

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower to upper primary (5–12 years)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning Areas:** English, Stand Together National Curriculum
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and creative thinking; Intercultural understanding

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- How an author constructs a story in structure, voice and character
- How an illustrator creates character and mood
- Building vocabulary and using literary devices and symbols
- Values: overcoming fear, resilience, fortitude, independence

## THEMES

- Bullying
- Imagination
- Problem-solving

## PREPARED BY

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright and Random House Australia

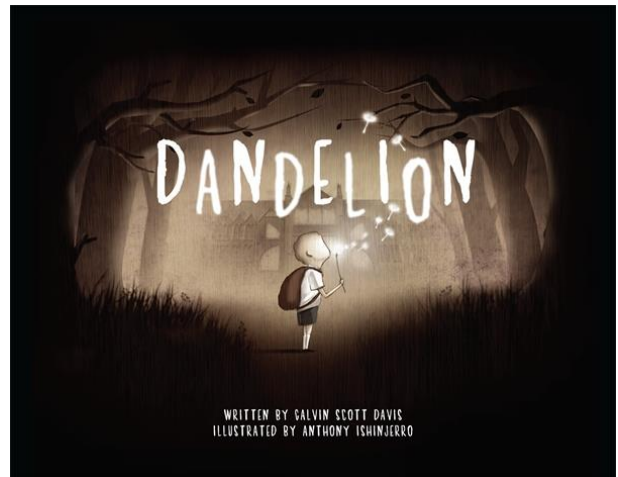
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## DANDELION

By Galvin Scott Davis  
Illustrated by Anthony Ishinjerro

## PLOT SUMMARY

*'With all my might, you'll all take flight.'*

Benjamin Brewster hates going to school, but he has a really good reason. He is being bullied. So he makes a wish by blowing on a dandelion – he wishes that either the school would disappear, or the bullies would. Sadly, wishes don't always come true, and although Benjamin never confronts his tormentors, he does come to realise that his imagination makes him stronger than they are.

Anthony Ishinjerro's atmospheric, cinematic illustrations have been likened to Tim Burton's film storyboards and they certainly transport readers into an eerie and threatening visual scenario.

Gavin Scott Davis's text promotes the idea that creativity can solve problems and provide a space where adults and children can discuss bullying and methods for coping with it.

This book will both solve some problems and also entertain young readers with its creatively written and visually stimulating insights into bullying.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Galvin Scott Davis is an award-winning writer and Creative Director of digital media company, Protein. He lives in Marrickville, Sydney, with his wife and three sons.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

A staggering one in six children are being bullied each week, according to a 2009 report by Edith Cowan University. 'A quarter of students between year 4 and year 9 reported being bullied at least once over the few weeks the research was undertaken,' School Education Minister Peter Garrett said in November last year. 'One in five students has experienced some form of cyber-bullying. This means every family either has a child, or knows one, who is being bullied at school.'

This book was written by Sydney father of three Galvin Scott Davis in response to his son being bullied. *Dandelion* began life as an app in 2012 after Galvin Scott Davis received kick-starter funding from the US. By late 2012 it had shot to fame as one of the #1 book apps in the Australian Apple iTunes store. At this time Galvin also received his first round of media attention, with articles appearing across Australia. While Galvin initially self-published a limited number of hardback copies of *Dandelion*, he was excited when Random House Australia acquired the rights to the book, saying that he was looking forward to spreading the message to the wider community.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Anthony Ishinjerro says that 'Drawing has always been a part of my childhood. I remember finding stacks and stacks of used paper and drawing space sagas on the back of them. Both my uncle and grandfather are architects; therefore art is always valued and encouraged in my family.' He did a bachelor course in graphic design at University of Wollongong and graduated in 2007. *Dandelion* is his first picture book.

## ILLUSTRATOR'S INSPIRATION

'The unique challenge of doing a picture book was to create characters that are engaging enough to sustain through the narrative. Like actors, characters in a picture book need to connect the viewer on an emotional level: without this connection the visual will damage the story's integrity [See Appendix].

## WRITING STYLE

### Structure

Narrative structure is essential to the successful creation of the arc of a story. This one is made up of a situation being presented (exposition), a problem occurring, and a resolution.

