

# CHARLIE AND LOLA

Author and illustrator: Lauren Child

## Introducing

Once I was travelling through Denmark on a train and there was a child who kept asking her mum and dad questions all the time. She was such a character, very sweet and pixie-like, and there was something enchanting about her. That's really where the inspiration for Lola came from. When I got home, I sketched a picture of her from memory and set about finding a story that suited her.

## More About

My boyfriend's younger sister is called Sofie. Photographs of her as a young child bear a strong resemblance to my little pixie girl on the train in Denmark, and the tales he told me of their childhood together inspired some elements of my stories.

For example, when Sofie was little she adored her older brother, but he found her intensely irritating, so she invented an imaginary "better brother" called Soren Lorensen. In my books Soren Lorensen is Lola's imaginary friend. Photos of my boyfriend as a young child show him wearing a T-shirt with different coloured sleeves and his name on the front. And so Charlie took shape.

I loved scrapbooks as a child and I could see the entire design for Charlie and Lola like a scrapbook in my head as I wrote it. Before I was a writer I had a business making unusual lampshades in a range of striking fabrics. It wasn't a commercial success - but you can see the lampshades in the books!



## Top Tips

**Use the right voice.** I've always been fascinated by how children talk. In my first book, Clarice Bean, I stopped trying to write in the way I'd been told to, and simply used the voice of a seven-year-old.

**Details are important.** Children have a world you can't enter as an adult. Simple things can be a big deal when you're small - such as bed-time, food, losing your first tooth, or going to the park to feed the ducks.

**Rules can be good.** For Charlie and Lola, I set myself quite strict rules in that I only ever do stories that are based on issues that are really important to small children, like sleeping and eating.

**Use your own experiences.** As a child I was often alone with my friends or siblings, with no adult supervision, and I thought it would be interesting to see life acted out with no grown-ups around.

