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Author/Interview subject: Liz Pichon

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Other speakers:

JF Hello there, I'm Janice Forsyth, a huge warm welcome to Authors Live! Now, today I'm not on my own. Today I have with me some wonderful pupils from Rhu Primary in Argyll and Bute and Sanderson Vale Primary in East Lothian. And if you have a little look at our set, hmm, you might just have a clue as to the person that we are going to meet today. Yes, the fabulous doodling style, the wonderfully talented author and illustrator Liz Pichon, who's responsible for the phenomenally successful...I know you love to read them, the Tom Gates series of books. So let's have a massive round of applause, wherever you are out there, and right here for Liz Pichon! [applause]

They're great, aren't they?

LP Fantastic, a good welcome.

JF I know.

LP Thank you.

JF It's lovely to have you along. What are you going to be doing for us today?

LP Well, firstly it's a pleasure to be here, it's fantastic. So what we're going to do today is obviously I think under the circumstances we ought to do some drawing and maybe a bit of doodling as well. And I'm going to read from the books and I'm going to show you how to do some special drawings as well. And I'm also going to get the members of the audience here to help make a special Authors Live monster.

JF An Authors Live monster; do you fancy that boys and girls?

Aud Yes.

JF Yeah? Fancy that? Yes!

LP Why not?

JF I don't think we've ever had an Authors Live monster before, so that's going to be a first. Also, well, first of all, make sure if you haven't got organised we are going to be doing some doling. It's quite difficult to say. Much easier to do. So if you haven't got a pencil, pen, piece of paper, you've just got a few moments to grab it now. So please do that because we're going to have such fun doing it.

But also of course some classes and schools have a Twitter feed. So if you have Twitter in your class or school you can ask a question of Liz. And you can do it right now, just use the hashtag #asklizpichon. It's that easy. And actually we've got somebody in early asking a question which I'm going to ask you right now, Liz.

LP Okay, go on.

JF Here we go. Joseph from Ashfield, hiya Joseph, says what was your favourite book to write?

LP Ah, that's a really good question. Do you know, it's really tricky because it's always the book that I've just finished. It's like choosing your favourite child, you can't do it. So it's always the book that I've just finished is usually my favourite. And as soon as I've finished writing the book then in my head I'm already thinking about the next one and what I can do.

JF So the most recent one is?

LP It probably is, yeah, the most recent one. It's got the most foil on it particularly.

JF Brilliant. Okay, brilliant question, thank you very much. Well look, I think we'll waste no more time and I'll let you get on with it, Liz.

LP Excellent.

JF Thank you.

LP Fantastic. Well, here we go. So I'm going to stand up for this bit. So I'm going to show you a few slides, so let's start the first slide then, shall we? Here we are, welcome to the brilliant world of Tom Gates. So I thought that you probably expected to be coming along here to have a nice relaxing morning and I was going to do all the talking and you were just going to sit down and just listen to me. Well, you've got another thing coming! Because I am going to get you to do some drawing and doodling. So are you up for doing that?

Aud Yes!

LP Excellent. Or if you like, we could sit here and we could do some very tricky maths homework. Anyone fancy doing some tricky maths homework?

Aud No!

LP Do you know, some kids actually yeah, yeah, I'd quite like that. It wasn't me when I was at school. So here we go. I'm going to tell you a little bit about Tom. So when I was writing Tom I kind of imagined in my head that he was about nine or ten years old. And he's not what I call naughty. He's just a little bit pesky. And he gets very easily distracted in class by things like drawing and doodling.

So him and his best mate...do you know remember him?

Aud Derek.

LP Yes, it's Derek. Let's have a look. There's Derek, and there they are. Derek and Tom are both... And they're a band together as well. And their favourite band in the whole wide world is this band here. Do you remember? And they're called Dude3. And they also really like to do special tricks. And one of Tom's favourite tricks is...I don't know if any of you have played it? Let's have a look. It's doing the wafer trick.

Now, has anybody ever played that? Have you tried that at home? No? You might have done? Some of you have, yeah. So if you don't know how to do it this is what you do and this is the kind of thing that I used to get up to too. So the best part about it is you get a wafer, and then you unwrap it, and you can do other biscuits as well. And then the best bit is you eat the wafer, and then you wrap it back up really carefully and you leave it on a plate for some poor unsuspecting person to come along. And usually in this case it's Delia.

So she'll come back and she'll look in and there'll be on the plate a wafer, and she goes to eat it, and what's inside?

