

Date: 19/01/2017  
Author/Interview subject: Chris Riddell (CR)  
Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth (JF)  
Other speakers: Audience (Aud), Eve (Eve)

JF: Hi there. A very, very warm welcome indeed to Authors Live. I'm Janice Forsyth. It is just fantastic to have your company today for this extremely special edition of Authors Live. With me are some wonderful pupils from a great primary school in South Lanarkshire, St Cuthbert's Primary School. Have a little wave to each other. There they are. I told you they were gorgeous and they are. Oh they're brilliant. And so are you. Thank you so, so much for joining us wherever you are across the country and thank you to your teachers for being here too. You're in for such a treat. I know I always say it's a special edition but today's is extra special. We're super excited, aren't we, today? We are.

Aud: Yes.

JF: Because our very special guest is the wonderful Children's Laureate himself, Chris Riddell. He's a chap who's done so much. As well as writing and illustrating many of his own books, Chris has worked with all sorts of really brilliant writers including Paul Stewart, Neil Gaiman and Michael Rosen. He's always busy but he's been particularly busy over the last two years. Honestly, I can't believe it. He's always off somewhere, talking in his role as Children's Laureate about things like the importance of libraries. Do you like libraries?

Aud: Yes.

JF: Yes. So important we keep them open. And also just his sheer passion for and love of illustration. Now if any of you have seen Chris, he's busy also on social media with Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. You'll know that...and I'm not joking, it's true, he never stops drawing. Well he's stopped just now for 30 seconds while I talk about him. So today rather than answering questions just with words, he is going to be drawing his responses. Isn't that great? It is. Now we had so many questions that we thought of on our team at Authors Live, we didn't know where to start. So we thought the best thing to do was to hand over

to you guys to come up with your own questions and you did brilliantly. So many of them. So you've been emailing them to us at the Scottish Book Trust. So we've selected a handful today for Chris to answer and apologies in advance that we can't get through them all.

But if you would like to get in touch with us via Twitter if you have a Twitter account and I know that many of you do, then use the #bbcauthorlive. The #bbcauthorlive. And there we have a brilliantly illustrated hashtag by Chris Riddell, which he just knocked off in about ten seconds. Isn't that lovely. I think Chris is slightly slimmer than that frankly, but never mind. Don't Tweet us a question because we've got our questions. But it would be just lovely for you to Tweet us and tell us who you are and where you are watching. And if you do have a burning question, we might be able to answer that after the broadcast. I'll shut up for a moment and say please join me in giving a huge loud welcome here and there for Chris Riddell. Are you blushing with the praise, Chris?

CR: A little bit, Janice. Particularly when you said I'm a lot slimmer than that. I did blush.

JF: It's true. It's true.

CR: [Laugh].

JF: It's great to see you here. And I know though that you're no stranger to Scotland or indeed most parts of the UK because you have been travelling a heck of a lot, haven't you, as Children's Laureate.

CR: Yes I have, Janice. And that's part of the fun actually, going to different places and meeting lots and lots of different people and lots of children. You are very strange and difficult people. You know that.

JF: [Laugh].

DR: You often ask me very difficult questions sometimes I can't answer...

JF: That's good.

CR: Do you know, my very good friend – my best friend – came to me when she heard that I'd become Children's Laureate and she said...and she comes from Germany. She said, I just heard that you've become Children's Laundrette. And now all my friends call me the Children's Laundrette. So I like to think I go all over the country doing of lots of laundry.

JF: [Laugh].

CR: Making sure that everyone's shirts are nicely ironed and socks are...I don't know why we're going down this route, but...mm.

JF: No, I love it. I think there should be a Children's Laundrette, yeah. That would be very handy for us all, wouldn't it. So we've got lots of questions and...so let's just go to the first one, shall we.

CR: Okay. Yes.

JF: So our first question has come from West End Primary School in Elgin in Moray, so if you're watching, hello and thank you for the terrific first question which is...so we're going back to the beginning which makes sense, Chris, when did you start working as an illustrator?