# ANNA HIBISCUS

Author: **Atinuke**

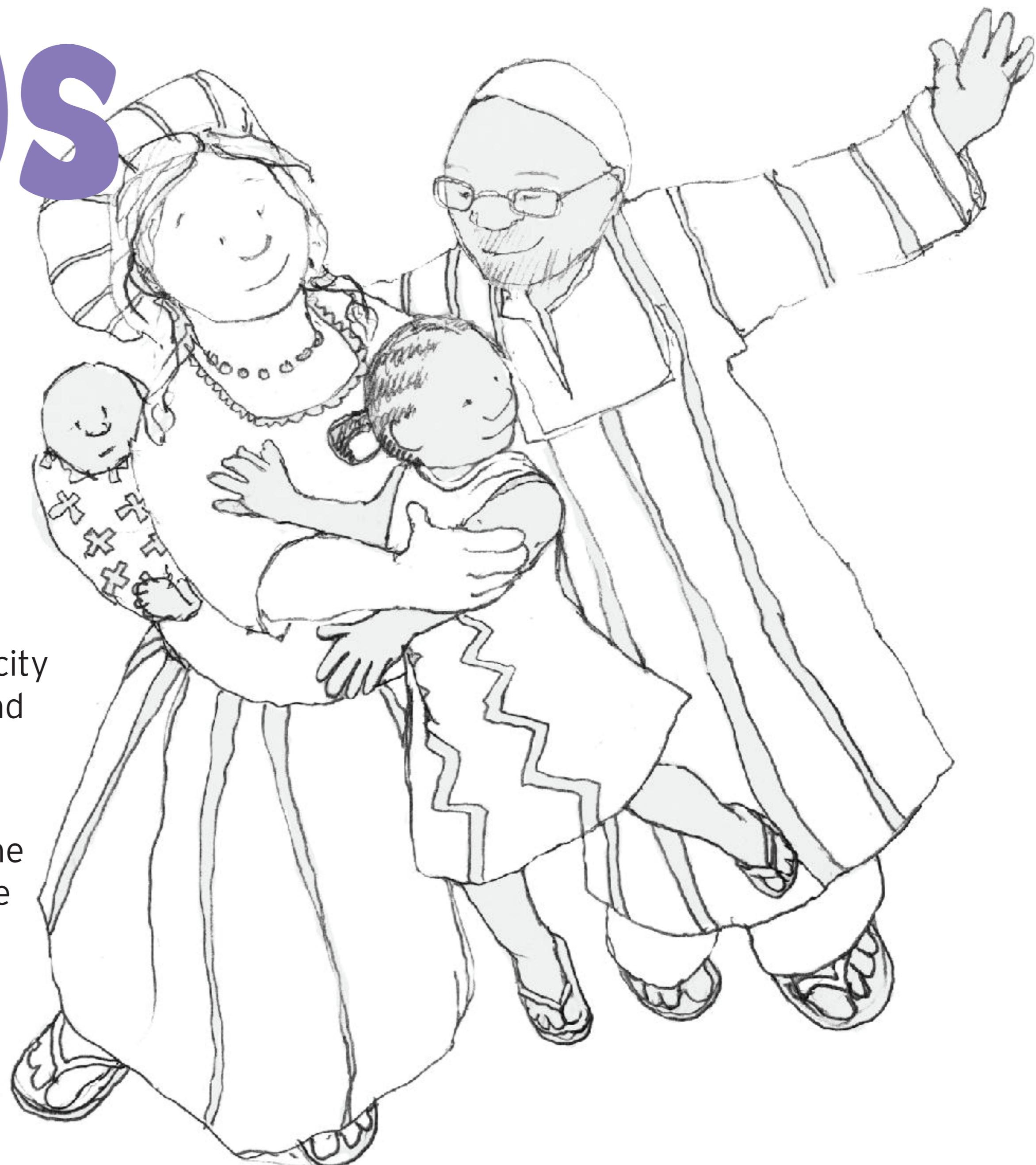
Illustrator: **Lauren Tobia**

## Introducing

Anna Hibiscus is a girl growing up in a big busy city in Africa. She goes to school with her cousins and - when she is not busy watching television - she helps her aunties with housework!

Anna Hibiscus is curious. She is curious about the African city she lives in, about the African village where her Grandmother and Grandfather were born, and about Canada - where her mother is from.

Anna Hibiscus is so curious, and so brave, and so fun, that she explores both Canada and Africa. She has lots of fun on her adventures, but sometimes she gets sad, and sometimes she gets into lots of trouble too!



## More About

Anna Hibiscus is inspired by my own childhood. Like her I grew up in a big, busy African city and, like her, my own mother was from overseas - from England.

Like Anna I was very curious about both England and Nigeria - the African country where I grew up. But unlike Anna I did not explore them in the ways Anna does, nor did I live with my whole entire African family. So Anna Hibiscus is not me - she just lived where I lived, and she does the things I wanted to do as a child.

Sometimes I wish I had done those things, and sometimes, when Anna gets into trouble, I am glad that I did not do them!

## Top Tips

**Find out as much as you can about your character.** When you're creating a fictional character it's important to have a clear idea of who they are so that they come to life when you write about them.

**You might have to write about them a lot before you really know them.** I wrote a lot about Anna Hibiscus before I wrote the actual stories which got published - by then I knew what she would do and think and feel when things happened to her.

**Choose your character carefully.** It's also important to choose a character that you find really fun or are really interested in - because you are going to spend a lot of time with them!

