

Date:

Author/Interview subject: Jon Klassen

Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth

Other speakers:

JF Hello there everybody, I am Janice Forsyth, how are you? Glad to hear you're feeling good! A very warm welcome to Authors Live, I'm sure you know by now, this is a series of really brilliant world-class events which are streamed live into all sorts of places, schools, homes, libraries, all kinds of venues all over the country and we're just so blooming pleased that you have joined us right now. These events are brought to you by the Scottish Book Trust in association with BBC Scotland.

Now, in the studio today I am not alone, I like a wee bit of company, particularly for some very, very charming good looking school pupils in terrific uniforms, I'm sure you'd like to have a wee look at them. They're from West Primary School in Paisley. But of course we're joined by all of you all over the country, so hello to Bantaskin Primary School in Falkirk, hi there! Thanks for joining us. To the primary school with the coolest name surely in the universe; [Cool 01:115] Primary School in the Scottish Highlands. A great name. Oxford Elementary School, where could they be from? Oxford! And Hexthorpe Primary School in Doncaster, you're all extremely welcome! Hello! Hello! Would you like to see the really cool pupils from West Primary School in Paisley? Right, they're going to look into cameras and wave to you right now, have a good old wave! See, I told you they were lovely, didn't I? Aren't they fab, and they're all waving back to you. Great!

Now, today's event is particularly cool and exciting because we're joined by an award winning picture book author and illustrator who's come all the way from Los Angeles in America, especially for... That's great West Primary, isn't it?

Aud Yes

JF Yes, it is! It's very exciting. And as well as producing some of the darkest and funniest picture books we've seen in recent years, I'm a huge fan of them, he has

also spent time working on films that you have probably seen, including one of my favourite animated feature film, Coraline, and also Kung Fu Panda. Tons to talk about today.

His picture books are well-loved by older readers, as well as wee titchy ones, because there's so much going on between the lines. Beautiful pictures to look at, but lots of darkly comic mischievous stuff going on there too. So he'll be telling us about how he works in animation, picture books, why he loves them so much and giving us a really brilliant insight into how he does what he does, how he does the drawings. So ladies and gentlemen, are you all set?

Aud Yeah.

JF Are you all set out there? Yes, you are. Good. Are you ready to give the biggest, warmest, loudest welcome ever to our guest?

Aud Yeah.

JF Thank you very much. Let's do it now, a huge welcome to Jon Klassen.

Aud Yeah. [applause]

JK Thank you very much for coming everybody. We've got some stuff to show you, we're going to do some book stuff; we're going to show some film stuff first. When I was done this kind of school I went to high school and then when I was done high school I went to school for animation. Do you guys know what animation means? You guys know what animation means?

Aud Yes.

JK Well, I went to school for that and I thought I wanted to be an animator, and that means moving characters around a lot. But it turns out that animation takes a lot of drawing, you have to make very many drawings to do one thing. If I'm going to reach over here that takes one, two, three, four, five...all these drawings, and it's very boring, and I was very bad at it. But I still wanted a job, I wanted to eat food that I bought with my money, and so I went to school for animation anyway and I could get other jobs inside animation.

And so I worked on a movie called Coraline drawing things that needed to be done for the film. So I didn't do the animation, because like I said, that was boring to me. But the characters and the sets and the chairs and the washing machines and the shovels and everything needed to be drawn first before we could do that, before we could make the film. And Coraline was a movie made with puppets. Coraline herself in the film was about that tall, and so all the sets needs to be as

big as that for her. And so her bedroom was probably about as tall as what that slide show is right there, a little bit taller than me, but we had to draw many, many drawings for her bedroom, different times of day, different parts of the story. It was really, really nice, although it took a long, long time; Coraline took three years to make. It takes a long time to make all these sets, to film it all and then to do it again because you've made many mistakes.

