.
- PG: Good.
- JF: Thank you very much, Piet. It's looking good though, isn't it? Three very different illustrations. Let's go back over to Chris, find out how he's getting on. Oh my goodness! I told you that he did a lot of drawing and illustrating every single day, I can't believe my eyes! Can you believe this already? That's incredible! It's almost as if you're a professional artist, an illustrator.
- CR: Yes, it's strange, isn't it?
- JF: Yeah, it's amazing.
- CR: I think someone's going to come along to my studio, which is at the bottom of my garden, and they're going to knock on the door and say I'm sorry, you need to go and get a proper job. What are you doing sitting at the bottom of your garden drawing all day?
- JF: What a great job and what a great world you have created here. So now I see the roof that you started off with.
- CR: Yes.
- JF: It's clearly a roof now. But not necessarily a roof that any of us...
- CR: It's sort of turned into a boot as well, but it's a boot with a front door and a window and I think it's set in a garden. So my dog Rosie, very small, hairy, Jack Russell terrier has this thing she does where she goes to the bottom of the garden and barks. And I can never see what she's barking at, I've no idea. So I'm thinking I

wonder what she's barking at. So I'm starting to construct a little world, maybe at the bottom of my garden, maybe there's someone who lives there. He will get a name at a certain point.

JF: He is adorable!

CR: He might have some friends as well which might inhabit this particular world. And sometimes worlds can be right under our noses.

JF: Indeed. And I'm wondering how many people watching this maybe have a dog that goes and barks, you take the dog for a walk in the park or the garden and they just go off and do that mysterious barking and you can't figure out what is going on. It could be a wee fellow like this with his wonderful boot house. I've asked you a little bit about starting to draw, but when it comes to the stories, do you start always with the visuals, with the drawings and the illustrations? That's what I'm wondering.

CR: I do. I always start...I keep sketchbooks all the time and out of the sketchbooks from random doodles, in fact, exactly what I'm doing here. I will start with a drawing, Janice, and it'll turn into something and then that'll suggest a story.

JF: Are you ever completely surprised by what you've ended up creating?

CR: Yes, often. Often.

JF: [chuckles] Is it always a pleasant surprise? You're like what?

CR: No, it isn't. And so what I have in my studio is I have a special drawer and it's called the naughty drawer. And if I have an idea and I suddenly look at it and think that's a very bad idea, it goes in the naughty drawer and nobody can ever see it again.

JF: Terrific tip. Before I leave you with a question from somebody else in our audience. Hello there, what is your question for Chris?

Girl 2: Do you start your stories with pictures or words?

CR: It's a really good question. I always start with pictures. And I'm an illustrator who likes to write, because I like to write stories that I can do the pictures to. So I always start with what I want to do, what I want to draw, and I'll draw that and then I'll start to write the story. So in some ways it's the wrong way around but I think it's the right way around.

JF: And I think that's a great question and that might actually appeal to a lot of you, and a lot of you I think, if you maybe think hmm, not sure about a story, but you

can start the story idea by actually drawing a picture. And I'll let you into a secret, just a few weeks ago I was talking to Chris but we weren't face-to-face, it was on the radio, so he was in a studio in another city and I was here. But he let me in on a secret at the end of our chat which was that he had been drawing the whole time that we had been chatting. It seems to me that you just can't stop.

CR: I can't stop. So for me, Janice, this is the nicest thing in the world, is just to stand and draw. The difficult thing is talking at the same time, I find that very difficult. [chuckles]

JF: I get the message. I shall move on! Thank you very much. I'm so interested to see what will be on there the next time I go along. Shall we go and have a look at Piet again? Much more colourful, well, it has colour which Chris' drawing does not have. Oh, much more colour going on now with our own-legged bird but he's got the extra advantage of a wheel for a foot and a tail for steering and...

JF: I've forgotten the name of your opera singer.

PG: Winifred.

JF: Winifred! Had you all remembered that? Yeah, you had. So she is now... Ah, right, flag, holding the flag. Very clever.

PG: Yes.

JF: Might be she be coming onto a Commonwealth Games ceremony and being brought on by the bird?

PG: If they'd decided to ask her to perform their opening, the right people might be listening this morning and invite her to come sing.

JF: Yeah! Now, has Winifred ever existed before or have you just thought her up now?

PG: Now, I thought her up for now.

JF: You just thought Winifred up now? I think that's brilliant. So do you have any tips for all the children listening, wherever they're listening around the world, about this idea of maybe just getting to work with some materials, pencil or whatever, creating a character and that leading to a story?