### Activities

1. Discuss these three aspects of narrative structure with your students.
2. Discuss the fact that the problem is often resolved after the occurrence of a series of sequential incidents.
3. Invite students to add an 'episode' or incident to this story which could work within the structure which has been presented. [See also **Worksheets 2** and **3**.]

### Questions

1. What other structure might have been used? For example, the problem might have been presented as a cumulative tale where the protagonist confronts a repeated sequence of situations, which are not resolved until the final solution is found.
2. What did you think of the resolution in this story?

### Rhyme

The use of rhyme in this story is well-suited to the author's aim which is to engage with students emotionally and to deliver a message which will stay with them. The 'meter' of the text is important in creating a pleasing rhythm or pattern in the telling of the story.

**Activities**

1. Invite students to take a rhyme used in the book and come up with a list of other words which might rhyme e.g. hide/pried/side/ride etc.
2. Complete this rhyme: Benjamin was a lonely boy, he [...] For assistance with choice of words see websites such as RhymeZone <http://www.rhymezone.com/>

**Questions**

1. What is a 'good' rhyme and what is a 'bad' rhyme? A rhyme should never sound forced or contrived. It should have the flow of ordinary conversation so that you are not aware of the rhyme. [For assistance see 'Ingrid's Notes: The Do's and Don'ts of Good Rhyme' <http://ingridsnotes.wordpress.com/2010/07/18/the-dos-and-donts-of-good-rhyme/>]
2. What is meter? [See Metre (poetry) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metre\\_\(poetry\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metre_(poetry)) for ideas]

**Literary Devices**

The use of literary devices such as metaphor, simile, personification and alliteration is important in achieving narrative effect.

**Activities**

1. Identify any examples of literary devices in this text (e.g. Alliteration is used in Benjamin Brewster's name.) Discuss the use of metaphor in this text.

**Questions**

1. What devices are used in the following: 'The school looked down. Could it be, it grinned and frowned?'; 'Poked and pried'; 'Nurse his wounds.' Answers: a. Personification. b. Alliteration. c. Metaphor.
2. Are there any examples of simile in this text?

**Choice of Vocabulary**

Choice of Vocabulary is another aspect of style.

**Activities**

1. Some uncommon words are used in this text e.g. particular, misguided, ne'er-do-wells, disperse. Test your student's comprehension by having them write a definition for these or other words used in the book.
2. Invite students to write a synonym for these words: frowned, courage, dodged, squished, disappear [See also Worksheet 3].

**Questions**

1. What words did students not understand?
2. What is a synonym? What is an antonym? What antonyms can you think of for synonyms you listed above? [For ideas, see websites such as Synonym <http://www.synonym.com/>]

**Storyboard**

Picture books are based on a storyboard just as films are (This book is actually based on an app!)

**Activities**

1. Write a short script showing a group of kids bullying another one.
2. Discuss the possible strategies to be used by the one being bullied and how the situation might be resolved.
3. Act out several alternative scenarios and then discuss them further. Base the script one of the episodes written by students above under Writing Style Structure.
4. Choose some music which is threatening to accompany your play. Then choose a piece which sounds comforting to end the performance.
5. Create a Book Trailer based on the book. See 'Book Trailers' The Learning Place

Ipswich District Teacher Librarian Network  
<http://learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=41987>

### Questions

1. What other ending might this story have had?
2. Why does Benjamin count backwards from nine hundred and seventy-two?

## ILLUSTRATION STYLE

### Design

Every part of a book is important in its overall design, including the cover, the title page, and the endpapers at the back and front of the book.

### Activities

1. Picture books are landscape, portrait or square in format or shape. This book is landscape-shaped. A picture book is like a film in that it relies for its impetus on the turning of pages, much as a film works in narration by using a storyboard of connected actions and effects. If the image doesn't entice the reader to turn the page, it isn't working as a sequential narrative. Discuss the format and design of this book.
2. Design your own cover for this book.

### Questions

1. How would you use the double page spread to illustrate the episode in this story which you wrote above? Make up a storyboard for the visual text. [See **Worksheet 1** for an outline to use.]
2. How do the endpapers relate to the story?

### Colour

Colour is an important aspect of an artist's emotional interpretation of a text.

