



This month, we've been talking to . . . Myles Lawford

Myles Lawford has been drawing for as long as he can remember. The art room became his second home from a young age, and when he finally left school he headed to AUT to study spatial design. He has worked at numerous design agencies, has created animated cartoons for TV shows and advertisements, as well as many online games for young children. He is now a children's book illustrator, working on his sixth book for Scholastic NZ.

We asked Myles some questions about himself, and here's what he said...

Where were you born? Where do you live now?

I was born in Auckland and live in Auckland. I have travelled around the world and still can't find a place that suits me better.

Where did you go to school? Did you have a nickname?

I went to Kohimarama Primary school then went on to King's College, Auckland University then across the road to Auckland University of Technology. My sisters used to call me Mice when I was young because they found it too difficult to pronounce Myles. They still call me that even now.

What were you like in school? What is the naughtiest thing you did?

The naughtiest thing I did at primary school was, probably every field trip, my friends and I would run off and hide. The teachers would start to keep a watchful eye on our group but that just made it more of a challenge for the 'A-team', which was the name of our little group of friends. I used to forge letters from my father to get out of doing all sorts of stuff. I got away with it for a long time until my father did actually write to the school, and that's when they compared all the previous letters to his real one. Busted!

What was your favourite book growing up?

Asterix and Obelix. I had quite the collection of Asterix books. Later I really got into comics like *X-Men* and *Avengers*. I also loved reading *The Hobbit* (illustrated version). I always enjoyed books that were illustrated and I think my parents soon discovered that if I was going to read something it better have pictures included.

Who is your favourite children's author?

Roald Dahl, Dr Seuss, René Goscinny, J.R.R. Tolkien.

What is your favourite food/colour/movie?

When I was young I ate cornflakes for breakfast, lunch and dinner, absolutely loved the stuff. Not so much anymore ... I think I overdid it when I was young. Favourite colour: blue. Favourite movies: *Shawshank Redemption*, *Star Wars* (the early ones, not the latest ones – they are horrible). I enjoy watching animated movies from Disney or Dreamworks; it's amazing some of the ideas they come up with.

Who inspired you to illustrate?

My mother – she was an art teacher and inspired me to do what I enjoyed.

How did you get started? How old were you?

I fell in love with art/drawing as far back as I can remember. I still have lots of pictures of *Star Wars* characters and spaceships I used to draw when I was five years old.

Why did you want to be an illustrator?

Three reasons. 1 – because I enjoy it so much, 2 – because I like the reactions and enjoyment I give to children that read my books, and 3 – because my family likes my books, especially my nephews and nieces. I wasn't always an illustrator, I was a graphic designer for years and was lucky enough to work for the NZRU on their Ruggabees characters for children. I loved it ... it was the catalyst that pulled me away from the corporate world and into the amazing creative scene of book illustration.

How do you think up ideas?

Imagination through experiences. I like to look around and observe things that I can use for my books. Then I just draw and draw. Even some good ideas can come through mistakes – I just call them ‘happy mistakes’.

Do you have a special place where you illustrate?

I illustrate in my office, but it’s not my special place. I draw everywhere: at dinner, on the street, on holiday lying on a beach chair... I carry around a notebook and pad most places I go.

What is the best thing about being an illustrator?

Doing something you’re passionate about and knowing that with each book sold you have entertained somebody.

Have you had a funny or embarrassing moment as an illustrator?

Not really but I do remember when I was a child I overfed our goldfish and my mother asked us kids who was responsible. Of course I said not me, but unfortunately because I drew all the time I had already drawn a bunch of pictures of me feeding the fish ... so once again I was busted.

What do you do when you are not illustrating?

I enjoy hanging out with friends, travelling, playing tennis to keep fit, but even when I’m not working on a book I still find myself illustrating something.

What would you have chosen to be if you were not an illustrator?

An architect or a games designer.

Which famous person from the past would you like to talk to?

Tough question, maybe someone like Walt Disney. He was a visionary and a creative. Also I feel like he was a child at heart which is a bit like me. We could sit around and think up new stories and characters.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

Currently I’m illustrating but I have so many ideas floating around in my head that one of these days I’m going to try my hand at writing as well – watch this space!

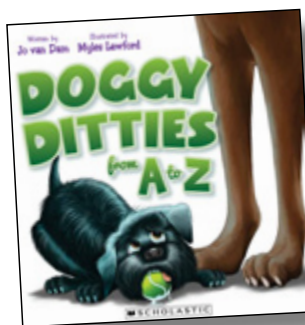
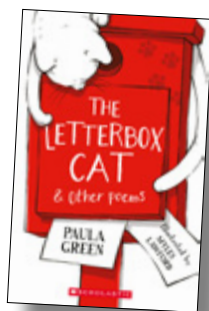
Awards received:

Best son in the universe – thanks mum!

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