PG: Yeah, I think it's a nice idea to begin with pictures. I've written some books and I started with the pictures when I did them. And I think good ideas, I often tell my students, I teach illustration at the University of Worcester, and I tell the students if you don't have any ideas go and sit in the station and when you sit in the

station think of these people that you see there, it's a bit naughty, but think of them as animals. And that goes you loads of wonderful ideas because we are a bit like animals. And then my students laughed at me and said you're a turtle.

JF: That's nice!

PG: My bald head I think and the big... So they thought I was a turtle.

JF: I'm not going to ask...

PG: And that gives you ideas about people.

JF: Well, that is interesting. And I'm just wondering, if you think about children, if they're in five days a week in school, maybe that's something to start thinking about at lunchtime in the playground; you could just do a bit of standing around and having a wee look and thinking oh that...

PG: Without being nasty.

JF: Without being nasty, no. Like a nice little pussy cat, a bird.

PG: You are...

JF: Oh no, please. I'm scared now.

PG: I think cat.

JF: A cat?

PG: Yeah.

JF: A nice cat I hope.

PG: Yeah.

JF: I'm not going to fall asleep any time soon. But Winifred, she doesn't look shy.

PG: No, she isn't, she's quite self-confident.

JF: So I suppose if you're starting, you've drawn her, she's very colourful, so that might lead you to think about the kind of adventures she might get involved in.

PG: Yeah, I think so. And I've done this before in one of my books, Fussy Freya, this one.

JF: Fussy Freya.

PG: It's about a little girl who didn't want to eat her food, was quite fussy about her food, and in there there's a little bird and I think it also had a... Oh, it was in another book. But in those one it also had a naught cat. So I love cats and people and birds I think.

JF: And you clearly like colour too and it's so interesting that we started off with that incredibly colourful flag that I certainly want to just jump into and swim off in those wonderful waves. Is that just a reflection of where you come from? South Africa, blue skies, green mountains, all of that.

PG: I think it's possible. I tend to think that South African illustrators often work with a lot of colour. We do live in a warm country, I used to, I live in England now.

JF: But you brought that with you.

PG: Yes, I think so. And I go back to get sunshine.

JF: Yes, I'm not surprised.

PG: And thinking about how children might...I mean in my day we would maybe just have a jotter or something, now I guess there are technological devices, you can do stuff on tablets and everything. What would you say about how to go about doing it in terms of the materials?

PG: One could work on a tablet; that's a good idea. But I always think the best way to start is to get a little sketchbook, keep it with you wherever you go, draw. Chris is quite good with that, he keeps a sketchbook, I'm a bit lazy sometimes or I lose my sketchbooks. But that's a good idea. So whenever you get an idea, whenever you go on the playground, on the station, just quickly make a doodle; that gives you ideas when you start writing your book.

JF: Great. A good thing to do on holiday too, isn't it, if you're somewhere new.

PG: Yeah.

JF: Thank you very much. I'll let you get on, lovely. Shall we go and see how Debi is getting on? Again, a completely different style here, she had the burst stick, she was being a cave woman with her burnt sticks and her chalk, much nicer than classroom chalk. Oh, right!

DG: It makes a mess of your fingers.

JF: Does it make a mess of your fingers?

DG: I have been wiping as I've been going. See, control freak, I tell you.

JF: Organised.

DG: Organised.

JF: So we had our downhill, but it's downhill volcano skiing.

DG: That's the one.

JF: That's it.

DG: Yeah.

JF: It's easy to say.

DG: Volcano down...yeah, it's a tricky one. If you think it's hard to say you should try doing it.

JF: Oh yes! Aha, quite burny. Oh right.

DG: Quite burny, hot-hot burny.

JF: I'll let you describe what we've got here.

DG: Yes, what has happened here is...actually, I've got them going around the wrong way. Oh dearie me, never mind. We have various competitors taking part, we have a dragon, we have a Tobermory cat, we have a penguin from Dragon Loves Penguin. We have a little fox or possibly a wolf, who knows? We have one of the three little pigs, and they were all doing really, really well until the volcano started to erupt in the way that volcanoes do, and it gobbled out...am I allowed to say that? A big lump of magma or whatever it is volcanoes heave out...

JF: Spew.

DG: Spew. That's a lovely word. I think I prefer gob actually. Anyway, it's chucked that out and it has melted a path in the downhill run of whatever it is, the event.

JF: Yes.