And Coraline was a very pretty movie because there were two different kinds of houses in it. There was a really boring house, and that's the house I got to draw a lot of, because I like to draw boring things. And then there was a very special house that she went into through a tunnel and a little door, and that got to be a nicer house. These were two old ladies that lived in the basement for no reason at all. And this was a theatre that their apartment into when she went through the tunnel and it was much bigger, and there were hundreds of little dogs in it, and they had to build all those little dogs, and we had to draw all those little dogs, and it took a long time. This was a part of her set going downstairs in the middle of the night where she heard a light on. A lot of times these things get done and then they'll go all the way into the movie and then at the very end the movie's too long and they have to cut them out, and that happens all the time and then you're very sad. But that's life.

This one was for a mice circus, there was a bunch of little mice that ran a circus, and they all had to sit in the bleachers and they made these little patterns and there were hundreds of these little mice and they all had to move at the same time. The mice were about this big but that circus probably wouldn't even fit in this room it was so big. It was very big and very scary and very expensive.

This was to figure out a lot of the colours for the movie. Before you want to build anything and spend all the time and work on building all the stuff you want to make sure it all looks good together. And so you can do very simple drawings like this to see if a raincoat is going to look good with the house, is going to look good with the trees and the hills and everything else. And so you can make very simple drawings very quickly and say well, this looks good, we like that yellow or we don't like that yellow, so we can change it now instead of building a little jacket for her and then realising you don't like the yellow.

These were mice and they all had hats the way I liked them, but then we couldn't afford the hats, so they don't have hats in the movie! They have little hats like this sometimes, but they all had their own instruments; they were a lot of fun. And then all the different little props, all little chairs and frying pans and tables for the film had to be drawn first, and then we would bring this to the shop, and the shop would build them very small. I would bring them the little drawing of the chair and

they would build the chair and they would come to me with the chair and say is this a good chair? And I'd say that's not a good chair, go back and do another chair, and they'd do another chair. And it was like that for about two years and no one was friends at the end.

And these were the posters for the film. Laika Studios made Coraline and we were starting out as a studio, and so usually the people who draw the chairs for the film aren't the same people who draw the posters. But for Coraline we did draw the posters for it. And so this was the first poster that we did, and then this was the second sketch for it, and then we actually built the set for her and she looked through the door and we photographed the whole thing for the final poster.

Coraline like I said took about three years to do and it was a long time, but not as long as Kung Fu Panda took. Kung Fu Panda took five years to make and it was really, really pretty and a really fun film to work on. I did a lot of drawings for it. There were dream sequences on Kung Fu Panda where he goes to sleep and the dreams and it looks different when he dreams than the regular film, and a lot of the artwork I did were for the times when he dreams because it was flatter, it was more cartoony and it was done actually without computer animation, it was done with drawings instead, the way how we learn how to do it in school with a very slow...one every twelve seconds kind of drawings.

Kung Fu Panda and Kung Fu Panda 2 together, I worked on both of those and like I say, these probably took longer than you have been alive to make. And at the end of that I thought these things take a long time, maybe I can do something that doesn't take so long. And so I started to try and do books in the evening time, just on my own, and books were a lot of fun and they didn't take nearly as long and I got to do whatever I wanted on them. The films, there are hundreds of people who work on the films and if you have an idea you have to yell very loudly and then it usually doesn't even get heard anyway. There's a panda in this one while we're showing it, can you see him? You can see him. [laughs]

But Kung Fu Panda, once it was finished I decided to go off on my own a little bit and make books, and those were the kinds of things we're going to talk about now.

JF Brilliant. Well, you want to...

JK We can go through the book, yeah.

JF Yeah.

JK The first book I made, well, not the first book I made but one of the first ones I made was about a lost hat, and it went very well so we made another one about a lost hat. And it's called This Is Not My Hat. And it's about a fish who steals a hat; he's not a good guy. Well, he's okay, he's alright. So we're going to read this is not my hat, are you guys ready for this?

Aud Yes.

JK I hope so because you're not going anywhere! Alright, so here we have a little fish and he's swimming through the black water and he's wearing a little tiny hat and he says this hat is not mine, I just stole it. And then we turn the page and there's a very big fish and he's asleep and it says I took it from a big fish; he was asleep when I did it. And then you turn the page again, and he probably won't wake up for a long time.

Now, is the fish awake?

Aud Yeah.

JK Yes, he is, he's very awake. And then we turn the page again and it says and even if he does wake up, he will probably not notice that it's gone. Is he noticing that it's gone?