Aud Nothing.

LP Oh, how annoying would that be? So I've done this especially for you today. Let's have a look. So there we have two wafers and one of them is empty, and you might like to try and do this as well back in the schools. So is it wafer A? Hands up if you think it's wafer A that's empty? Hands up for A. Hands up for B. Oh, quite a few of you think it's B.

Right, can you give me a drum roll? Give me a drum roll. Keep it going, keep it going, let's have a look, and it's... B! Hurray! You need got it right, didn't you? Some of you did. So let's have a look at another one then, shall we?

There's three now, we've got wafer A, wafer B or wafer C. And one of them is empty. So do you want to take a look then? Let's see if you can guess as well back in the schools. So hands up if you think it's A. Just a couple of you. Hands up for B. And hands up for C. Oh, lots of you think it's C, okay. Give me another drum roll, so if we can make it really loud. Keep it going, and it's... A! Whey! That one person!

So I bet you'll all be doing this when you get back home now. Right, you're getting really good at it. Let's do one last wafer trick then. Let's three of them, hmm, now which one could it be? Let's have a look. Hands up if you think it's A. Hands up for B. Or hands up for C. Lots of you. Alright, give me a great big drum roll, keep it going, keep it going. And it's... All of them! Hey, what can I say? I was hungry! [laughs]

So there you are, that's the kind of thing that Tom gets up to in the book. And you might try and do it at home. And sometimes as well randomly he likes to do doodles on all kinds of things, and this is banana doodle which is one of the books. Has anyone ever tried that? You have? Well, you can actually eat the banana as well afterwards, but you just poke holes really carefully in the skin. And where you've poked a hole in it, it turns black and you can make a little doodle there. So that's something else that you can try having a doodle on. And doodling on toast as well. Yes, I know. Oh wow! A big surprise about that.

Let's have a look at the next one. So this is Frank and Rita Gates. So this is Tom's mum and dad. And hands up here anyone who's got embarrassing members of their family? Yeah. Lots of you, yeah. Lots of people have. So you'll understand what it's like for Tom when there he is being hugged by his mum right at the wrong moment when he really doesn't want to be hugged. Oh look, and there's Tom's mum and dad doing embarrassing mum and dad dancing. And actually there's Tom's dad wearing a pair of bright blue cycling shorts that he probably really shouldn't be seen in. So we all have embarrassing members of our family and that's for poor Tom.

And this is the next one. And there's Bob and Mavis, and this is Tom's grandparents. And Tom calls them the fossils. Anyone got any ideas where they might be called the fossils? Yeah, you've got an idea?

Girl Because they're so old.

LP Because they're so old and ancient. But actually when I was writing about them I imagined, especially Granny Mavis, she's really eccentric and she's full of life really and she likes to make very odd combinations of food. So Granny Mavis will

put things together like she'll put her tea on top of her cornflakes because she thinks it saves time. Or even hands up here anyone who fancies chocolate sauce on chips? Anyone fancy that? Oh, some of you do! [laughs] Yeah, I don't think that's going to be very nice. But that's the kind of thing that Granny Mavis does as well. And there's Grandad Bob and he likes to take his teeth out and snap them around. So that's Grandad Bob.

Let's have a look at the next one. So some of you might recognise this character, she appears a lot in the books. And she likes to wear sunglasses to block the world out. So this is Delia, this is Tom's sister. And Tom occasionally will pinch Delia's sunglasses and then he'll hide them in a fruit bowl because he reckons that's the only place that Delia won't look. Or he might even use them as an armpit scratcher. Do you think that's a good use?

Aud Yes.

LP Or even maybe a foot scratcher. I'm starting to feel a bit sorry for Delia now, aren't you? [laughs] Someone said no, not really.

And he also has a really big argument with her one day and decides to write a song about her. So he writes a song called Delia's a Weirdo. And these are the lyrics, Delia, she's a weirdo, Delia, she's a geek, Delia, she's a weirdo, Delia, she's a...

Aud Freak.

LP Freak! [chuckles] So let's see if you can guess. Has Tom drawn Delia or has he drawn a monster freak? Shall we have a look? Right, so let's have a look then. What do you think? There's a bit of a miserable mouth going on. Hands up if you think it's Delia? Just a couple of you.