DG: So there is now a great big hole which of course has turned into water which has meant that the mermaid who was really never going to be in the front running for winning the downhill volcano skiing event, because let's face it, here's how a mermaid goes; she goes...like that. It's really hard to ski if you're a mermaid because you can only ski on one ski. So actually she's going to win because the bottom of the volcano's all turned to water, so she's about to go under the finish flag.

JF: Lovely.

DG: You're looking at puzzled as it's possible for anyone to be.

JF: Do you know what? I also like...this to me looks like a gold medal as well.

DG: Oh yes.

JF: That's what you mean too, didn't you?

DG: Of course I did, thank you.

JF: It's meant to look like a gold medal.

DG: Thank you for that.

JF: We've got a question for you from our audience member and the microphone coming to you, sir.

Boy 1: How many books have you illustrated?

DG: Oh my goodness.

JF: How many books have you illustrated?

DG: Well, I have to say, that book, Dragon Loves Penguin, this one here, is book number 75. So that's an awful lot of books. Well, I think. I mean it's probably nothing like as many as my fellow illustrators here. But to me it's an awful lot of books.

JF: Well, and we established that Chris just feels compelled to illustrate all the time or pretty much most of the time. You've got five children that you've been bringing up over the years, have you had to be incredibly focused about it or is it fun to maybe escape from doing childcare things and go off and draw?

DG: It was a nice balance but I also quite like drawing things for the children because when they were very little they would say, well, my sons would say draw me maps, because they really liked treasure maps. So we would draw these elaborate great big treasure maps but they would ask for monsters and ships. Neither of which I was any good at drawing. And my daughters would ask me to draw this ridiculous thing but packing a suitcase to go on holiday into which we would throw all sorts of items. So this was a way of keeping my children quite quiet and also quite happy and also brushing up on my drawing skills if we were stuck. Also with a pen and pencil you're never bored.

JF: You'd just be straightforward. So if our viewers are looking at this Debi and they're thinking oh right, I've got a story, how can I incorporate this; any tips about what they might think? It's such an unusual brilliant sport?

DG: There's quite a lot happening in it. What I do if I'm trying to think of a story and I start with the picture is I start asking it questions. So I would say my first question would be what do the competitors feel like the night before they knew they were going to do the downhill volcano skiing event. Were they scared? Were they confident? Did they try and sabotage each other's event by sawing off bits of the skis? Or you could take it from what it was actually like to climb all the way to the top of that volcano, that stomach lurching moment as you push off with your skis and you think am I going to make it to the bottom or am I going to be a crispy critter before I get there? All of that.

You could take it from the point of view of any character you like. Or you could take it from the point of view of a polar explorer who was just crossing across the tundra and he goes what is that up there on the volcano! What are they doing!? There's lots of different ways into a story, none of which are straightforward.

JF: Brilliant. Well, thank you very much. Lots of food for thought. I'll let you continue. Thank you! So there we go, a wonderful imaginary sport clearly. Although it could take off, global warming and all of that. But that leads me to think again about sport, from our viewers here. Here's a question and from all of you out there; are you sporty?

Aud: Yeah.

JF: Yes! That's the right answer. We can't hear nodding. Yes, so you are sporty. Are you sporty out there? Yeah, knew that. Well, we have a person here who is extremely sporty to say the least, she is a professional athlete, a good time I think to welcome her, and our audience here all have a flag underneath each of their seats. So if you want to get your flags out, I think it'll be a lovely Commonwealth Class way to welcome our wonderful athlete and Commonwealth Class ambassador Eilidh Child, get waving everybody! Yey! Hello.

EC: Hiya.

JF: Isn't that lovely to see all their flags...

EC: That's beautiful, yeah.

JF: ...of the Commonwealth being waved. Oh, now, what do you think about this particular sport here?

EC: Yeah...

JF: Do you think you would've been any good at this?

EC: Well, I'm not the best skier which might lack...yeah, I'm also a bit of a scaredy-cat as well, so I don't think that would be my sport. I'm not bad at swimming though, so I might be alright when I get to the mermaid area. [chuckles]

JF: It looks a wee bit like you actually. So we know obviously, Eilidh, that you're brilliant at sport, but what about art? Was that something that you enjoyed when you were young?

EC: Yeah, I enjoyed it at school, I wasn't particularly great at it but I did enjoy it and my sister was very good at it, and my brother, so they got the art gene I think.

JF: And what about actually making up stories?

EC: Yeah, I loved English at school, and again, I think my sister took that talent as well because she's actually an author as well. She's got her own book out. So yeah...

JF: Your family's multi-talented.