### Activities

1. Discuss colour and how it can have an emotional impact on the reader's interpretation of a particular image.

2. Discuss tonal registers and how muted colours vary from vibrant ones. a sequential narrative. Discuss the format and design of this book.

### Questions

1. Why has the artist used sepia colours in much of the illustrations? Anthony Ishinjerro explains: 'By limiting the colour palette you can create a sense of focus, as there are no other colours to distract the viewer. Also by limiting it, we can utilise colour as a part of the narrative. The bullies' world is monotonous and shadowy, with danger hidden in every corner. On the other hand, Benjamin is in colour. This contrast meant to show that Benjamin is blessed with imaginative ways of dealing with life's challenges, while the bullies and their world are single minded and lacks that imagination.'
2. How does the 'look' of the book echo the story and message of the narrative? It has a rather Gothic look suggestive of a moody past rather than the contemporary setting. Why?

### Characterisation

Characterisation is created by the illustrator as well as the author.

### Activities

1. Invite students to discuss why the artist chose to depict Benjamin without a face? Anthony Ishinjerro says in his interview: 'This way, every child can very easily project their own self onto Benjamin, thus making the story their own. Also, being faceless gives Benjamin a stoic and eerie quality, which reflects the narrative's gothic tone.'
2. Creating characters is another challenge for an illustrator. In his interview the artist said: 'The unique challenge of doing a picture book was to create characters that are engaging enough to sustain through the narrative. Like actors, characters in a picture book need to connect with the viewer on an emotional level, without this connection the visual will damage the story's integrity.'

Observe for example the use of body language in the images of Benjamin.

- Abstract interpretations give a strong sense of the bullies. Observe, too, the image where Benjamin is surrounded by a circle of pointing fingers. What does this suggest about his fellow classmates? Observe a later image where an unnaturally large silhouetted figure is holding him aloft as his three fellow bullies laugh and taunt. By showing the bullies in relief like this, the artist has added to the sense of menace.

### Questions

- How did you think the characters were presented in this book?
- What clues were there to Benjamin's character?

### Medium

The choice of medium and style is important to the overall meaning conveyed.

### Activities

- Investigate the medium the illustrator works in, and how he has used it.
- What other medium might the artist have used? Choose one image and 're-interpret it using (for example) collage.

### Questions

- How well suited was the art medium the artist has employed to the text in this book?
- The font or typeface used in this book looks hand-written. How does this enhance the look of the book?

## KEY STUDY TOPICS

This book can be used in discussion of a range of **themes** with relevance to **Curriculum Areas, English** (including **Language Literacy** and **Visual Literacy**) and the **Stand Together National Curriculum:**

### Bullying

Bullying is really common! 'One student in every four in Australian schools is affected by bullying,

says recent research commissioned by the Federal Government.'

<http://www.kidspot.com.au/schoolzone/Bullying-Facts-and-figures-about-bullying+4065+395+article.htm>

Students often feel very alone when they are bullied (like Benjamin does) but it is important to point out to students that they are not alone and that this is a common problem.

The Stand Together National Curriculum was released by the Hon. Peter Garrett MP on the third National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence on March 15, 2013, with the launch of the Safe School Hub <http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/>

Further information including Stand Together 2013 Lesson Plans are also provided on the government website: Bullying. No Way!

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/grownups/news-research/teacher-resources/bullying-lesson-resources.php>

### Activities

- Discuss bullying behavior with your students and whether they have ever experienced it. (This will be a sensitive subject for some of your students, so teachers will need to adapt their coverage of this topic according to issues they are aware of in their classroom.)
- Benjamin deals with the bullies by overcoming his fear. But should he have told a teacher or his parents about his problem? He deals with it himself but how would that assist another child who is being bullied? Sometimes children are frightened to tell an adult for fear that the bully will discover that they have 'told' and become even more vicious. Discuss strategies for responding to bullies.
- Friends can be bullies too, and peer group pressure is one of the most insidious forms of bullying. The three friends watching the 'big guy' raising Benjamin into the air may be simply afraid of upsetting him. And why doesn't Benjamin have anyone to support him?
- Cyber bullying is considered to be one of the most prevalent forms of bullying amongst students in secondary and even

primary schools. Discuss with students whether they have played online games or 'Facebooked' friends and how this might be a dangerous thing to do. [Teachers might read 'Cyber Bullying: Boystown Report' for further background on this topic.]