Hands up if you think it's a monster freak? A few of you. Now, I know you can do a good drum roll, so give me another drum roll. Give me a drum roll. And let's have a look, it's a freak! Whey! And also remember this monster, okay? Because I'm going to get you in a minute, you can help me to do a drawing.

Let's have a look at the next one then. So hmm, it could be Delia or it could be a monster freak. So hands up for Delia. Hands up for a monster freak. Let's see if you can guess back there in the schools. Just a few of you. Give me another drum roll. Keep it going, keep it going. And it's Delia! [chuckles]

Right, last one. Let's see if you can guess this one then. So is it Delia? Hands up for Delia. Hands up...see if you can guess the last one back in the schools. Hands up for a monster freak. Lots of you there. Alright, because you're really

good at this now, give me a drum roll. Keep it going, keep it going, and the last one, it's... It's a freak! [chuckles]

So there you go. So that's all the kind of things that are put in the books. So this is your opportunity now, here we are, I'm going to try and get you to help me to make a monster. So the way I'm going to do that is we're going to do it in two halves, okay? So you're going to have to give me some ideas. Now just think about what kind of monster is going to be the top half. It's a big like a game of consequences. So you need to put up your hand and I'll think about...give me a description. So I really need descriptions of what kind of monster, how many eyes has it got, has it got anything on its ears or its head, neck, shoulders. So we'll do the top half first and then the bottom half.

Right, your hand shot up...

Boy Twenty eight eyes.

LP Twenty eight eyes. How much time do you think we have here? [laughs] We could be...I'll give it lots of eyes but maybe not 28. Yeah?

Boy Two belly buttons.

LP Two belly buttons, okay, so we'll give it two... So what kind...we're going to start with the top. How about you, yeah?

Boy Three noses.

LP Three noses. Can you give me a description? What kind of noses? We're getting lots of numbers here, but what kind of... What am I going to draw?

Boy Really, really hairy chubby cheeks.

LP Hairy. Shall we make it a really, really hairy, chubby face of the monster? And what sort of shape? Yes?

Boy Could be slimy.

LP Slimy, okay. So we're getting a sort of...let's do a sort of... Alright, let's have a look. Slimy and lots of hairs, and we know it's got lots of eyes. So let's give it some...different shape eyes then. Maybe another one there. It's not quite 28. We could be here for a long time otherwise then, couldn't we? A few eye lashes. I'm just adding these on. But now you can get an idea.

So if that's...right. Let's go like that. I'll make it really hairy, like that. Lots of slime dripping off. So what else? What else shall we do? If we make the monster up to

about there so we leave it enough space...so we need to fill it up, what kind of mouth... Yeah?

Girl Like red, big lips.

LP Big lips. Okay, you're going to have to imagine the red bit. Like that then, yeah? And maybe some fangs as well. Anything else? Yeah, you there.

Boy Elephant ears.

LP Some?

Boy Elephant ears.

LP Elephant ears, of course! This is what this monster needs, is some elephant ears. There we are. Another one there like that. So it's elephant ears. Has it got any arms or anything? Yes?

Girl Six arms.

LP Six arms, okay. But what kind of arms? So we've got a number but you have to give me like...

Girl Like long...

LP Like tentacles then, okay. So we've got one there. I'll try and fit in as many as I can there. Two. They're getting smaller. Three and another one there, and maybe another one there. So it looks like it's doing something. So I'm going to give it a book to read. What book shall I give? I wonder! [chuckles] Tom Gates. Oh okay, if you insist.

There we go, so it's got a little Tom Gates book. I'll just write it really small there. So he's reading a book and he's got a few tentacles like that. Excellent, okay. So we've got the top half of our monster reading a Tom Gates book like that. And has it got enough drool? It's probably got enough here, let's give it a little scar there. Okay, so we're all happy with that?

Aud Yeah.

LP Excellent, okay. So what I'm going to do now is peel this off and then we've got a tiny little space at the bottom to do the bottom half of the monster. So if you haven't had any ideas, it's not got that much space. So we've got to fill it up. Yes, you are the back.

Boy Spider legs.

LP Spider legs. Okay, we've got some spider legs. Yes?

Boy Slimy globby legs.

LP Slimy globby legs. There's a lot of slime on this monster, isn't there? Yes?

Girl [inaudible 14:56].

LP And?

Girl Backward hooves.

LP Backward hooves? Okay. So we've got... Oh, backward hooves, right okay. Let's give it some spider legs then with a few...lots of hair, like that. Backward hooves? I don't... That's kind of...well, it's a sort of hoof. Everyone's going like what's that! [chuckles] There we are.