Aud Yeah.

JK Right, so, so far we've been wrong both times. And then we turn the page again and it says and even if he does notice that it's gone he probably won't know it was me who took it. What do we think?

Aud Yeah.

JK Does he know? [laughs] He probably knows. And even if he does guess it was me he won't know where I'm going. Now, there's only two ways you can go in a book because a book is flat; you can go that way or you can go that way. Sometimes you can go up and down, but we're not going to talk about that right now. So which way did the little fish go?

Aud That way.

JK He went this way. Which way did the big fish go?

Aud That way.

JK Right. So I think we can already guess which way this story is going. And here's our little fish again, and he says but I will tell you where I'm going. I'm going

where the plants grow big and tall and close together, and it's very hard to see in there; nobody will ever find me. So, what do we think? Is anyone going to find him?

Aud Yes.

JK [laughs] Probably! And here we have a crab but it's still the little fish talking and he's says there is someone who saw me already, but he said he wouldn't tell anyone which way I went. So I'm not worried about that. It's going very well for this little fish. And now we have the little fish again and he's in some taller plants now, he's been swimming for a while, and he says I know it's wrong to steal a hat, I know it does not belong to me, but I am going to keep it. It was too small for him anyway, it fits me just right. It's a good reason to steal something, right? And it does look pretty good on him, I have to say, not to compliment my own illustrations too much. And now he's by the big plants and he says look, I made it, where the plants grow big and tall and close together. I knew I was going to make it. Can you see the little fish going in the plants?

Aud Yes.

JK Can we see the big fish? [laughs]

Aud Yes.

JK Nobody will ever find me. And now it's just plants. Can anyone see anything in those plants?

Aud No.

JK No, I can't see. What do you think is going on behind those plants? Any number of things could be going on behind those plants. If you look at that for a long time you might be able to see something. I didn't draw it but there might be something in there. And now the big fish goes back past the crab who's wondering about this whole day and what he might have done. And then the big fish is back home, back asleep wearing his little blue hat. And the plants aren't saying anything.

So hands up if we think the little fish is okay? There's one hand, two hands. Hands up if the little fish is not okay. Yeah, that's my theory as well. I mean he might be okay back there, but I don't think he is either.

This book, it took a long time to make compared to some things, but it took about eight or nine months to make which was much shorter than a film, and also I didn't have to draw anybody moving. You can say they're moving but you don't have to show them moving, you just have to have bubbles behind them and then

they're moving as fast as you want them to. I did a number of other books, some that I wrote myself and some that other people wrote, and now we're going to see one that someone else wrote named Mac Barnett. He wrote a book about two boys who did a hole named Sam and Dave. This is a brand new book, we haven't shown it very much, but we're going to try it out. Do you want to try this one out?

Aud Yeah.

JK This is called Sam and Dave Dig a Hole. It's a pretty appropriate title. And there's a cat and a dog and an apple tree, and there's our apple tree and it starts out the book. And it's very important this apple tree, it doesn't say anything but you should watch out for it. And on the very first page we have Sam and Dave and they're both walking out of their house and we should make a list of the things we're seeing here because they are going to be very important. We have an apple tree, a dog, Sam and Dave, a cat with a red collar, a flower pot with a red flower and a weathervane with a chicken on top or a rooster I guess. So I think now we're ready to start the book, we've taken note of all those things.

And here we have Sam and Dave next to their apple tree, and it says on Monday Sam and Dave dug a hole. These are very complicated illustrations. When should we stop digging, asked Sam. We're on a mission, said Dave. We won't stop digging until we find something spectacular. And they get a little deeper. The hole got so deep that their heads were underground, but they still had not found anything spectacular. We need to keep digging said Dave. Do we see anything spectacular?

Aud Yes.

JK Do they see anything spectacular?

Aud No.

JK Does the dog see anything spectacular?

Aud Yeah.

JK Well, that's something at least. But they do keep digging.

They took a break. Dave drank chocolate milk out of the canteen; Sam ate animal cookies he had wrapped in their grandfather's kerchief. Maybe said Dave, the problem is that we are digging straight down. Yes, said Sam, that could be the problem. I think we should dig in another direction said Dave. Yes, said Sam, that is a good idea.