5. Encourage students to empathise with those who are bullied. What might be the results of bullying? Students might suffer failing grades; or be unhappy at school and wish to change schools; they may lose friends; suffer low self-esteem or become ill. Encourage students to consider all these outcomes so that prospective bullies are made aware of the problems they can cause.
6. Find some poems about bullying to share with your students.
7. Read and share a range of relevant resources and organise a display of books about bullying in the classroom, and display some of the stories and images the students have created in **Writing Style** and **Illustration Style** above. [See **Further Reading** below.]
8. Consult websites for relevant activities to share with your students. [See **Further Reading** below.]
9. Organise an Anti-Bullying Program in your school. Invite students to design a poster and slogan to launch the program. [Visit the national websites listed above and in the **Further Reading** for ideas.]

### Questions

1. Does your school have an anti-bullying policy and strategies for dealing with the problem?
2. What research have you done to prepare yourself for dealing with potential bullying problems?

### Imagination

Benjamin realises in the end that he can imagine himself into a happier and less fearful frame of mind. Imagination is perhaps another word for hope. We all need the latter in order to survive minor or major crises.

### Activities

1. Discuss the power of the imagination and storytelling in dealing with emotional problems.
2. Imagine a scenario in which you are being bullied and then become empowered with some super capacity. Write a story based on this scenario.

### Questions

1. How can the imagination help you deal with problems?
2. Have you ever had an experience like Benjamin's where a dream or a wish has made a difference?
3. Benjamin doesn't get rid of the bullies or fight them – he wishes for his fears to disappear. In short, he gains confidence again. Is this a positive or useful way to deal with a problem?
4. Is the message in this text one of hope?

### Problem-solving

Every problem has some kind of solution but we need to develop strategies for solving problems.

### Activities

1. Discuss with students the need to confront a problem logically.
2. For points to discuss with your students, consult sites such as "Problem Solving Procedures" <http://www.behavioradvisor.com/ProblemSolving.html>

### Questions

1. Have you ever had a problem which you have solved by a particular strategy? Discuss the sorts of options you might consider in dealing with a problem.
2. Have you ever had a problem you couldn't solve? Brainstorm the problem with your classmates.

### KEY QUOTES

1. *'Benjamin Brewster was a very particular little boy.'* Are people who are different or a little special often the ones who are picked on by other kids?
2. *'Happy thoughts were quick to run and hide, whenever the bullies poked and pried.'* Being bullied can destroy even the more confident children's lives, and can ruin a day which begins happily. Have you ever had your confidence undermined, or a special day ruined by a bully?
3. *'Dandelions for all to see! Grown from imagination, wild and free.'* What do dandelions symbolise in this story?
4. *'And Benjamin... Was about to roar.'* What does this sentence mean?
5. *'Imagination was the thing that would make him feel strong.'* Discuss this statement with your students.

## FURTHER READING

### **Picture Books about Bullying:**

Alexander, Clair *Lucy and the Bully* Albert Whitman & Co, 2008.

Browne, Anthony *Willy the Wimp* Walker Books, 2008.

Butler, Christina *Big Bad Rex* Ill. by Val Biro. Hodder, 1999.

Caseley, Judith *Bully* Greenwillow, 2001.

De Paola, Tomie *Trouble in the Barkers Class* Scholastic, 2006.

Emberley, Ed *Bye-Bye Big Bad Bullybug* LB Kids, 2007.

Galan, Ana *Billy Bully: a School-Yard Counting Tale* Ill. By Steve Simpson Cartwheel Books, 2009.

Gervay, Suzanne *I am Jack* Ill. By Cathy Wilcox, HarperCollins, 2012.

Hemingway, Edward *Bad Apple: a Tale of Friendship* Penguin, 2012.

Howe, James *Pinky and Rex and the Bully* Ill. By Melissa Sweet Simon Spotlight, 1996.

Morimoto, Junko *The Two Bullies* Random House, 1997.

Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds *King of the Playground* Ill. by Nola Langner Malone Atheneum, 1994.

Peters, Andrew Fusek *The Ant and the Big Bad Bully* Goat Ill. By Anna Wadham Child's Play, 2007.