And I'll do another spider leg there. Gloopy, and maybe it's in a horrible pile, lots of glue[15:36] and some scars. I'll do another one there. Maybe it's got a web as well. And a little spider I think as we're talking about spiders. There we are. Right, I think...what else shall we do? Let's do a few little... Maybe a little bit of a spider's web there. There we go. Lots of hair.

Right okay, are you ready to see your monster then?

Aud Yeah.

LP Right, can you give me another drum roll? Let's see what it looks like. Here we go. Let's see what it looks like. Here is...ta-da.

Girl Oh, so beautiful!

LP [laughs] It's beautiful! Yeah, I'm not sure about that. Well done everyone. Give yourself a round of applause. Hurray. [applause] That looks very peculiar, doesn't it? So you might want to think about a name you could give this monster. I have no idea. Oh yes, you've got an idea.

Boy Bob.

LP Bob! Excellent. This monster is now officially called Bob, the Authors Live monster, excellent. Right, let's put this down to one side. Now this is the opportunity now I thought I might read to you a little bit of the new book. So oh look, lots of excited faces. Good, I'm glad you like that. So because I put lots of drawings and doodles in all of the books, when I'm reading along I like to put it up

on the screen, so that's the whole of the front cover. Has anyone read the first book. This book yet? Oh, a few of you have, okay.

Well, if you haven't read the book I'll set the scene for you. So as usual Tom is having a bit of a tough time at school, and this is because there's been a test. And somehow he's ended up in a catch-up class which he's not very happy about. So here we go.

Somehow I've ended up in catch-up class. Being here is supposed to help me get better marks in my school test. It's not like I didn't know the answers to the questions, I just wasn't really concentrating as much as I probably should've been. The first time Mr Fullerman mentioned the test he had his very serious face on. Tests are nothing to be nervous about. You just have to work hard and concentrate. But please don't worry about this very important test.

But the way he kept saying very important test made some kids worry about it a lot. Not me though. The school sent a letter home about the test that looked quite serious as well. When mum and dad read it mum told me just try your best, Tom. It's not the end of the world if you don't do that well. As far as we're concerned it's the effort that really counts. So don't worry about the test, dad said.

I'm not worried I said, which was true, I wasn't worried at all. Then Delia turned up and joined up. Huh, so let me get this straight. When Tom comes at the bottom of the class in the test you won't mind, she said, trying to make a point. Tom won't be at the bottom of the class will you, Tom, dad said, looking at me. He might be, you're not great at tests, are you, Tom? If Tom is at the bottom of the class in his test, and it's a big if, as long as he's tried his best we won't mind at all.

I couldn't get a word in edge ways with everyone discussing how badly I was doing in this test. Eventually I managed to say excuse me, I might do really well in the test and come top of the class. Silence. No one said anything. Finally mum spoke up and said yes, of course you might, Tom, which made Delia laugh even more.

Then she said huh, and guess what? Tom might get a pet unicorn too, but that's not going to happen, is it? What does that mean? I wanted to know. If you can't say something nice, Delia, just keep quiet, mum told her sternly. You'll be fine, Tom, don't worry about a thing, dad tells me again. I could hear Delia still laughing as she went upstairs. Mum and dad wouldn't stop talking about this test even after Delia had left. I'm sure you'll be absolutely fine, as long as you concentrate, mum said. You do tend to get a bit distracted, dad added.

Then as they were chatting I suddenly thought of a very important question. Can I ask you something? Ask away, Tom, mum and dad both said patiently. What I really want to know is... Yes? Unicorns, they don't actually exist, do they? Ah, no Tom, they don't. I thought so, just checking. Oh, mind you, if unicorns did exist how good would that be. Here are some made up pets I drew. And there you are, there's Tom, he's drawn a few made up unicorns and pets. So as you can see, things don't always work out for Tom.

So this is your opportunity as well if you're back in the schools, so if you want to get yourselves ready with pencil and paper. Because I'm going to show you a doodle video first, and then I'm going to get you to do some drawing. So let's have a watch of this first then. And this is me. You can tell it's me because of the nails. It's a sped up doodle. [video playback]

Ta-da! Now you can all do that, can't you?

Aud Kind of.

LP Kind of. Oh yes you can!

Aud Oh no...