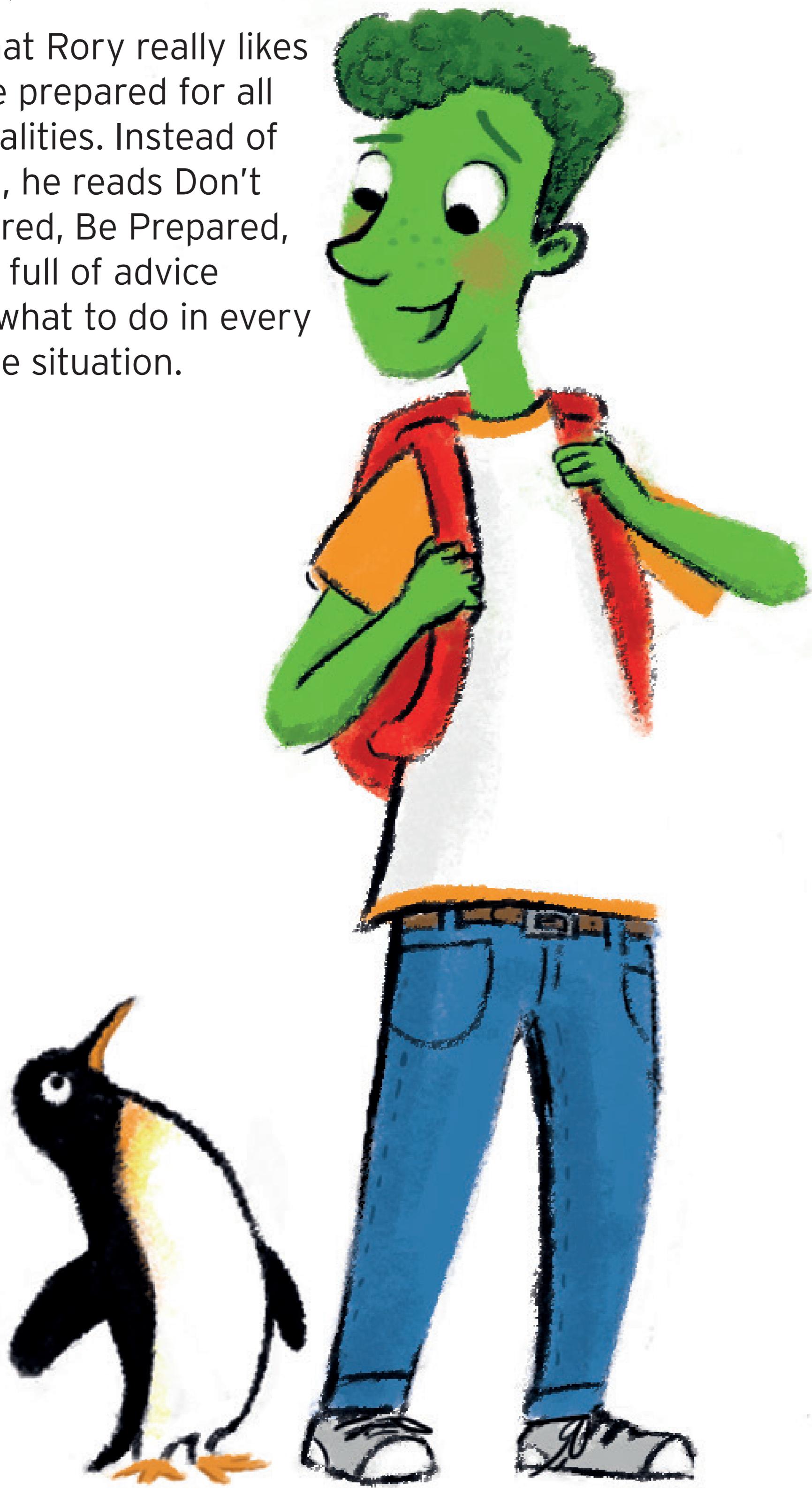
# RORY ROONEY

Author: **Frank Cottrell Boyce**  
Illustrator: **Steven Lenton**

## Introducing

Rory Rooney is a very ordinary boy. He goes to school, squabbles with his older sister and knows all about superheroes (but only because his dad likes comics – he doesn't).

But what Rory really likes is to be prepared for all eventualities. Instead of comics, he reads *Don't Be Scared, Be Prepared*, a book full of advice about what to do in every possible situation.



## More About

There really were green children in England once. A monk called Ralph of Coggeshall told how two green children had turned up in the village of Woolpit during the reign of King Stephen, in the twelfth century. They were found hiding in a pit during harvest time.

They were frightened. They couldn't speak English and wouldn't eat any food. The lord of the manor took them in and after a week or so they agreed to eat raw beans. Eventually they learned to speak English. I've always been haunted by this strange sad little tale.

But the main reason I was fascinated was because I change colour too. I have a strange blood condition that means when I am under stress I go bright yellow. Like a walking, talking daffodil. I don't feel any different when this happens, so the first I tend to know about it is when people stare at me in shops.

When I was a teenager maybe it should have made me feel like hiding, but I always remembered the story of the green children and it made me feel as though changing colour was all right really.