CR: My goodness. Right. Well I started a very long time ago. I started when I was I think about five years old. Five years old. My dad was a vicar. So I used to have to go to church. And I wasn't terribly well behaved in church. It's okay, just between the few of us, you know, the not...don't tell anyone about this, but I used to, sort of, get up to all sorts. I'd drop the prayer book in very, very, sort of, quiet parts of the service, you know, accidentally on purpose. And I also used to do this thing, I used to like...again in...during quiet...very quiet parts of the service, just leaning forward in my seat and just blowing very gently on the neck of the person sitting in front of me. And they used to go, oh. You know, that wasn't good.

Now my mum got very, very upset by this. So she said, look, Chris, if you just behave yourself during the service, she said, I will give you some paper and a pencil and then you can draw. And you can draw in church as long as you're well behaved. And I said, yes, great, okay. So my mum gave me paper and pencil and I got to sit at the back of the church and draw during my dad's sermons. And my dad would be preaching lovely sermons about peace on earth and loving your neighbour and all these good things and I'd be drawing knights with their head being cut off and castles on fire and all these really, sort of, exciting things. My best friend in church was a lady called Mrs Stock. And I just thought I would draw her. This is Mrs Stock in her Sunday best as I remember her. And Mrs Stock had a lovely Sunday best hat and glasses, smiley face.

And the thing I remember about Mrs Stock is that she had a really big handbag. Great big handbag. And during the sermon when I was sitting drawing, what she would do is she'd reach in to her handbag and she'd take out a little purse – little leather purse – and she'd just very quietly unzip this purse and take out wine gums and then she'd feed me wine gums.

JF: [Laugh].

CR: It was so brilliant. So I'd be drawing and Mrs Stock would be feeding me. When no one was looking, feeding me wine gums in church. It was a lovely thing. And so at the end of the service, we had an arrangement. In return for the wine gums Mrs Stock had fed me, I would give her my drawing, however inappropriate. And that was the thing. And I remember thinking, when I grow up, what I want to do is I want to draw pictures and be fed wine gums. True story. It's how it all began.

JF: [Laugh]. And Chris Riddell's dream came true. Do you fancy a job like that?

Aud: Yes.

JF: Drawing, sweeties. Come on. That is heaven. That is heaven.

CR: Doesn't get any better.

JF: And what a lovely picture...she just looks great. And I wonder, what was your mum's reaction then when she realised this started off as her realising you'd bags of energy and you were getting bored and this was something to do? But then she must have seen quite quickly that you were enjoying it and clearly had a talent.

CR: She knew how to keep me quiet, Janice. That was the main thing. So lots of paper and pencils, art supplies, anything like that, she knew I loved that and that would keep me busy. Because the thing I love most to do was to draw. You know, I just love drawing. And I've never stopped since that moment, Janice. So it's been...that was a very long time ago.

JF: Well that's the thing about Chris, we all see lots of writers and illustrators, but I've never met anybody who absolutely enjoys it as much as you do...

CR: [Laugh].

JF: ...which is presumably why you never stop. And in terms of materials...'cause I know that lots of children...do you like to draw?

Aud: Yes.

JF: Yeah? Do you like to draw? Do you like to draw? Yes. Great. What kind of materials do you...do you need to spend a lot of money on pencils or specific things or is it quite easy to do?

CR: You can spend a lot of money on pencils. When I go in to an art shop, I only go in to buy one pencil and then I come out with 25 pencils and three sketch books

and lots of paint and lots...all sorts of things. I went in to buy a pencil the other day and came out with a paint set that goes in my pocket. It's fantastic. So I can paint when I'm travelling. This is what happens to me. But you don't have to spend a lot of money. All you need is some paper. I always think the best form of paper is in little sketchbooks like that. That is the nicest thing, to have a little sketch book so you can just be drawing as you...where you...wherever you go. And then it fits in your pocket, so it's nice and...so I would say to anyone who's interested in becoming an illustrator or a designer or a painter to get a sketchbook and keep with them at all times and then just draw all the time. Draw every day.

JF: Do you fancy that?

Aud: Yeah.

JF: Yeah. I like the little notebook idea. I hadn't thought of doing that. I might do that myself. Okay. Well there...bye bye, Mrs Stock, for now.

