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Shoo Rayner

1. Tell us a bit about yourself.

I'm dyslexic. When I get a really great idea, I write so fast that I can't read what I write! It's all a scribble. I've learned to slow down a lot. I probably wouldn't have become a writer without a computer. I've learned to slow down and think more carefully when I write. Practice makes perfect.

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

I began writing songs when I was 13. I didn't realise I was writing. I wrote on the backs of envelopes or whatever was close at hand when I was inspired. I liked to make the words fit the tunes in my head. I think I still write with a certain amount of rhythm.

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

My first books were only 14 sentences long. They were stories I made up for my niece, Lydia, about when she was a baby. When they came out people told me I was clever to write such short stories. I didn't know it was hard! Once they told me it was, I found it really difficult to write such short stories again!

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

I like telling stories. That's what I do with both words and pictures.

5. How do you start to write/draw?

Lots of sketches and planning until I think I know the characters and the situation. Then I know when I'm ready to write the story.

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

It's all about ideas. Ideas are waiting for you to grab them all day long. You have to practise having ideas to get better. It takes 99 duff ideas to have a good one, but you have to have those 99 ideas to get there. Practise is at the heart of getting good at anything, so fill up sketchbooks and notebooks with ideas. The hard part is learning which are the good ideas. When you know you've got a good one, put all your energy into that one. You may be able to adapt some earlier ideas to make the big idea work better.

7. Do you find there is a good time of day to work?

Just sit down and get on with it. If you wait for inspiration it will never come. Start writing or drawing anything. Just doing it kicks your brain awake and lets the good stuff roll out. Wait for inspiration and you will wait forever.

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

I'm proud of have stuck through all the hard times. When I go into a library and see my books on the shelf, I feel really proud, especially when I look at how many times the book has been borrowed.

I love it when someone tells me they have read one of my books and they really enjoyed it. That's great!

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

Narnia. I lived in that world!

10. What are your 5 top tips for young budding writers?

- Read out loud: you will hear mistakes you don't see.
Plan your story into chunks. You don't have to write it all in one go.
- Edit! You can always change what you have written to make it better.
It's hard work, but it's worth it.
- Don't talk about it - do it! Stick your bum on a chair and get on with it!
- Never, ever, ever, ever, ever give up.



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Shoo Rayner has written the following titles for Collins Big Cat:

- 978-0-00-718544-3 *Fly Away Home*: Band 1B/Pink
- 978-0-00-718528-3 *Cat and Dog*: Band 0/Lilac
- 978-0-00-723582-7 *Cat and Dog in a Mess*: Band 2A/ Red
- 978-0-00-723075-4 *The Monster Joke Book*: Band 12/Copper
- 978-0-00-733096-6 *Nip! Nip!*: Band 1A/Pink Phonics
- 978-0-00-723588-9 *Bot on the Moon*: Band 2B/Red Phonics



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