So they go a little to the right. I have a new idea, said Dave, let's split up. Really, said Sam. Just for a little while, said Dave. It will help our chances. So does the dog see anything here that they don't see?

Aud Yeah.

JK Does Sam and Dave see anything yet?

Aud No.

JK So Dave went one way and Sam went another, but they still had not found anything spectacular. Maybe we should go back to digging straight down said Dave. Yes, said Sam, that is a good idea. Have they seen anything yet?

Aud No.

JK Is the dog getting fed up?

Aud Yeah.

JK [laughs] Sam and Dave ran out of chocolate milk but they kept digging. They shared the last animal cookie, but they kept digging. After a while Sam sat down, Dave, he said, I am tired; I cannot dig any more. I am tired too said Dave, we should take a rest. Now, does the dog see something here?

Aud Yes.

JK The dog is fed up here. He's had a long day. They haven't found anything and he's known it, but he is not going to come away empty-handed so he is going to get that bone. Sam and Dave fell asleep. Is that dog getting that bone?

Aud Yes.

JK Where is the top of that dog? Where is the bone? We're going to find out. The bone has fallen and the dog is watching and now everyone is falling. Sam and Dave are falling, the shovels are falling. Sam and Dave fell down, down, down, and they're beginning to wake up and see that they're falling. And they landed in the soft dirt. Well, said Sam. Well, said Dave. That was pretty spectacular. And they went inside for chocolate milk and animal cookies.

Now, we should take a look at this picture, what do we have here? We have a duck, weathervane, we have a flower pot with a blue flower, we have a cat with a blue collar and we have a pear tree. Did Sam and Dave get home?

Aud No.

JK Did they go inside their own house?

Aud No.

JK Do we know what's in that house?

Aud No.

JK No, and we won't because that is the end of that book. We'll never know where Sam and Dave ended up, but the dog knows that at least they're not home. But that is the end of Sam and Dave Dig a Hole. I hope you like that book.

JF Fantastic.

JK Yeah, those are the two books that I brought to show.

JF Wonderful, thank you very much indeed.

JK Thank you very much for listening to me.

JF Yey! I think a huge round of applause, don't you? [applause] Do you want to come and sit down and show us some more...

JK Yeah...

JF Yeah, brilliant. Just amazing and I think what's so interesting is that those books appeal to your age, don't they? And they appeal to younger children and also older children, people even as old as I am. I think your mums and dads would like those books, don't you think so?

Aud Yeah.

JF Because there's so much going on there, the illustrations are beautiful. But as we saw with the big fish after the wee fish and whatever goes on and the little crab giving the game way, it is quite dark, isn't it? Is that something that you think about beforehand, when you think of the story think rather than everything be all cheerful I'm going to make people laugh but I'm going to be in this dark place as well?

JK I don't think it happens on purpose but I always liked scary books when I was little. I don't like scary movies or scary TV; I get really scared very quickly, even still now. I turn it off or I leave the room or something. But I always like scary picture books. I always go to the library and get scary picture books and take them out and look at them. I couldn't believe there was a scary story meant for me in the language that I wanted to read it in with the pictures like that. So I

would go through it... And you can scare yourself really nicely with a picture book or with any book, because you can always close it. If you're getting too scared you can close it and come back to it later. With a movie or a show you can't really pause it or leave. I guess you can, but you don't often. You're being dragged through it, and that's what's so scary. But with a book you can turn the page when you feel like it and it's a much quieter, nicer way to get scared. So I always like that. But with these ones I feel like it's not so much that you want to make a dark story, you just want a story where something happens. And I can't really think of a lot of stories that don't have some dark turn, but still have something happen in it.

JF Yeah, like all the best fairy stories are Roald Dahl, all of that, go to those really dark sides. But I guess, kids, give us a cheer or a yes, it's a difficult to know how to...give us a yes if you think this is true. As you get older do you think that kids go oh, picture books, they're not for us? What do you think?

Aud Yeah.

JF Yeah? Well, it's interesting, isn't it, because there I'm saying that those books we just looked at, I could spend hours going back to those books. What would you say about that then? About not just thinking that picture books are for babies and small children?