EC: Yes, so she got the creative writing gene, I got the sport gene.

JF: But what I think's really interesting is today we're talking about enjoying drawing and making wonderful pictures like this. Then that encouraging people to think about stories; what about you as a professional athlete. It must be such a grind to keep going with all the training. I can hardly run for the bus, Eilidh, so I'm full of admiration. But when you're training do you have a vision? Do you have almost like a drawing or a picture in your mind of what you're hoping to achieve.

EC: Yeah, I mean a lot of athletes actually use visions to help them focus and help them actually compete and for me I've always got that vision of me, whatever my goal is perhaps that year of that target, so whether it's standing on top of a podium, whether it's running a certain time, I have that vision and that's what I am for when I'm training. Likewise when I compete, the night before I always visualise the race through in my head, so I know exactly what I'm going to do when I go out there and compete.

JF: Wow, how amazing. And when you're actually on those starting blocks are you thinking about things then or is it different situation?

- EC: It's autopilot really when you're on the starting blocks. It's almost a comfort zone; I do that all the time. So once I'm in the blocks it's like this is what I'm used to, I'm just going to go through and do what I do all the time.
- JF: Gaw, it's so exciting and nerve-wracking too, what do you think? Because we all see professional athletes like you on tele, but actually to talk to somebody and find out a bit about what it's like is so interesting. And what about in terms of honours and awards, tell us what you've won? Go on, don't be modest.
- EC: My first major honour was at the last Commonwealth Games in Delhi, I won a silver medal in the 400m hurdles then. And then more recently I got a bronze medal at the World Championships last year, the outdoor championships as part of the 4x4 relay. And just recently at the weekend there I won a bronze medal at the World Indoor Championships...
- JF: Wow.
- EC: ...as part of the 4x4 relay.
- JF: So all of that presumably comes into play with the Commonwealth Games...
- EC: Yeah.
- JF: ...looming up. How is the training going for that?
- EC: Yeah, it's going well. Everything's gearing towards that now. So yeah, it's just really exciting and it's a great motivation and training just to think that we've got our home Commonwealth Games and yeah, I just can't wait until that all starts.
- JF: Does that make a big difference here in Scotland?
- EC: It does, yeah. I actually went to visit the stadium yesterday and to know that the whole crowd is going to be Scottish and home supporters, it's just going to really help, the home crowd, and help us athletes get round.
- JF: Is it possible I wonder to pick out a career highlight if you look back on everything that you done?
- EC: Yeah, there's lots, but I think it was my Commonwealth silver in Delhi. It was my very first senior medal and I got to run around and do a lap of honour with the Scotland flag wrapped around me, and it was just such an incredible feeling to do that. And all those moments, that's what makes all the hard training and everything worthwhile, and for me, yeah, I'll just have those memories, they'll be with me forever.

JF: Wow. I want to know something else now that I've got you. Do you ever just kick back and be really lazy? Do you ever just sit around the house in a dressing gown watching rubbish tele?

EC: Yeah.

JF: Or are you always completely motivated?

EC: No. Well, my Saturday's my day off, so Saturday I always call it my cheat day and my rest day where I'll just not do very much and just lounge about, watch some rubbish tele and eat some chocolate. [chuckles]

JF: That's good to know, isn't it? She eats chocolate as well! But not too much.

EC: No, no.

JF: Debi's liking that. [laughter]

DG: Yeah.

EC: It's just on my cheat day.

DG: [voices overlap 35:45]

EC: No.

DG: Why do they hand those out at the end of races?

EC: I've never had them at the end of a race.

JF: What's that that's handed out?

DG: Tunnock's Teacakes.

JF: Oh right.

DG: I mean for heaven's sake, the last thing you'd want to eat at the end of a race.

JF: I think other teacakes are available.

EC: Yeah, I think I'm doing the wrong races; I've never had one of them given to me at the end of a race. [chuckles]

JF: I think it must be one of your fantasy visions.

DG: No, no, it happened.

JF: How are you getting on with this now? Oh, right, okay. What are you thinking now, Eilidh? You think possibly...

EC: I'm still not convinced. [chuckles]

DG: It's too dangerous, isn't it?

EC: Yeah. It's more of an extreme sport that, I think, isn't it really?

JF: Definitely.

DG: Yeah. Like running with fridges up Ben Nevis or all these nonsense things.

EC: Yeah, I'll just stick to the hurdles.

DG: That's hard enough.

JF: And tell us about your flag then.