## Top Tips

**Think about people you know.** What makes them different from everyone else?

**Think about what your character likes and dislikes,** and how they react to these things.

**Don't get too bogged down in what your characters look like.** Readers will fill in the blanks in their imaginations.

**Give your character a problem to overcome, or a challenge to achieve.** This gives them purpose throughout the story.

**Let their name come to you.** Don't try and force it. When it's right, you'll know.

# JULIUS ZEBRA

## Introducing

Julius is a young zebra who is captured by Romans and transported all the way from his African home, to the magnificent city of Rome. Here, alongside many other animals from around the Empire, Julius is thrust into the great amphitheatre called the Colosseum to be killed for sport.

What the Romans didn't expect was for Julius to fight back! The Emperor Hadrian is impressed with the gutsy zebra and allows Julius and his friends to be trained as proper gladiators so they can fight for their freedom at the Emperor's big birthday bash in one month's time!

## Top Tips

**Keep your character design simple, fun and instantly recognisable.** Julius is built around several basic shapes including circles, triangles and even sausages!

**Scribble your character in lots of poses and situations** so that you get used to their posture and shape.

**Draw on your own experiences** and those of your friends and family to make your character believable.

**Write down funny thoughts or interesting conversations in a notebook;** if you don't, you are 100% guaranteed to forget them!

**Do lots of research** if you are creating something historical. If you dress your characters correctly, it will enrich them no end.

Author and illustrator:  
Gary Northfield



## More About

I've always admired zebras after watching a great documentary on them many years ago. Zebras are very loyal, hardy creatures who have to put up with a lot of danger in their lives.

I thought a zebra would be a perfect star for my book about gladiators as he's not the sort of animal you would expect to see fight back in the Colosseum, but he would draw on his natural abilities of speed and guile and could grow into an excellent fighter. Julius is still young and naïve, so it was fun taking him on his personal journey, from a nincompoop, to a brave gladiator.

# EMILY WILD

Author and illustrator: **Helen Moss**  
Illustrator: **Leo Hartas**

## Introducing

Twelve-year old Emily Wild lives with her mum and dad in a converted lighthouse on the island of Castle Key. She loves solving mysteries and is always on the lookout for smugglers, spy rings and other dastardly criminal activities.

Emily never leaves home without her investigations kit or her trusty dog, Drift. In the first Adventure Island book, *The Mystery of the Whistling Caves*, Emily teams up with Scott and Jack Carter, two brothers who are staying in Castle Key for the holidays. Over the course of the series they investigate all sorts of mysteries (and face all kinds of peril) together.

## More About

I love writing about Emily. Although I didn't base her on a real person she seems very real to me. I think it's because she is exactly the person I wanted to be when I was a girl!

I was a big fan of mystery series like *The Famous Five*. I spent much of my childhood searching for baffling crimes to solve. Annoyingly, the criminals where I lived were never considerate enough to leave any exciting clues for me to find. In truth, I would have been hopeless at crime detection. Emily is much braver and cleverer and more resourceful and determined than I ever was.



## Top Tips

**When writing a mystery story it works well to create a team of about two to five main characters as your detectives.**

Think about the strengths that each member contributes, and - just as importantly - about their weaknesses. For example, Emily is brave, resourceful and organised (her notebooks are a thing of wonder!) but she can also be bossy and impatient and so obsessed with her investigation that she loses sight of reality.

At first Emily is reluctant to accept help from Jack and Scott and she doesn't think they are taking the investigation seriously enough. But she gradually grows to respect and rely on the boys more.

**It's fun to show what annoys your characters about each other, but also what they learn from each other.** This gives you lots of scope for comedy and drama in your story.