LP [laughs] It's a bit early for panto, isn't it? Well listen, I'll tell you, and I'll tell everyone now as well at schools, there's no wrong way to doodle. So don't worry about it, okay? Honestly, don't worry about making a mistake. Because as I said, some of you might have spotted that I don't just draw on books as well. Has anyone spotted anything else I might have drawn on? Yeah, my dress and my shoes and my nails. Because this style of drawing...no, not that I'm encouraging you to go rushing out and drawing on everything. Don't do it! I'll get into trouble. But this style of drawing is really brilliant and it's a really great thing because it goes on lots of different things.

So do you want to get your pieces of paper ready? And I'm going to start in the middle. So I'm going to start long ways, and I'm going to write Tom's name in the middle. But if you want to you can write your own name. And we've left out the drawing as well. So let's start in the middle then. So let's draw Tom. So it's like bubble writing, like that. There we go. So you can draw Tom's name. Let's try this one.

So one you've drawn Tom just draw a little line around the outside, like that. And don't worry if I go a bit faster than you. So I'm just going to colour that in, a little bit of shading. There we go. You can write your own name if you want to. So everyone's concentrating. [chuckles] So once you've done that then you take

your pencil or your pen and you draw a line around the name, like that. And then guess what you do next? Another line, excellent.

So we've got two lines around the outside. And guess what you do next? Another line! They're thinking oh, is that all there is to it? It's true. There you go. So you should have the name and lots of lines on there. And we've got a nice space up here, so now I'm going to show you how to draw Tom. And like most of the characters Tom starts off as a circle. So if you draw a little circle like that. And he's got two little dots for eyes, a little dot for a...a little nose there. And a nice big smile. And he's got two little ears. What's missing? His hair! Because he's got this flat top hairstyle. We have a line down the side there and a straight line that goes all the way across like that. And then you do a little M on the side of his head.

And I'm going to colour his hair in. So he's got this flat top hairstyle going on there. So that's Tom. And then once you've drawn Tom just draw a circle around the outside like that. Gosh, I can easily see some really good drawings going on. And then you draw another circle, like that. And these little bits that you're drawing, the extra lines, you can colour in-between them. So if you don't get a chance to finish off your whole drawing you get to take them away. There we go.

So on this particular drawing we've got a big arrow that's at the side there. So I'm going to draw that arrow, and then you draw just a line around the outside of it. That just makes it look a bit solid. And as I say, don't worry about what kind of shape arrow or how big it is. So I'm just drawing a...

And then I think we'll do some stars. So if you're not sure how to draw a star I'll do one really slowly first of all in the space there. So you do a little pointy bit like that, one at the side, one there, and then two there. So just dot some stars around your picture, like that. There we go. And if you want to make the stars, this is the kind of things that's on all the covers of the books.

So if you want to make the stars look like they're 3D and shooting out from behind your picture, the way I do it is I do a little dot, and then you join...do like curving lines all the way down to the dot, like that. Maybe another one there. And then the same there as well. Weee! And over here. So you just go around your whole page and just fill up like that. So there you go.

So there's a nice big space there, so I'm going to put a monster down there. So shall we draw a monster down here?

Aud Yes!

LP Yes! Excellent, right answer. Try not to hear my knees crack, because I'm like this... I don't really know where these monsters came from but you can make up your own one. But they almost have like little Ms for their ears. And then they've got a big foot down there, like that. And then these monsters have one really big eye, and then one really teeny little one. And what I call a letter box mouth. There you are, so it's got big grinning teeth, and funny little dangly arms. And I usually give it a few hairs as well, like that. And there. And let's give this monster a speech bubble, or you can put something else in.

Right now, you've got all the different parts of your drawing, this is my favourite bit. This is where you get to link the whole drawing together. And the way to do that is the first thing you do is draw a line around the outside of your monster. And you can see I'm doing it really roughly, this is more about just filling up all the space that you've got. And then I'm going to do the same thing with the stars. So you just draw lines very quickly. And then you get left with all these little spaces everywhere.

So I'm going to start filling them up. So the way you do that, start anywhere on the drawing, and then you just do these little...they're like little curved lines. And sometimes they're curved and sometimes they're straight, like that. So the idea is that you just fill up all of your paper, like that. And I'm going to try and fill this up as much as possible, like that. There we go, and let's do some more around here. So I'm going to draw around the speech bubble. And these of the bits of the drawing that when you take them back you can put different colours in, like I've done on my shoes, or on my nails. There we go. So let's just fill that up, like that. Nearly done.