CR: [Laugh].

JF: And we're going to move on to our next question. Thanks again, West End Primary School in Elgin. But this next question, Chris, is from Dumfries, another part of the country. Amisfield Primary School in Dumfries. Thank you very much for your question which is, do you prefer drawing, Chris, realistic pictures or mythical and fantasy drawings?

CR: That's a very difficult one, Janice, 'cause I love drawing mythical creatures. I love it. And I suppose, you know, drawing things from your imagination is really, really good fun. I love that. I like drawing things like unicorns. Unicorns can be really nice to draw. Or I spend a lot of time drawing, I don't know, sort of, strange goblins and characters with, sort of, pointy ears and stuff. And every so often I've got stop and think, hang on a minute, I haven't drawn anything real. And so I think every so often I just need to stop and draw maybe someone who's...I don't know, come to the BBC to hear an author talk maybe.

And so I just, sort of, stop and I think, right, no, I know I want to draw a unicorn or something, but instead I'll draw someone who maybe is...just doesn't know I'm drawing them, maybe has just come along to the BBC to ask a nice question of an author and I'll just draw them, particularly if they've got, like, a really nice ribbon in their hair. That's quite nice. I like that. Very, very, very nice red hair. That's very good as well. And, you know, the great thing is, they don't know I'm drawing them, that's what I really like. They've no idea I'm drawing them. Sometimes when I travel on trains, I wait 'til someone takes their mobile phone

out and they send a very important message or they're reading something on their phone and I'll take out my sketchbook and I'll just do a little sketch when they don't know.

And then...they never know and then sometimes I'll just take a little photograph of my sketch and post it on social media. And they'll never know that I've drawn them. It's just one of the things I do. I really like that. So it's great. So I'm drawing this person. I bet you can't tell who I'm drawing.

JF: [Laugh].

Aud: [Laugh].

CR: Bet you can't tell. But the reason I'm drawing, sometimes it's nice to draw someone who doesn't know I'm drawing them. But the reason I'm drawing you is that you said such a nice thing when Janice asked who your favourite author was. You said, Chris Riddell. So nice. So thank you so much. So I've just done a very quick drawing. It's very good to draw someone real for a change, 'cause I spend a lot of my time drawing imaginary people.

JF: Oh that is wonder...I think we need a round of applause for that drawing, particularly for you [laugh]. That is just terrific. You're famous now. How wonderful. But that's so interesting that you kept up the interest in drawing real people and the fantasy stuff because as you told us right away, when you were in the church when...where your father was up there preaching and Mrs Stock was giving you the wine gums, you were often in a fantasy world then. Did it take you a wee while then to move in to drawing real pictures when you were little, when you were just starting off?

CR: Not when I was little, Janice. When I grew up and wanted to become an illustrator, what I did...and I went to art school. And art school is a very good place to learn to become an illustrator because you get to draw a lot. And so I spent three years drawing and drawing and drawing at art school. And I was taught by a wonderful teacher. His name was Raymond Briggs and he wrote some brilliant books. He wrote *The Snowman*. Do you remember *The Snowman*? Brilliant book. He wrote *When the Wind Blows*, amazing book. *Fungus the Bogeyman*, very funny. Very funny book.

And I don't know whether this Christmas you watched Ethel & Ernest. What a brilliant film that was. That was lovely. And Raymond wrote that as well and did the pictures.

JF: And he was your teacher? What...

CR: He was my teacher, Janice.

JF: ...kind of teacher was he then? Was he inspiring?

CR: He was very inspiring, Janice, because he would look at my work and he would say, marvellous. Marvellous. And then he would look at something else and he would say, marvellous. Marvellous. And I would just feel so fantastic. So he was very, very encouraging. And I once arrived for my lesson with Raymond – my tutorial – and I was little bit early and Raymond was with another student and he was looking at another student's work and he was looking at the work and he was saying, marvellous. Marvellous. And look at something...marvellous. And do you know, I didn't mind. I didn't mind. There were lots of marvellous students. So...

JF: Yeah. Encouragement is so important.

CR: Encouragement was the thing, yeah.