JK Well, I always liked picture books, I think I read them longer than most kids do because I think that you can tell certain kinds of stories that you can't tell in regular kinds of books, in chapter books. I can't think of how I would write this fish book or even the Sam and Dave one. If you wrote the Sam and Dave story as a regular book it'd be kind of boring because you'd have to say there was a diamond next to Sam and Dave but they didn't see it, and that would be a very boring story to read. But here you can show it in the pictures and then the text can say one thing and then the pictures can show another. And so it's a real way of telling a story and it's not just for young people; I think it's just a different way of telling a story, just the same as books and movies or anything else.

JF So you can mix it up?

JK You can mix it up and they're very easy to make. They're actually a lot of fun to make. The two things working together; I'm not especially a great writer, and my illustrations always are here and there, but the two things together can tell a story. If you want to draw something very simple and then write something very simple, together they can make a much better story.

JF Brilliant, great. Well, I think we've got some questions from some of the children here, from West Primary School. And the first one's over here, is it Emily? Where's Emily? Hi, Emily.

Girl Hi.

JF Hello. Wait till we get the microphone and we can hear you properly, thank you.

Girl Why did you want to become an illustrator?

JK I think I wanted to become an illustrator because I wasn't much good at anything else. I didn't like math very much, I liked drawing, but I didn't know what kind of job there could be for people who draw. You think of people who paint and artists and things and they're always very hungry in their apartment somewhere in Paris or something and that didn't sound very nice. But I wanted a job. And I like working with people and I like working on stories and I always like books and movies and everything else, and so that was a job.

Being an illustrator specifically took a little while to come to. You can try other jobs out before you realise that that's the kind of job you want. I had to try a lot of different jobs before books, but book seemed to fit. So yeah, being an illustrator after a while just seemed like the only thing left. If one day books don't work anymore I think I'll have to probably not eat anymore! [laughs]

JF Brilliant, great question, thank you very much. And now I think we have a question from the other side, from Lee. Give us a wave, Lee, we'll get the microphone. Thank you.

Boy Who inspired you as a child?

JF Who inspired you as a child?

JK I think lots of people did. I don't think that I knew when I was a little, I had a lot of books but I never met any authors or illustrators, so I don't know if I knew they were people, you know what I mean? When you pick up a book I don't know if I ever thought there was a person behind it. I think I just thought it fell from the sky like that and you don't really think of someone in their own house making a book. But I think people who were doing what they liked really inspired me. I think even when you're a kid and you can see that people have jobs doing things that they really like. They aren't just things that you do because someone tells you to do them, but you meet people every now and then who are doing jobs that they really enjoy and they choose to do them and they're getting better at them, or they might leave them to do something they like better. Watching people do what they really enjoy I think has always been really interesting, because I don't think

that you know it's a choice when you're young. You think that you have to do one thing or the other. But if you find out you're good at something there's usually a job there somewhere. You can find ways of making that what you do all the time, and I think that was really inspiring.

JF There's certainly lots of smiles in our audience here, and I'm sure wherever you're watching too, lots of children smiling at the thought of actually being able to do something that you really enjoy, because if you can find that, that's incredibly important, isn't it?

JK Yeah, I mean kids, sometimes we talk about drawing and we talk about whether they like to draw or they like to write, and there are so many different things you can get a job. Like animation; I wasn't great at animating. Animating is a whole job on its own and just because you like to draw, because you're even good at drawing doesn't mean you're necessarily a good animator. You can draw someone beautifully doing something really badly. It's a tricky job.

JF And as you said it can be quite boring.

JK Well, I think for me it was quite boring. But that's an important distinction. If you think something is interesting that means you'll probably get better at it because you'll do it over and over again. And I just don't think I was interested in animation, so you just don't try. Whatever you end up trying really hard at probably you can get a job at because you're probably very interested in it. But with illustrating books you can be sort of good at it because there's so many things going on with the story, you can draw very simple shapes. The fish in the book isn't drawn very complicated but he looks guilty because you say he's guilty. I don't know what a guilty fish looks like in real life, I'm not sure there are any. But because you say he stole a hat and you have him looking backwards, that means he's guilty. He looks guilty to you then. And there's very small simple shapes, things you can draw now can tell these stories, they're just circles, his eyes are just a circle inside a circle and you guys can draw that just as easily. So it's not so much the illustration as it is solving the problem of it; how do we make this thing look like it's telling a story. And that's a very different job than illustrating necessarily.

