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## Satoshi Kitamura

### 1. Tell us a bit about yourself.

I was born in Tokyo, Japan in 1956 but lived in London for nearly 30 years until the summer 2009. I now live in Japan again.

I have been an illustrator since I was 19 years old. I cannot remember when I started to draw. . . I must have been four or five years old and since then I've never stopped. I was 23 when I came to UK the first time. It was a very interesting experience to learn the language and develop my career as an artist at the same time.

I was very lucky to be asked to illustrate a story called 'Angry Arthur' by Hiawyn Oram as my first book. It is one of the best picture book stories I have ever come across. The book became very successful.

### 2. When did you start writing? How old were you?

I am an artist first and only write occasionally. The first picture book I wrote myself was called 'When Sheep Cannot Sleep.' I was about 29 years old. I learnt to write from illustrating other authors' stories.

Words and visual images often come together. These days I write stories and illustrate most of the time but I really enjoy illustrating stories like the ones that John Agard or Grace Nichols write.



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**3. Tell us a bit about your first piece of writing or artwork.**

I cannot remember the first picture I drew. I was too small. When I was a child I drew lots of cars and airplanes. I often drew imaginary machines and vehicles.

I preferred to draw from my imagination than from nature. Also I used to draw comic book characters and dinosaurs. I made my own funny comics, too. I even printed some of them using a simple printing machine by myself.

**4. Why do you write/draw? What motivates you?**

For me drawing is always the most interesting thing in the world. I still think so even though I have been doing it for almost 50 years now. I never get bored. It is a way to think and see things better.

**5. How do you start to write/draw?**

There's nothing special. I draw lots of sketches of the images I want to create with pen or pencil in my sketchbook or sheets of paper. When I feel ready to move on to a finish drawing, I pick a pen or brush. I usually use ink or water colours. Even though I make a plenty of preparations, often I have to do more than one finish drawing. It is not uncommon to repeat the same picture quite few times until I feel happy with the result.

**6. How do you get inspiration for writing/drawing?**

This is one of the most difficult questions. Inspiration is a mystery to me. I don't often remember how I get inspired for certain ideas. Being an illustrator, words seem to inspire me a lot. I love illustrating poems. Or sometimes words I overhear in streets or in conversations give me new ideas.





7. Where and when do you write/draw? Is there a good time of day?

I used to be a night person. Nowadays I prefer to work in the morning. Usually I go to bed early and get up early. I often start working before six in the morning. I can concentrate more in the morning.

8. What achievement/s are you most proud of?

I don't think I can pick one. I'm proud of some of my picture books and poetry books I have illustrated, especially when people say they like them.

9. What was your favourite book as a child and what did it mean to you?

'Tetsuwan Atom' (Astro Boy), a comic book, by Osamu Tezuka. I think it has been made into a film recently but it looks very different from the original version that I loved.

10. What are your top tips for budding young writers?

The only advice I can give to a young writer or artist is: write a lot if you want to write better and draw all the time if you are a budding artist. Also read, listen and look at the world around you.

Satoshi Kitamura has written the following titles for Collins Big Cat:

978-0-00-718663-1 *Colours*: Band 04/Blue

978-0-00-723119-5 *Tiger dead! Tiger dead! Stories from the Caribbean*: Band 13/Topaz