JF: But is it...I guess also some people watching might be thinking, oh look, Chris is just so brilliant at this. I could never do anything like that. But going to art school clearly there's much that you can learn to expand on your talent. And would you say that to some of the young people who are here and who are watching that you should keep doing it for a start.

CR: Of course. Of course, Janice. But what I would say is never stop drawing. Never stop drawing. There comes a moment and it always makes me very sad when someone says to me, I can't draw. And I feel so sad when someone says that. I think that's awful. And what I do, I do a little experiment and if someone says to me they can't draw, I say, would you mind just holding this pencil, and they give me that look and think, what's he talking about? And I say, could you hold that pencil? And they hold the pencil and I say, that's wonderful. I say, could you just make a mark on this bit of paper? And they make a little mark. And I say, that's amazing. Can you make another one? And they make another one. And another one? And another one? I say, guess what, you can draw. And they go, really? I say, yes, you can draw. If you can make marks on a bit of paper, you're drawing.

And if you start making marks and start doodling, little doodles and maybe...whatever you like and then you carry on and carry on and don't stop, before you know it, you'll be doing amazing drawings. And I say that everyone. Never stop drawing.

JF: Fantastic. And I know this is true, 'cause sometimes I have spoken to Chris on the radio, so Chris has been in London and I've been in Glasgow, we've not been together. And I've been interviewing him and then later on I go on his Instagram account and it turns out all the time that we've been speaking and he's been talking to me or whatever, he's been drawing and...brilliantly. You did a drawing of me yapping at you, which was great. So there we have...we've had Mrs Stock and a real person, another real person. Oh...

Aud: [Laugh].

JF: Didn't know you were doing that. So that happened earlier on today too. Interesting earrings. Thank you very much. So there we go. Thanks for the question from Amisfield Primary School. And we're on to our next question, Chris, which is from Dunoon, Kirn Primary in Dunoon in Argyll and Bute. So we're coming up to date. What was your reaction to being told that you were Children's Laureate?

CR: Oh my goodness. Now that was 18 months ago, Janice. And the time has absolutely flown past. But I'll remember...I remember when they asked me whether I would like to become Children's Laureate. And I suppose I felt a little bit like this.

JF: [Laugh].

CR: Just a little bit. You know when you get that lovely, lovely feeling, sort of, in your tummy and then it, sort of, swells up and it just...it, sort of, felt like that. Felt just like that. And sometimes when I'm drawing, I really like to draw things that make feel nice. And sometimes, sort of, it's so nice when they asked me, would I like to become Children's Laureate and travel round the country and talk about lovely things? I think this is called swelling with pride. Swelling with pride. So I swelled with pride. It was lovely.

And then the even more exciting thing is that they said, of course if you become Children's Laureate, we'll give you a medal. A real medal. A shiny medal. Medal made of silver. It was so exciting. And so when I became Children's Laureate, they gave me a medal, not for running a hundred metres really fast and not for, sort of, running a marathon or anything exciting like that. They gave me a medal just for saying I would become Children's Laureate. It was very exciting.

And the medal came in a special box, special, sort of, jewellery box like this and ever since they gave me the medal, I've been a little bit, sort of, frightened about travelling with it – because I do a lot of travelling – just in case I leave it in a hotel room or I leave it on the train or I lose it. And that would be terrible. So I keep

my medal on the mantelpiece at home. And then when I need to, every so often, when no one's looking, I'll just go over to the mantelpiece, I'll open the lid and I'll just stroke my medal. Just quietly. Makes me feel like that, Janice. That's what I loved.

JF: Oh it's good. That's wonderful.

CR: So it's a lovely feeling.

JF: And...so clearly immediately you were swelling with pride and loving the idea of this. You didn't need to be persuaded. But over the last 18 months, I mean, has there been one particular high point for you? Or there's just been so many that it's impossible?

CR: There have been lots, Janice. Wonderful things. I think the thing I really, sort of...the...all sorts of things. I'm just thinking now that being at the Globe Theatre, that was fun. And sitting next to the Norse god Loki from Avengers, that was good. The actor who played that, that was very good, Tom Hiddleston. That was fun. He's very good looking. Very good looking. And I think he might be the new James Bond, but he wouldn't tell me. And I said to him, I said, Tom, what I think would be really interesting is if the next James Bond was a middle aged cartoonist. I thought that would be an interesting...yeah. You never know. He just looked at me like that.