JF Yeah, I think that's one of the great things about your books, particularly that story, because you've got that big, basic shape, haven't you, of the big fish. And it's just that tiny thing of the eyes moving just a fraction one side or the other, and you know so much, because all of you here with us today, and I'm sure wherever you're watching, I'm sure you were answering John's questions about does he

know and is he safe, and all of that. And it's quite difficult to describe, you've just got to look at it.

JK That's why picture books are great though. I think to keep reading them is because it's communication, it's a different kind of communication in storytelling and I think it's still great for people of any age to do it.

JF And although we talk about it being dark, it's very funny as well, it has to be said. Now, we have another question, back on the other side, I think this is Katrina. Katrina can wave and we'll get the microphone so we can hear you. Thank you.

Girl What was your favourite book as a child?

JF Ah, what was Jon's favourite book as a child?

JK My favourite book when I was a child was one called Sam and the Firefly. I'm not sure it's around...you can get it some places now, but it was an old book when I had it, I think it belonged to my dad and he had it in his house. It was about an owl and a firefly, and this owl meets this firefly in the middle of the night and he finds out that the firefly can make lines with his light, and he says you know what you should do, you should fly around the sky and you should follow me and make these lines that I make. And he started spelling words; he would spell hello and yes and no and things like that, and the firefly didn't know he could do that. And he's very excited about it and the owl's really proud that he showed him how to do this, but almost immediately the firefly leaves and he starts causing trouble with this. He starts telling planes to go up and down and cars to stop and go and things start crashing, and the firefly's very happy with this but the owl is worried that he's maybe created a bit of a monster.

And the firefly eventually finds a hotdog man and instead of hot he writes cold over the word hot on his sign, and all the people leave. And the hot dog man is very upset and he puts the firefly in a jar and he puts him in the back of his truck and he drives out into the country, into the night. And the owl is watching all of this and he's horrified, and so he follows the truck and the man to see what he's going to do to this firefly trapped in this jar. And the truck suddenly stalls on a railroad track, it stops working right on the side of the railroad track, and there's a train coming, and they don't know what they're going to do. And so the owl picks up the jar with the firefly in it and crashes it against the tracks and he says you know what to do, firefly, you go and do what you know you should do. And so the firefly writes stop in the sky in big letters, and he's finally done something good with this thing that he's learnt how to do. And the train stops just before it hits the truck, and then they're friends and everything is okay.

I like the book a lot because it had an interesting story, but I look at it now and it's such a complicated thing to do, to show this firefly learning how to do all these words and everything, it's actually a very complicated series of pictures, but it was so simple. And when I was even younger than you I knew what was going on, and that's hard to do as a bookmaker, to make something that complicated into something very simple. And it's a very pretty book, it all takes place at night and fireflies are very pretty and that was my favourite book, it's still I think one of my favourite books.

JF And that sounds great and it's also so interesting to hear you say that you have to keep practising and thinking about it, because I'm sure a lot of the children here today and watching, wherever they are, do draw. Do you draw? Yeah.

Aud Yeah.

JF Do you like to draw and write stories? And it's the idea of maybe you can't quite work out what to do next, but it's so interesting to hear somebody like you, you do this for your profession but I imagine you're still learning every single day.

JK Oh yeah, that's the fun part; you don't want a job that you know how to do already because it's boring already. Every day you forget everything you learn, or those new books. Once you finish a book you've done it but then you don't really have a lot of lessons to apply to the next book. You start from scratch and it's really nice because you have to learn all over again. But for every book that you put out there's maybe ten or twenty books that you've tried that didn't work, and that's important.

JF Really, that's many?

JK Oh yeah. But it's just important that you can...it's very nice to be able to put things out that you know are okay, that work. But it's also a great luxury to not show your mistakes to anybody. I have lots of mistakes, you get to look nice and put out you book full of the finished drawings, but there's lots of stuff in the garbage as well that you wouldn't want to show you guys because you wouldn't like it.