# FUTURE RATBOY

Author and illustrator: Jim Smith

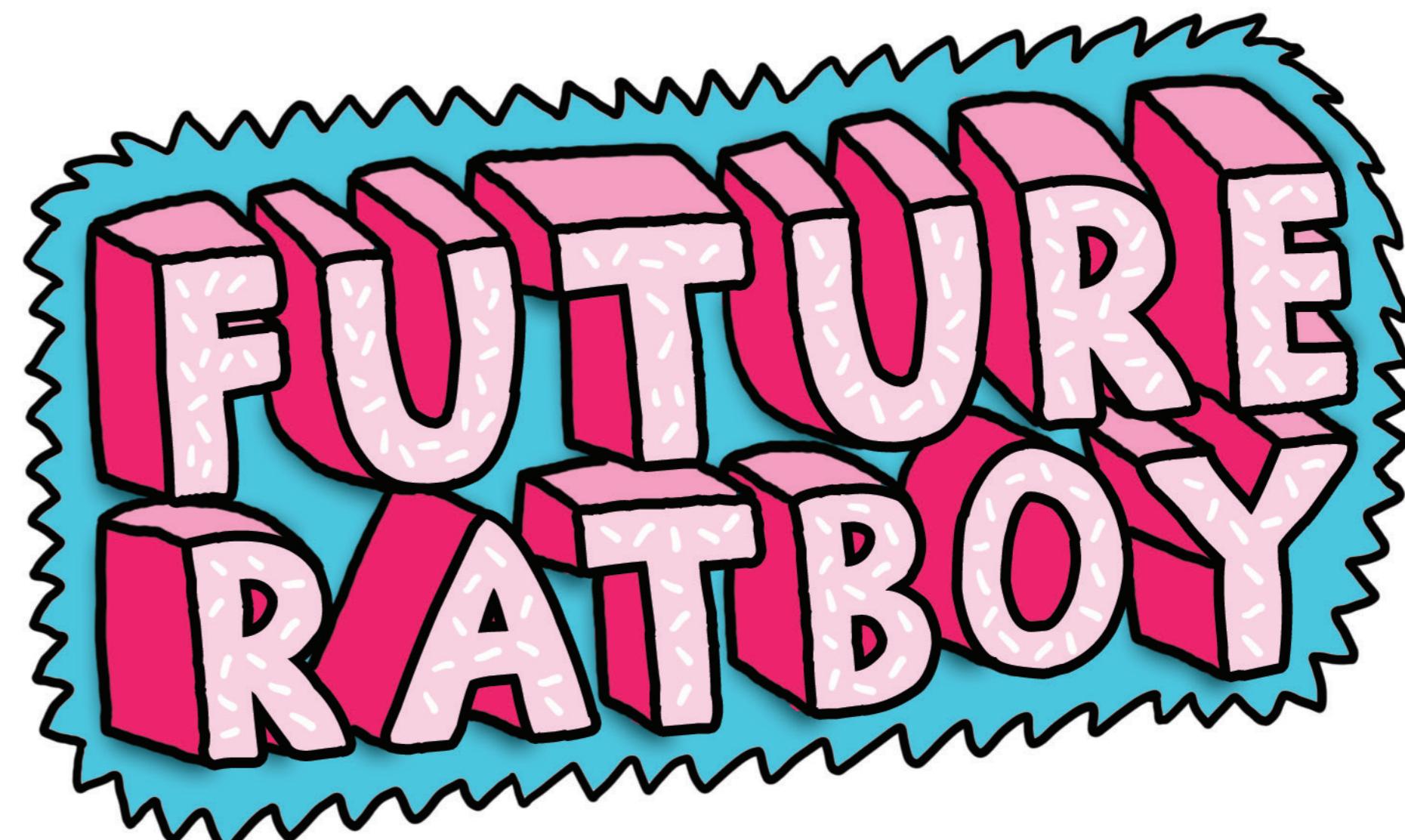
## Introducing

Future Ratboy's real name is Colin Lamppost. Colin was transported millions of years into the future when the bin he was in got zapped by lightning.

He was in a bin because his dad had thrown the TV in it, and Colin was trying to rescue it, by the way.

When he got zapped, Colin's DNA was fused with some rat's DNA and the DNA of that TV I mentioned earlier. Now he's half boy, half rat, half TV.

Oh yeah, and he had his cuddly toy bird with him too. Now the bird can talk and fly. Except all it can say is 'NOT!' - which is why he calls it 'Not Bird'. Make sense?



## More About

Future Ratboy is a character that first appeared in my 'Barry Loser' books. He's Barry Loser's favourite TV superhero.

One day I thought, 'What if Future Ratboy had his own books?' - so I started writing one, and now it's in the shops - it's called 'Future Ratboy and the attack of the killer robot grannies' and it's the keelest book ever! (I think).

'Keel' is how Future Ratboy says 'cool', by the way. It's how EVERYONE says 'cool' in the future. So if you want to be cool in the future, you'd better start saying 'Keel'!