JF: [Laugh]. Love it. Love it. Fabulous. Thank you very much indeed to Kirn Primary in Dunoon. Right. Let's move on to our next question which is from East Plean Primary School in Stirling. And we'll say cheerio, swelling with pride. East Plean Primary in Stirling, hello, hi there all of you, thank you very much for watching. And...ah, I wonder how difficult a question this is going to be to answer. Chris Riddell, what is your favourite illustrated character and why?

CR: Oh my goodness. That is a difficult one to answer. I've got two answers, Janice. Can I have two answers?

JF: You can have two answers.

CR: Two answers. 'Cause I've just found this in my pocket, 'cause I travel with this. This is my favourite character. I love this character because this is the White Rabbit from *Alice in Wonderland* and I loved the White...the *Alice in Wonderland* book and I loved the illustrations in the book. And when I was little what I used to do is I used to just copy out this illustration, because I like... I really love this illustration, more than any of the others. I just loved it. It's...the book is full of

great, great, sort of, drawings by someone called Sir John Tenniel who was a Victorian illustrator.

And what I did was I just tried to...as I copied, and this is a really good thing to do if you're interested in pictures and illustrations in books is sometimes just to see if you can just copy an illustration. Just to see if you can work out how it's done. It's a really good exercise. Sometimes people think, you know, oh copying, you shouldn't copy. And I say...I always say, yes copying's very, very good because it means you learn. You can learn as you copy how to get expressions in to an eye, how to...sort of, the fold of a sleeve works and that sort of thing. So I absolutely loved that.

JF: And you doing that actually, Chris, you're making me really look at the original illustration in a way that I wouldn't have done before, the detail of it. And that's really...'cause I guess...

CR: Yes, 'cause you go all the way through it don't you, Janice, and look at the different ways in which the artist has actually, sort of, created a character. And I think in stories, it's really important if you're illustrating a story to work out how your...what your character looks like, so that you can enhance the, sort of...the story as an illustrator. My favourite, sort of, character that I've drawn is this one, Janice. This is from a series of books about a little girl called Ottoline. And this is Ottoline's best friend. You might recognise him if you've read the Ottoline books. He's called Mr Munroe and he's small and hairy and comes from a bog in Norway where it's always raining. And Mr Munroe is based on my daughter Katie. And Katie...when she was little, she used to like to brush her hair over her face. I think quite a few of you could do that, you could brush your hair over your face, couldn't you and...then you'd just become a curtain of hair with just two little eyes, sort of, looking out. It's very...and that's what Katie used to enjoy doing.

So when I came to, sort of, draw Mr Munroe, I thought I'll just draw a curtain of hair with just little eyes looking out and you never know what Mr Munroe's thinking. But Ottoline does. She knows what Mr...and Mr Munroe never talks, but somehow Ottoline always understands him. And he is her best friend. And just like Mr Munroe, my daughter Katie's got very large hairy feet.

JF: [Laugh].

CR: She enjoys it when I say that, Janice.

JF: I'm sure she does. What did she think of the fact that this character was inspired by her?