Gosh, I can look... Wow! I can see some fantastic drawings already. Amazing! Excellent, right, let's just do this one down here. So I'm hoping as well that while you're doing this we've got some good questions that we're going to answer afterwards. There you are, let's just do that. So I'm whizzing through it now. And I'll just fill that up at the bottom. So lastly all I'm going to do here is just take a line and do all the way around the drawing, and that gives it a framework just to fill in the rest of it, like that.

Fantastic. So you can see...let's have a look. Amazing! Look at your drawings! So I'm pretty much...so that's basically how you do a Tom Gates doodle. And as I said, you can take those away and add in...maybe you might want to colour in some of the stars and add a little bit of extra drawings there. But fantastic, what amazing drawings! I can really see some really fantastic drawings now as well. Brilliant!

JF And what a stunning drawing Liz has done, don't you think? I can't believe the concentration, Liz, on everybody's eyes...

LP I know.

JF ...everybody really getting into it. I think this is the quietest I've ever heard this room.

LP [chuckles] It's because I'm really frightening. [chuckles]

JF No, it's the sound of silence because everyone's really concentrating. Have you been enjoying doing it wherever you've been doing it? You're enjoying it? I think if you can put the things down for a second I think Liz deserves a massive round of applause. [applause]

LP Thank you.

JF Amazing. That was so wonderful to watch you doing it, but also I was keeping an eye on what all of you were doing here. I can't watch what you were doing out there but I'm sure you were really enjoying it. And it's such fun, isn't it, just to find that space and get into it. Yeah, they're nodding away.

Now, I think we have a couple of questions actually from some people here. So we're going to bring a microphone to our lovely young people in the front row and then we can ask a question. Here we come. And you could say your name and then your question.

Boy I'm Harry.

JF Harry.

Boy Which books did you most enjoy reading when you were younger?

LP Well one of my absolute all-time favourite books when I was young was The Twits by Roald Dahl. And it's one of those books that when my children were little, there were some books that they'd reach for as a parent, and you'd go like oh, okay. But The Twits, it was always so funny and I still love reading that book even now. So that was one of my favourites.

And somebody bought me a book called the Bad Speller, because I'm not very good at spelling when I was younger. And I used to really love looking through that as well. It was like lots of cartoons and it was all spelt in a really wierd way, which was quite funny.

JF Great question, thank you very much. And actually I wondered, did that go on to influence you in a way in terms of drawings and just having fun with books?

LP Do you know, I think it was the first time that I thought somebody had given me a book...because I did really struggle with spelling. I had lots of ideas and I was very creative, doing writing and stuff. But I always used to get my work back covered in red pen saying oh Liz, that spelling! And I'm still not very good at it. So it kind of just put it in my head that actually maybe even if I wasn't brilliant at spelling, I could still do it. There was a way of writing stories and doing drawings that we could still put down on paper.

JF Great, lovely. And we have another question? What's your name?

Boy Fergus.

JF Hi Fergus. What's your question?

Boy Have you doodled on anything that you shouldn't have?

JF Oh, have you doodled on anything that you shouldn't have?

LP [laughs] No! Well look, look at me. I probably shouldn't. Yeah, like I said, I'm not...

JF You're a walking doodle.

LP I am a walking doodle, I know. And sometimes I've done my belt. Probably I have. And actually I was very lucky because I think when I was younger I had a big wall in my bedroom and I think my mum and dad, they let me draw on the wall. Okay, so I'm not encouraging... All the parents will be going like no! But I did have to...my mum made me do a proper drawing first and she said if you're going to do this...it was during the summer holidays. And I think she was quite glad that I just had lots of things to keep me busy.

So I did a drawing first and I did a drawing on my wall. I can't remember. I think it was a palm tree and a sea scene or something like that. But yeah, I draw on things I probably shouldn't do quite a lot.

JF But as Liz said, don't do that at home.

LP Don't do that at home!

JF Ask permission...

LP Exactly.

JF ...before you draw on anything that's not a pad. We've had some great questions on Twitter, thank you very much, using the hashtag #asklizpichon. This is a good one, because it says they were watching the monster being drawn. Woodlands Primary in Carnoustie love the monster and they say how would you make it even more scary for Halloween? That's a good one, isn't it? [laughter] Even more scary for Halloween.

LP For Halloween? Oh, well probably a few more scars, spiders, maybe colour in the background, more drool, dribble.