DG: Well, it's the flag of the new Antarctica for the downhill and I just thought there are no winners in this event, just to survive is enough. So I thought instead of having lava pouring out of it I'd just have the stars, everybody is a star who competes.

JF: Nice once.

EC: Ah, I like that, yeah.

DG: A non-competitive sport.

JF: Something that I've learnt today, I'll just let you finish it if you've got a wee bit more to do, but it's something that I certainly think, along with everybody who's watching today, is just the whole idea of the flags and how important they are.

EC: Yeah.

JF: Certainly with you with the Olympics and Commonwealth Games you must always be seeing those flags.

EC: Yeah.

JF: Do you feel proud to be...

EC: It is, it's really nice and especially at the opening ceremonies when you carry the flag around and everybody knows which country it is. And I think it's really exciting, they always have them all the way around the stadium flying high. So yeah, it's a really nice honour.

JF: We had our own miniature version for you today. Thank you very much, Eilidh.

EC: Thank you very much.

JF: And very best of luck for gold medal glory. A huge round of applause for Eilidh Child.

EC: Thank you, thank you very much. [Applause]

JF: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Oh! We'll all be cheering her on, won't we? Absolutely. Now, I think this is time for us to say it's the end of the Illustration Slam. So lady and gentlemen, see what I did there, put down your materials, thank you very much and step away from the easels. We're going to have a final look at these three brilliant drawings and the flags you've come up with. Let's go back to Chris and have a wee look over here at what Chris has done. Oh, how lovely.

CR: Well, this is my new book obviously, created right here, now, before your very eyes. These are two inhabitants at the bottom of the garden. There's Burdock, he's a small gnome-like creature, he's made his house in a wellington boot that he found at the bottom of the garden. He's put in a nice front door and window and a thatched roof. This is his very good friend. She's called Dandelion. She has wings. I think she might be a flower fairy, I'm not sure.

JF: She's really cute.

CR: She lives up here in this nest-like tree and she's very good at collecting things. The little bits of paper that she finds around sweet wrappers.

JF: And let me just ask you about the flag?

CR: Well, that is Burdock's flag. He's discovered this, he found it thrown away at the bottom of the garden and he's made a flagpole for it, and there it is. It looks familiar, it looks like, I don't know, a pair of underpants.

JF: It looks very like a pair of underpants.

CR: He's very proud of it. That is the flag at the bottom of the garden. A pair of underpants.

JF: You're very eco-friendly. Thank you very much. And a quick look at yours. You've got your flag, that's fantastic. And Piet, let's see your flag.

PG: It's Winifred Music Garden flag.

JF: Brilliant.

PG: She sings music, so there's a music note turned into a flower.

JF: Wonderful, thank you very much indeed. What do you think? Aren't they amazing? I think we should have a huge round of applause and a cheer for these brilliant... [Applause]

Fantastic, thank you very much. Well, wherever you're watching I hope you're incredibly impressed and have been inspired to do your own thing too. Pencaitland Primary, what do you think? Big cheering?

Aud: Yeah!

JF: Yes! Fantastic. And terrific flags too. Do you think you might be inspired to do more? You might be inspired to do more? I'm so pleased. Well, thank you all very much indeed. You've worked extremely hard under unusual conditions. These guys are usually in different places doing this, not standing in front of an easel, and I think they've produced wonderful work, and I hope, as I say, we've inspired you to pick up whichever materials, pens, paints, pencils, charcoals, jotters, tablets, whatever you want to get going. And more importantly to use those visuals as starting points for your stories.

Now, if you would like to ask Debi, Chris or Piet more about their drawings and indeed their books, you're very, very, welcome to join in the Commonwealth Class online discussion. That will be at 12 noon, GMT. Stating the obvious, you'll know this; if you're watching this later on, on-demand, that's over, you can't join in that online discussion. But if you're watching live please do; we'd love to have you along.

And as well as watching all of the previous Authors Live events any time you can download the free learning resources to accompany this event from scottishbooktrust.com/authorslive. We will be back on the 22nd May at 11 o'clock in the morning with another event for P4-7s, this is great, looking at stars, scientific theories and stories with Lucy Hawking, that's Stephen Hawking's daughter. So visit our website, let us know you'll be watching. We want to have you along. Authors Live is a joint production by the Scottish Book Trust and BBC learning, it's funded by Creative Scotland. Please though, a huge, giant round of applause and cheering from everyone here and you out there, show your appreciation for Piet Grobler, Chris Riddell, Debi Gliori and Eilidh Child. Thank you, bye! [Applause]

Aud: [Cheering].