- CR: She gives me one of those looks, Janice, which is...maybe you do this to your dads. She just gives me one of those looks which is, really? It's not clever, it's not grown up. Just stop it, Dad. You know, one of those looks. And I just ignore her...
- JF: She doesn't have to say anything.
- CR: Yes. I...
- JF: So is it, kind of, like that?
- CR: Little bit, yes. Yes.
- JF: [Laugh].
- CR: And...so I just carry on telling that story to anyone who'll listen. And now Katie's all grown up and she's 23 and she has become an illustrator.
- JF: Aha, how wonderful.
- CR: So she'll probably draw me as something in one of her books. Who knows. [Laugh].
- JF: That would be good. That would be wonderful. I know that often authors say they've...they create characters and they write about the same character over several books. They feel almost like they're real people, like friends that they get to know. Is it the same with your illustrated characters? Do you get to really feel fond of them?
- CR: You do. You do, because you think about them a lot and I think that's one of the wonderful things about stories. We all need stories. Stories are so important because you can live in a story. You can have experiences in a story that you wouldn't normally have in your everyday life. And that's what's so fantastic about reading, it takes you somewhere else. I love this, sort of, saying that it's not a book, it's a doorway. And that's what I think books are. Books are doorways in to other places and other worlds and other people's imaginations. That's why reading is so good, 'cause it takes us somewhere else. And I think as an author, when I'm writing and I'm writing about Mr Munroe or Ottoline or Ada Goth, my latest character who lives in a big country house, they become real, Janice. And I'm not sure what they're going to say until they say it.
- JF: Mm. And we're seeing you do your drawings and it's so quick, isn't it. It's amazing. They're so beautiful but it doesn't take you very long 'cause as we know now, you've been doing this since you were a little boy in church [laugh]...

CR: [Laugh].

JF: ...so you know what you're doing. But when it comes to coming up with different characters and how you're going to represent them, is it quite a long process? Or does it vary from character to character? Do you...are there lots of sketches that end up in the wastepaper bin?

CR: Never, Janice. Never.

JF: Really?

CR: No. I mean, what they end up in is they end up in my book. So that's where my sketches end up. So they're always...I'm always drawing and the thing is, Janice, I never make a mistake. I never make a mistake. When I draw something that I didn't mean to draw...

JF: [Laugh].

CR: ...I pretend I meant it and then just carry on. So whenever things go a bit wrong, I just pretend I meant it to look like that. So I think all my life I've been making mistakes and pretending I haven't. And I think that's actually quite a good...think...there's a dancing bear...

JF: Of course.

CR: It's a boy in a very large coat. And that's how I feel when I read really nice comments that people make on social media. That's...it's a lovely feeling. And here I am, I'm travelling to Glasgow to meet you all and talk on Authors Live. So there I am going off...

JF: So we're bang up to date with your sketchbook. Aha.

CR: So this is what I do all the time. And out of the sketchbook come ideas for things and come ideas for stories and that's where it all begins. And sometimes they never, ever leave my sketchbook and they stay there forever, but sometimes they do. So Mr Munroe and Ottoline began in a sketchbook. I didn't think about them for a very long time until I was looking through the sketchbook and I suddenly saw them and I thought, I want to know their story. And so I started to write a story all about them. And so, you know, I would say to all of you, never throw any of your drawings away. Keep them all together. And if you can, keep them in as sketchbook.

- JF: And do you know what I'm struck by, boys and girls, that little sketchbook that you were holding up, small and black, it reminds me of a mobile phone. And so many of us get lost in a world that opens up through...
- CR: It's about the same size. Yes.
- JF: ...the mobile phone and your eyes get sore and all the rest...yeah, do you see? But how wonderful actually you can spend time instead of online, actually creating your own world of characters in that little book. That's a lovely, lovely idea.
- CR: I hope that lots and lots of people do this and that we all end up, sort of, drawing all the time. Wouldn't that be fantastic? When I go to a lovely art gallery I'm often surprised that everybody doesn't have a notebook and they're not all copying down pictures and drawing. One of the great things I discovered was that Doctor Who draws. Isn't that brilliant, Doctor Who...
- JF: Peter Capaldi, yes.
- CR: The actor. The actor who plays Doctor Who, Peter Capaldi...
- JF: 'Cause he went to Glasgow School of Art.
- CR: He goes...yeah. And he goes everywhere with a little black notebook...
- JF: Wow.
- CR: ...and where...whenever he sees something interesting, he'll take out his notebook and he'll draw. And he will copy and he'll draw it. I love the fact that Doctor Who draws.
- JF: I didn't know that.
- CR: It's good, isn't it.
- JF: The Doctor draws. That's a good fact, isn't it, to take away with you today. Oh lovely. The other thing I like about the idea of getting inspiration from everyday life, so you might be standing in a train station or something and you can sketch someone, as you said, they'll never think for a moment you're sketching them, but if you were to take a camera out, they could get annoyed [laugh].
- CR: Exactly. Exactly. You always look interesting if you're making notes or drawing in a notebook or it's...it makes you look very, very interesting indeed.