### **You might also consult these lists:**

Bullying ('Explorations of Bullying in Children's Books: an historical survey by Dr. Carlisle Sheridan.) *The Literature Base* Vol 7, No 4, October 1996, pp18-21.

Bullying (A list of books that deal with the topic of bullying – Junior Primary, Middle Primary, Upper Primary, Lower Secondary and Teacher Reference.) *The Literature Base* Vol 7, No 4, October 1996 pp 22-25.

'Bullying (An updated list of novels dealing with the topic of bullying to go with the teachers' reference, *A Literature Based Approach to Bullying*)' *The Literature Base* Vol 12, No 3, August 2011, pp 22-7.

### **Read Other Resources on Bullying:**

Arundell, Karene *Bullying: Concepts and Strategies for Anti-Bullying Education* Knowledge Books and Software, 2003.

*Bullying solutions: evidence-based approaches to bullying in Australian schools* Editors: Helen McGrath and Toni Noble Pearson Education, 2006.

Field, Evelyn M. *Bully blocking: six secrets to help children deal with teasing and bullying* Finch Publishing, 2007.

Healey, Justin, ed. *Dealing with Bullying* (Issue in Society, Vol 330) Spinney Press, 2011.

Reducing bullying in schools [kit]: a professional development resource Adelaide, SA: Dept of Education and Children's Services, 2004-6.

Rigby, Kenneth *Bullying Interventions in Schools: Six basic Approaches* ACER Press, 2010.

Suckling, Amelia and Temple, Carla *Bullying: A Whole School Approach*. Ill. by Christina Miesen ACER Press, 2001.

**Websites:**

Australian Psychological Society Parent Guide to Helping Children Manage Conflict, Aggression and Bullying  
[http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip\\_sheets/bullying/](http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/bullying/)

'Book Trailers' The Learning Place Ipswich District Teacher Librarian Network  
<http://learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=41987>

**Bullying Lesson Resources**

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/grownups/news-research/teacher-resources/bullying-lesson-resources.php>

Bullying Prevention Resources Teacher Vision

<http://www.teachervision.com.au/bullies/school-safety-month/65589.html>

Bullying. No Way!  
<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/grownups/news-research/teacher-resources/bullying-lesson-resources.php>

'Cyber Bullying: Boystown Report'

<http://www.boystown.com.au/downloads/rep/BT-Research-Report-Cyberbullying.pdf>

'11 Facts About Bullying' DoSomething.Org

<http://www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-cyber-bullying>

'Facts and Figures about Bullying'  
<http://www.kidspot.com.au/schoolzone/Bullying->

[Facts-and-figures-about-bullying+4065+395+article.htm](http://www.kidspot.com.au/schoolzone/Bullying-facts-and-figures-about-bullying+4065+395+article.htm)

Ingrid's Notes: The Do's and Don'ts of Good Rhyme by Ingrid Sundberg July 18, 2010  
<http://ingridsnotes.wordpress.com/2010/07/18/the-dos-and-donts-of-good-rhyme/>

Metre (poetry)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metre\\_\(poetry\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metre_(poetry))

'National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence' Hon. Peter Garrett MP 15 March 2013

<http://ministers.deewr.gov.au/garrett/national-day-action-against-bullying-and-violence>

"Problem Solving Procedures"  
<http://www.behavioradvisor.com/ProblemSolving.html>

RhymeZone <http://www.rhymezone.com/>

Safe Schools Hub <http://safeschoolshub.edu.au/>

Stand Together 2013 Activity  
<http://bullyingnoway.gov.au/national-day/stand-together-2013/index.html>

Synonym <http://www.synonym.com/>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THESE RESOURCES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright has operated justified text writing and publishing consultancy services since 1997, and has published widely on children's and YA literature. She has judged a number of literary awards and was Inaugural Chair of the Prime Minister's Literary Awards Children's and YA panel (2010-1). She is a Member, IBBY Australia Inc Committee; Member, ACLA Board; Deputy-Chair, ASA Board, and President, Curtis Coast Literary Carnivale Committee. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, and in 2012 the CBCA (National) Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature in Australia.