JF Yeah, a bit of blood.

LP Fangs. Yeah, put some colour on it, just...

JF Some good...

LP Cut it out and dangle it from something.

JF Because I think everyone's doing really scary drawings right now, so that's a good one. Rothesay Primary, I love Rothesay and the beautiful Isle of Bute, says how did you come up with the idea of Tom Gates?

LP Ah well, yeah, do you know, lots of people assume that the idea...you have like a light bulb moment, you suddenly go bing! But actually it took me quite a few years to come up with the idea. So it started off as a picture book and it was for younger children. And then it took me about three or four writes and rewrites. So I kept sending it out and they kept coming back saying, yeah, we quite like it but we don't think there's enough of a story of it.

So eventually I got around to writing it in an exercise book. I don't know, do you want to have a look at the...

JF Yes please.

LP So I've actually... It's a good question because I've actually brought a few bits and pieces. So I thought you might like to see...if anyone's read the very first Tom Gates...so that's what I wrote it in. I wrote it in an exercise book, and I imagined that Tom was sitting at his desk writing about his holiday homework. So he'd had a terrible holiday. Anyone been camping? Has it rained? Yes. All hands stay up.

So he has a terrible holiday, and he calls it camping sucks. So imagined that he was writing in his own exercise book.

JF And this is the actual exercise...

- LP And that's the actual.
- JF This is actually it, boys and girls. The real exercise book.
- LP And it's one of the reasons that I always get the children and kids to do their drawings on a plain piece of paper in pencil, because that's how I work and that's how I get the ideas out of my head and onto a book. So I did the first draft of Tom Gates, and then I sent it off... Well, I photocopied it a few times...
- JF Here we are.
- LP ...like that, imagined it was his. So you can see the covers have changed quite a lot. But actually a lot of the things that are inside haven't changed very much at all. So that's what I sent off.
- JF Shall we look inside?
- LP And it's got...yes.
- JF So...
- LP That's Tom. Tom's tiny there, isn't he? [laughter] He's really tiny. So you can see how things develop sometimes. He's not that big. Look, everyone's going like oh!
- JF I'll show everyone.
- LP He looks really small there! And the parents have changed a bit. So that's what happens. If anyone's seen any pictures of early Mickey Mouse in cartoons they always change quite a lot.
- JF They really do change. Let me just ask another question. Oh, this is good. Jack from Hilton Primary in Inverness, hi Jack. Says do you get writer's block? And if so, where do you go to unblock it? [laughter]
- LP That sounds ominous, doesn't it?
- JF It does.
- LP Well, do you know what, I try and have more than one thing on the go. So I'll be thinking about lots of different things at once. And quite often when you get your really good ideas it's when you've switched your brain off a little bit. Which might sound a bit weird. But if sitting in front of a blank piece of paper, it's like when somebody says to you tell me a joke. Tell me something funny. And you go oh, like this.

So if I'm having trouble writing or drawing and I think everybody has good writing days and bad writing days. And some days things just take a lot longer. But you never stop doing it. You might just leave it, go and do something different. Go and look at a magazine. I do look on YouTube and look at magazines, listen to the radio...

JF You could even go for a walk or something...

LP Go for a walk, yeah.

JF ...couldn't you?

LP You just change the scenery, maybe think about something else, and then you come back to it. And then maybe you can look at something with fresh eyes and you think oh, that's what was wrong.

JF A top tip.

LP Exactly. [laughs]

JF Top tips. This has been wonderful, hasn't it? Are you all inspired to do more drawing and doodling?

Aud Yes.

JF And they really mean it, don't you? Yeah! Guess what, sadly we've ran out of time.

LP No way!

JF How sad? I know, can you believe it, that we have done so much. Let me remind you the good news is if you want to watch this again, if you're the people here and you want to see it for the first time then it's always available to watch online at the website, which is [www.scottishbooktrust.com/authorslive](http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/authorslive). And of course you can watch all of the ones we've done before and future ones. And BBC Scotland Learning are also making brilliant Authors Live radio shows including one with the wonderful Liz. So you can find that at [bbc.co.uk/authorslive](http://bbc.co.uk/authorslive). Give those a listen.

But please, please everyone, join me in thanking the marvellous Liz Pichon for introducing a whole wonderful world of doodling and drawing. And I hope that you're going to continue wherever you are with that for the rest of the day and weeks, months and years. The rest of your lives. Let's hear it for Liz Pichon.  
[applause]