JF: Oh I'm going to look out a notebook as soon as this session is over. Right. Thank you very much for your question, East Plean Primary in Stirling. We went to all sorts of places with that, about favourite illustrated character and why. Do you know what, Chris? Now we are going to have a question from a real live person in the audience, from St Cuthbert's and it's the young lady in the front row here who's got the microphone. Thank you very much. So maybe you can say your first name and what your question is?

Eve: My name's Eve and my question is, which authors inspire you?

JF: Thank you.

CR: Eve, that's a lovely question. Lots and lots. Now I was talking about Raymond Briggs. Now he really inspired me. He was wonderful. I loved Raymond. We were talking about the White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*, Sir John Tenniel, he really inspired me. So lots and lots of illustrators and authors have inspired me. I think that...I think the book that, I suppose, really, really did get me, sort of, reading...it was very, very inspirational, very exciting, was this book. [Pause]. I feel, sort of, quite excited just drawing the cover. Very exciting book. I'm...this is a book that I read when I was maybe in reception, maybe year one. Very exciting. It was called Peter and Jane Book 2C. Very exciting. Now this is one of those books that was going to teach me to read.

So when I was very little, I used to read...try to read with Peter and Jane. And Peter and Jane had very, very exciting adventures. They had adventures like having tea with mummy. That was a good adventure. That was in maybe 1C. And you would actually read the books. You would go up from 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C. I got to 2C and reading was a bit difficult for me. It was quite, quite hard. I wasn't finding it easy. But Peter and Jane were going to teach me to read with all their exciting adventures. They went to the seaside I remember once. That was very exciting. They played in the garden. There was that one. I think there might have been a tent. That could have been too exciting.

Anyway, you...Peter and Jane were going to teach me to read. And I tried and I tried to read with Peter and Jane. It was very, very difficult. And one day I went in to another classroom and I looked on the teacher's desk and I saw this amazing book. And it was Peter and Jane 12C. I remember it, 12C. The very hardest Peter and Jane book. And the amazing thing about this book is it was a little bit like Peter and Jane 2C, except with much, much longer words and sentences. Peter and Jane were still doing exciting things like going to the park but in really long sentences. And I thought if I could just follow Peter and Jane all

the way up the reading scheme, up to 12C, then I would learn to read. I would have done this very difficult thing called learning to read.

And then I would never need to read another book again. 'Cause I'd have done that. I'd have been fine. And then I just looked and next to Peter and Jane was another book. It was just, sort of, sitting there. And I remember it, it had quite a funny name which intrigued me. I think it was called *Agaton Sax and the Diamond Thieves*. I think that's what it was called. Jewel thieves or diamond thieves. I think it was diamond thieves. And on the cover it had, like, this very droopy looking dog. Very droopy looking dog. I think it was a sort of bloodhound. Very droopy. And a big sort of cream cake. There was a big cream cake next to the...and then in the background there's something interesting. I think there was some sort of robbers or something robbing a country house. It just looked really interesting. I thought, I want to know what that story's all about.

So I opened the book to find out what it was all about and it had pictures in it on every page as well as all the sentences. And I thought, this is good. I thought, if...I want to find out what this book has. And this book had something really amazing in it. It had a story in it. And I wanted to find that story. And I knew that that story would be really interesting because of the pictures. All these things were going in the pictures and I wanted to find out. So I tried very hard to read that book and I read it a little bit at a time and I didn't get a lot of the words, 'cause it was quite difficult, but I had the pictures to help me. And I went all the way through. And at the end I found out all about Agaton Sax and the jewel thieves and his dog who liked cream cakes. And I go to the end of that and I thought, wow. I want another book just like this. I'm not sure I want another book about Peter and Jane. I want another book about diamond thieves.

And I went to my school library and I asked the school librarian. I said, do you have any more books like this? And do you know what? She took me to this shelf and she said, yes. And she showed me five more Agaton Sax stories. And then she showed me a whole other shelf full of other stories. She said, I think you'd like these as well. She showed me all these things. And guess what? None of them had Peter and Jane in them. They're very nice, Peter and Jane, but, you know, these other are were really exciting. And from then on, I never looked back. I just read and I read and I read often.