## Top Tips

**When I'm coming up with a character, I think a lot about what they're like** and what's happening to them. I was used to writing about Barry Loser, who's a bit of a worrier and a wimp, and I wanted to make Future Ratboy different. So I made sure he was a bit braver than Barry, and didn't worry about stuff as much.

**Then I thought about what was going to happen to him** - Ratboy was going to get zapped into the future, away from his family. Which meant he'd be homesick. That gave me a good idea of how he'd be feeling throughout the story, and what he'd be trying to do - get home to his mum and dad!

# KETCHUP-FACE

Author: John Dougherty  
Illustrator: David Tazzyman



## Introducing

Ketchup-Face lives in a lovely house on the little island of Great Kerfuffle, with her big brother Stinkbomb (and her parents, but they like to keep out of the way when Stinkbomb and Ketchup-Face are in a story).

How old is Ketchup-Face? I don't know. About your age, probably. Or maybe your little sister's or brother's age.

She's quite brave, and she's very proud of her smile, which shows off the gap where she's recently lost a tooth. She hates: unfairness; evilness and wickedness; and being woken too early by a blackbird. And she likes: doing good; Miss Butterworth the ninja librarian; and pretending her friend the little shopping trolley is really a beautiful horsey called Starlight.

## More About

I like Ketchup-Face. I suspect you might, too. David, who does the pictures, says she's his hero.

I think that's because she's so true to herself. If she's happy, you'll know all about it. If she's cross, you'll know why. If she wants to sing, she'll open her mouth and see what comes out. And if she wants to pretend something, then it stays pretended.

Much of the inspiration for Ketchup-Face came from my daughter, and from children in general. Children are great at dealing with the weirdness of life in a way that most grown-ups aren't, and they have an almost limitless imagination. And what good is a story without imagination?

## Top Tips

A lot of the best bits of Ketchup-Face are pinched from children at play. Her song in the first book, for instance, is based on one I heard a young friend of mine singing while he was sitting on his potty.

Sometimes one of my own children, messing around, will say something daft and I'll think, 'That sounds like a Ketchup-Face thing to say', and try to remember it for the next story.

So my toppest tip is: look at the people around you, and see which bits of them would be good to put in a story.

Oh, and read lots of other stories, too.

