

## Not So Quiet Mouse

### **The inspiration behind the story**

In 2018 my debut picture book *Not So Scary Bear* – about a bear and his friendship with a little mouse – was published. I knew during the making process that this little mouse had a story of his own tale to tell. And, similarly to *Not So Scary Bear*, I knew it had to be a story about defying stereotypes, belonging and being yourself.

Whilst the seeds of the story were beginning to grow in my head, I was also spending my days trying to control two noisy children - regularly telling them to “not jump on the furniture”, “sit still” and “be quiet”. But, equally, knowing that it is was this confidence, enthusiasm and energy that made me so proud of them and often laugh out loud. And so, it was this experience which gradually gave me the core idea of *Not So Quiet Mouse*'s story.

### **The Illustration Process**

The process began with getting to know the key characters. I did this by creating a series of pencil sketches in various poses and settings. I then began to think about how the illustrations could complement and develop the text. At the same time, I had to be mindful of how the book should flow visually – such as having a page with a big illustration and lots of detail, followed by a ‘less busy’ page made up of four smaller illustrations. I then drew the final sketches for every page, making sure I left space for the text (this is called the storyboard). I found this stage of the process the trickiest and it took about 2-3 months to get it just right.

I then decided upon the colour palette for the entire book. I wanted it to be similar to *Not So Scary Bear* but with an extra splash of yellow to emphasise the exuberant nature of *Not So Quiet Mouse*. The next step was to create a pack of coloured paper, using acrylic paint rolled on to a variety of textured paper, which I would later use to create all the illustrations.

Once the publisher and I were happy with the storyboard, it was time to whip out the scissors and begin to cut!

Unusually, at this time, I was also embarking on a 6-week campervan trip around New Zealand. Let me tell you, a 4-berth campervan with, the aforementioned, two noisy children is not the most ideal of art studios! However, due to the space limitations, it did mean that rather than create really large pages of illustrations, I just spent my time making lots of little collage pieces. For me this proved a satisfying and productive way of working and, by the end of the holiday, I had a bag full of small collage creations that I would later take home to create the final picture book illustrations.

With all 32 pages completed, including the front cover, back cover and end pages – it was time to send it off to Windy Hollow Books.

### Before reading

Take a look at the cover and predict what the story might be about.

What do you imagine the character of the mouse might be like?

### After reading

How would you describe the character of the mouse? What are some adjectives you could use to describe his personality?

Why do you think the other animals are bothered by Mouse's reading?

In what way does the book challenge the stereotype of a mouse?

What message do you think this book is trying to get across?

What other mouse stories can you find? Do they reinforce or challenge mouse stereotypes?

### Art

Ruth Waters uses collage for her illustration. In her note above she describes her process. Experiment with collage to make your own library scene.

### Writing

What do you think Mouse's favourite books would be? Can you come up with a list of funny book titles that might appeal to a mouse?

Can you write your own story about an adventure that the bear and the mouse have together.

Ruth has written a book about Not So Scary Bear and one about Not So Quiet Mouse. Can you make your own stories about the other characters, Not So Cunning Fox, Not So Wise Owl or Not So Busy Bee.