The ones I liked best were books with pictures, but I'd read anything. Absolutely anything. Because I wanted to find the stories. And that's the magical things about books. We know this, don't we. They've got stories. We want to find out. And they have brilliant characters. And I, sort of, love them all, Eve, so it's very hard for me to choose one. *James and the Giant Peach*. Loved that. *The*

*Hobbit*. I loved Bilbo Baggins. Five...the Famous Five doing all those amazing things. Loved all those. So there...I love them all because they're brilliant stories and they're all in books.

JF: Wonderful. Great question, Eve, thank you very much indeed. And just wonderful to hear about...I wonder if ever Peter and Jane went on to do some diamond thieving of...themselves. That might have been interesting.

CR: They probably did, Janice. But they just never wrote about it. That's the trouble. No.

JF: No. [Laugh]. Love this. Thank you very much. I think we can just squeeze in one just very quickly for Liff Primary School in Angus. Hi there. I wonder if there's anything that you find challenging to draw. What do you find challenging to draw?

CR: Right. I...there was something I found very hard to draw. And so what I did, Janice, to try and, sort of, solve this is I thought, right I'm going to make myself draw this all the time. So I did have...I did go through a phase where I really liked drawing slightly grumpy goldfish. I don't know why. So this is a slightly, sort of, grumpy fish. Here he is. I enjoy drawing this, but the thing I found very difficult to draw were bicycles. Very tricky. And so I tried to, sort of, practice drawing bicycles so I could draw them very quickly so they look like bicycles. And so I thought, right I'll draw a fish on a bicycle. So now whenever anyone writes to me, Janice, I always reply and on the envelope...you'll know you're getting a letter from me, because on the envelope there will be a fish on a bicycle. That's because I've practiced my bicycles. I'm now very good at bicycles. That didn't take very long, did it, Janice. Quite fast.

JF: That didn't take very long. I think that deserves a round of applause, that fish on a bicycle, don't you. Yes. That is so interesting, because doing something like a bicycle...the fish is such a lovely shape, but a bicycle is a real thing that we all recognise, but blooming difficult...difficult to draw, don't you agree. Bicycles? Yeah. Does it tend to be that kind of thing, sort of, mechanical stuff that's more difficult?

CR: Always. Always, Janice. I'm...I love drawing animals and I love drawing people. I love drawing people. But sometimes drawing cars and trains and planes and bicycles, that can be quite difficult.

JF: Yeah. And in terms of colour, we had that little quick look in your sketchpad and we saw drawing particularly had some blue. Is it just when the fancy takes you

you decide to add a little bit of colour if you...? Or if you have some coloured pencils on you perhaps.

CR: Yes, of course. Of course. I mean it is...it's one of the things I really enjoy doing, just adding a little bit of colour when I'm drawing and this is a very handy way. It's always useful if you've got a little thing of water, you can have...and painting. Painting. I like painting almost as much as I like...there's...let's put that there. I like painting almost as much as drawing. And then you can just add little bits of colour. And colouring in, I really enjoy colour...I love the current, sort of, fashion for colouring in books. I love that. Because when you're colouring in, it's a little bit like drawing. It's...it just...you can just think about all sorts of things, what sort of day you've had, what you're doing tomorrow, what you're having for tea, all sorts of things. You can just, sort of, relax as you...

JF: Wow. Well while you do that...have you been inspired to get drawing? Painting? Yes. Have you?

Aud: Yes.

JF: Yes? Good. I know I have. In fact somebody bought me a little sketchpad for Christmas. She just thought it was a normal notebook and then she said, I think this is for drawing, Janice. So I'm going to look that out immediately. I'm not joking. Guess what? We've run out of time. Ah. Yes, indeed. Ah. It's been fantastic watching Chris at work, hasn't it? Hearing his answers and watching him do this work at the same time, which he's still doing. While he's doing that, please him one final massive Authors Live round of applause. You too. All of you. [Laugh].

CR: Thank you.