# SIR CHARLIE STINKY SOCKS

Author and illustrator:  
**Kristina Stephenson**

## Introducing

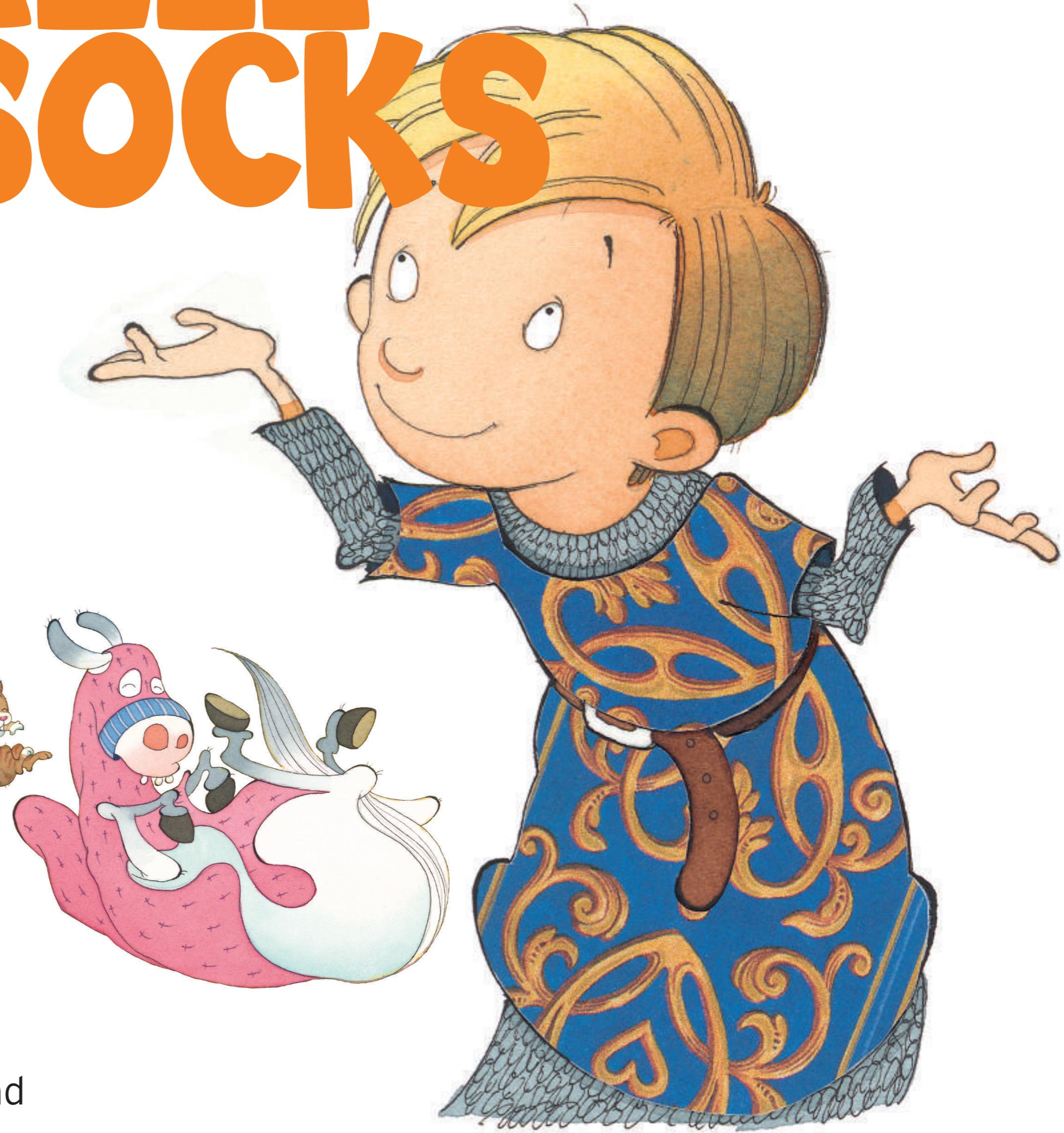
Sir Charlie Stinky Socks is a bold, brave knight who likes nothing more than heading off, over the hills and far away, in search of really big adventures. He wears chain mail under his blue and gold tunic and is never without his trusty sword. He keeps a big bottle of water and a stack of sandwiches by his side and he's always happy to share them.

This is just as well, because Sir Charlie never goes anywhere without his two best friends: his faithful, fearless cat, Envelope and his good, grey mare. Oh, and let's not forget those red and white stripy socks and their powerful pong which come in pretty handy for breaking spells and luring magical mermaids.

## More About

Sir Charlie Stinky Socks is quite an unusual knight. For a start he's probably only about 6-8 years old and was based on a real person - my own son, Charlie when he was a little boy. He's not afraid to face anything from fire-breathing dragons and monstrous beasties, to mummified pharaohs and cursed pirate captains, but he never, ever fights them. No, no! I wanted kindness and problem-solving to be the order of the day for my young hero. So Sir Charlie only ever uses his sword for things like cutting up his sandwiches and slicing paths through thorny overgrown forests.

And while Envelope and the good grey mare may flee at the sight of fearsome foes, clever Sir Charlie stands his ground, looks around and thinks in the face of danger. He knows that nothing is ever quite as scary as it might first seem, and that everyone has problems from time to time... even fire-breathing dragons. Sir Charlie Stinky Socks is a knight with a heart of gold and a head full of brilliant ideas and he's always happy to help.



## Top Tips

**Real people provide fabulous inspiration for fictional characters.** I based Sir Charlie on my own son when he was a little boy; not just the way he looked but the things he said and did and the games he played.

**Keep your ears and eyes wide open** and you'll soon realise that people around you are saying and doing the funniest things, all the time; things that might be great starting points when you are trying to create a character. Jot down in a note book things you hear and see - you never know when they might come in handy.

**Draw your characters before you start writing about them.** I never begin a new story without making lots of sketches of each new character, whether they are people or monstrous beasts. I draw the character from different angles, in all sorts of poses and pulling a range of faces. I stick these around my studio; it really helps the characters come to life.