JF See, that's good to know though, isn't it? What you're seeing isn't always perfect. Talking of things going wrong, I'm going to let you into a secret, I think my little earpiece has stopped working which tells me how much time we've left. So maybe somebody from behind the scenes can give me a big wave at some point. Oh, I think it is working, so that is good, that is the main thing. But maybe you could be a little bit louder. You see, it's the secrets of television, what's going on behind the scenes. Yes, indeed.

In terms of inspiration, we heard about that early book, but every day, I mean as you're just going about your normal life, are ideas coming to you. Like for example, you're coming over here to Scotland, might that give you some kind of inspiration for a story or a certain atmosphere?

JK It sort of works like that. I think you store those things up anyway, the things that you're going through now, trips you're taking or days that you have, you'll remember them always. And so you don't really know that you're coming up with ideas for stories necessarily right now. But there could be something that just comes to you. If you have an idea for a story you could say well, I had this one day that felt like that, and you can use it. Thinking about ideas for stories is very hard. When someone sits you down and says think of a story, if that's an assignment you have to do it's very hard because that doesn't just happen like that. For this book and for a lot of the other books, for the fish book it happened that I liked the idea of someone telling us a story, the fish was telling us a story, there wasn't a narrator saying once upon a time a fish stole a hat; you don't say it like that. You say the fish is talking and he says I stole this hat. And we can have a lot of fun with that because now we know that he's wrong. If we're watching the big fish wake up and he says that fish isn't going to wake up, then that's your story.

And so it's not so much that you have an idea for a story about a fish who stole a hat, because that can be a very boring book just as easily. It's most about how you're writing it. Once you figure out that the fish is talking to us, and then at the end he won't be talking any more, and we don't know why, but we hope we know why, that's more of how you think of the story. And then once you've thought of that idea you can say well, alright, now, what do fish look like and what's the water I like? I grew up in Ontario in Canada and there's lakes and things, and lake water, when you get even a little bit further down in the deep it gets black; it's very dark water. And so I like the idea of black water instead of blue water. And so things like that you just...you don't know you're coming up with story ideas when you're looking at things, but you're storing them away anyway. You're just remembering everything.

JF Is that your hat? I'm only joking.

JK This hat that I'm wearing?

JF Yeah.

JK No, I stole it from...

JF I thought that was possibly the case. Now, will you show us how to do some of these drawings, how you go about it?

JK Yeah, would you guys like to see how some of this stuff is done?

JF Would you like to see that?

Aud Yeah.

JK We can do some drawings.

JF Yeah, that'll be great.

JK Okay.

JF Yeah, thank you very much.

JK Yeah, no problem, we'll see if we can do this. Part of what you can do too, computers are really good at this stuff now and you can make lots of mistakes and fix them on the computer; they're very good at that. But this is a very simple way of doing these kinds of pictures, just to try them out. When I rough out the books before I make the good copies of them you have to do practice runs where you make sure the story's working well. And you can't do those kinds of drawings too slowly, because then you'd never make any changes and you'd have a bad story.

So for this one we're going to draw the crab from that last book, and since that last book was on black I've filled the whole picture with black. You can make new layers in computers that can help you change only certain parts of the picture, but this crab is made up of very simple shapes. He's just got a body like that, and then he's got claws, like that. There's one claw. Then there's another claw. And he's got four little feet. Some illustrators when they decide to make a book about animals or anything they like to go to the library or go on the computer and do lots of research about what these animals might look like and what their lives are like. And that's very good; you get to learn a lot about crabs. But I don't do that. This crab probably doesn't look like anything you've ever seen. If you looked up a crab on the internet I don't think it would look like this crab. But if I say it's a crab, actually the book doesn't even say it's a crab, so it can be whatever we want it to be. I'm saying it's a crab.