## WORKSHEET: Create a Storyboard

Print this out and give your students a copy on which to draw thumbnail sketches, and to write the text below the images. (You could also enlarge it to an A3 size to give them more room to work on.) Invite students to use the simple story they wrote in **Writing Style Structure** and create a graphic novel version of the story. **Image from:** <[http:// utopian.flipbrothers.com](http://utopian.flipbrothers.com)>

The storyboard template consists of eight rectangular panels arranged in two columns and four rows. Each panel is empty for drawing. To the left of each panel is a small circle, and below each panel are two horizontal lines for writing text.

UTOPIAN PRODUCTIONS STORYBOARD TEMPLATE

## WORKSHEET: Story Starter

Use this image as a catalyst for writing a story about bullying.

- What might these two girls be saying about the girl in the foreground?
- Is bullying always physical?
- What words would you use to describe the two girls whispering?
- What words might you use to describe the other girl?
- Imagine a scenario and how it might resolve itself.



## WORKSHEET: Word Search

Find these words which all have to do with bullying. They can be found vertically, horizontally or diagonally:  
**Gang, hurt, tease, taunt, chase, persecute, intimidate, menace, threat, violence, punch, stalk, foe** (three times).

P	T	A	U	N	T		M		I
U	E	G	A	N	G	T	E	V	N
N	F	R	F			E	N	I	T
C	O		S	O		A	A	O	I
H	E			E	E	S	C	L	M
S	T	A	L	K	C	E	E	E	I
H	U	R	T			U		N	D
	M	E	N	A	C	E	T	C	A
			C	H	A	S	E	E	T
T	H	R	E	A	T	F	O	E	E



## APPENDIX

### Interview with the Illustrator

**Can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you came to be an illustrator—have you always enjoyed drawing and illustrating, even as a kid? What did you want to be when you grew up? What did you study? etc.**

Drawing has always been a part of my childhood. I remember finding stacks and stacks of used paper and drawing space sagas on the back of them. Both of my uncle and grandfather are architects, therefore art is always valued and encouraged in my family. The prospect of doing art as a career didn't occur to me until late into my high school years. I initially wanted to study painting in uni but ended up applying for graphic design, as I considered the field to be much broader and my work could reach wider audience. I did a bachelor course in graphic design at university of Wollongong and graduated in 2007.

*Dandelion* is my first picture book. My previous illustration experience derived from my profession as a graphic designer - for posters, websites; T-shirts, print materials etc., and from drawing in my own spare time. The unique challenge of doing a picture book was create characters that are engaging enough to sustain through the narrative. Like actors, characters in a picture book needs to connect the viewer on an emotional level, without this connection the visual will damage the story's integrity.

**2. Can you tell us a little bit about why you decided to make Benjamin faceless?**

In the very early sketches Benjamin did have a face. However, as we progressed further along we've realised that it would more interesting for the character to faceless. This way, every child can very easily project their own self onto Benjamin, thus making the story their own. Also, being faceless gives Benjamin a stoic and eerie quality, which reflects the narrative's gothic tone.

**3. Why did you choose to go with a very limited, sepia palette?**

By limiting the colour palette you can create a sense of focus, as there are no other colours to distract the viewer. Also by limiting it, we can utilise colour as a part of the narrative. The bullies' world is monotonous and shadowy, with danger hidden in every corner. On the other hand, Benjamin is in colour. This contrast meant to show that Benjamin is blessed with imaginative ways of dealing with life's challenges, while the bullies and their world are single minded and lacks that imagination.

**4. Have you ever experienced or witnessed bullying yourself? Did you draw on this experience when creating the art?**

I don't think I've experienced bullying personally but I've witness bullying in all parts of society and it has definitely informed the illustration.

**5. What mediums did you use to create the art? Can you explain a little bit about your process?**

I would start with a rough storyboard of every page, working out the composition and possible character gestures. Once approved, I would start to sketch the background and characters in detail. The pencils sketches are then scanned and put into Photoshop, where they are coloured and textured.

**6. What was the most challenging part of the project?**

The most challenging part is creating the visuals that enhance the story. It is a great story and I wanted to make sure it is supported by great illustrations.

**7. What was the most rewarding part of the project?**

The most rewarding part is seeing kids being delighted by the book.

**8. Do you have a favourite picture book or illustrator?**

My favourite illustrators are: Shaun Tan, Brett Helquist, James Jean, Tegan White, Craig Thompson and Jacqui Oakley.