So we have our crab shape up here and he's all got his legs and his feet and everything, but we have to colour him in. And so we're going to hide him for a second, and then we're going to bring him back. So with this brush we can rub in the colour, very simple shapes, but they make a crab. And there's his claw, and

there's his little feet, and there's his other claw. Now, we're not done yet because this crab doesn't have eyes. So we can give him some eyes on another layer. First the white parts of the eyes. So there's one eye, and two eyes, and we've got to pick a colour for those eyes, so we're going to go for like a lightish yellow, almost white, but not quite white. And you hide those again and then you bring in those eye shapes, just like that. See, very simple shapes, you guys could totally draw this crab. But now we're going to draw the pupils and the pupils are the most important part for storytelling, because you can tell a lot of what a character's thinking about just by the pupils. Which way the eyes are looking can tell you lots about them.

Usually if you tell a lie to your parents they know that you're lying because of what your pupils are doing. And this crab, now, he has pupils but we can change those if we want to. This crab's looking right at us and he can be thinking any number of things. If he's worried that a rock is going to fall on him, he might look like that. If we're thinking that he's being chased by somebody from this direction he might look that way. If he's being shouted at someone he might be looking the other way, very slowly. [chuckles] And if he's feeling bad about anything he might have done he might look down at the ground the way you would, just like this. So if you asked this crab...this crab's looking right at you and you say crab, did you finish your broccoli? And he says yes, and then he goes like this; probably he didn't finish his broccoli and you know it now.

But you can do that, illustration is so much more about what you're choosing to do with these shapes than anything you're good at drawing. You can get better at drawing your whole life, but what you're choosing to draw and how you're choosing to put these shapes in order is so much more what illustration is about and that's why I like it so much, is because it's very, very simple elements and shapes that can make people do whatever you want, it's really fun.

We can do another animal if we want?

JF Yeah.

JK Yeah? We can do a turtle; the other book has a turtle and he's my favourite guy in the book.

JF Maybe just a very quick one if possible.

JK Yeah, sure thing. Turtles are easy, you can make them wrong all sorts of ways and they still look like a turtle, because a turtle has this, then he has that, then he's got four legs...actually I'm going to re-do that head a little bit. There we go. Four little legs, some turtles have tails, but I don't like them, we're not going to do

them. Then you can choose a green from all the greens you can find, then you choose a little brush for yourself, and you bring that turtle in just like that. You can colour him in, big shapes. I like big shapes, some people like to draw with lines, but I like to do them with shapes because you can see them from far away. When you're making books for kids in classes they're sometimes sitting far away, and so you can see the big shapes from far away. And this turtle has eyes the same as the crab does, they're a bit different. And we choose white for the eyes again. And which way is this turtle looking? Do you think he's looking this way? We can always change it. Let's have him looking that way. This turtle is walking in that direction very slowly probably. Turtles don't get very much done very quickly. And maybe this turtle is also wearing a hat, maybe he's going to a wedding and he's late for the wedding and everybody's waiting and he's like I'm getting married, so you have to wait. And there's him and his hat, and he's late for his wedding.

JF Gorgeous. I think Jon's got a thing about hats, hasn't he?

JK I do have a thing about hats.

JF Yeah.

JK I don't know what it is but I like them.

JF Hats are great. Well, thank you very much indeed, I can't believe the time has evaporated, it's been amazing. Thank you very much, Jon.

JK Thank you very much for having me and thank you for coming you guys.

JF Well, before you give him a huge round of applause let me just remind you all that as well as watching all of the previous Authors Live events any time you can also download the free learning resources, you can continue to learn all about everything we've been talking about today. You'll find those at the website, scottishbooktrust.com/authorslive. And audience, have you been inspired then to go back and continue with your own drawing? Yeah, I can see lots of nodding. Can I hear a cheer? Yeah?

Aud Yeah.

JF And you out there too, I hope we've given you lots of inspiration to get on with making your own really brilliant picture books, and to keep doing it for as long as possible. Authors Live, I hope you've enjoyed this and I hope you've watched the rest as well and will continue to watch. It was a joint production, Scottish Book Trust and BBC Scotland Learning, it's supported by Creative Scotland. But I think what we should do, if we had caps or hats we could doff them to our wonderful

guest, Jon. I think we should have a huge round of applause for Jon and his marvellous cap, thank you very much indeed! Thank you. [applause]

JK Thank you.