

## Author Interview - Richard Vobes



*When did you first decide that you wanted to be a writer?*

I cannot remember! When I was young I loved to pretend. I made up stories and played with my dad's tape recorders, putting on silly voices. I think that was when I got interested in telling stories.

*How would you describe your books?*

The books I write are adventures in 'other' worlds. In my 'Splidge' books I borrow ideas, events and technology from history and put them into the story. My books are about good versus evil where a small hero fights against a powerful enemy.

*How long does it take you to write a book?*

Each book can take a different amount of time to write. The first draft is really about getting the main ideas of the story down on paper and not worrying if I make mistakes or cannot find the best way to describe everything. It takes between three and six months to get that first draft finished.

*How much time do you spend writing each day?*

The key to writing is to do it every day even when you do not feel like it. I try to spend at least three hours a day writing.

*Which of your own books is your favourite? Why?*

My favourite book is always the one I am writing, because it is exciting to discover it unfold as I go along.

*Is there anything that you don't enjoy about writing?*

Writing is hard work. It can be difficult to go back through your work to correct all the errors and make the story interesting. There is also a chance that other people won't enjoy the story as much as you do, so it can be hard trying to improve it all the time.

*Where do you get ideas for the characters, settings and storylines in your books?*

I love to read and enjoying listening to the radio. Being interested in the world around you is good for a writer because your imagination can take all that knowledge and create something new that can be used in a story.

*Do you have any tips or advice to help others become better writers?*

Read lots and lots. After that, it is about putting your bottom on a chair and getting the ideas from your head onto paper. The first draft does not have to be good at all. It is just the beginning of an idea. Remember the more you write, the better it will get. It simply takes time. Good luck.



## **Author Interview - Richard Vobes**

- 1) What did Richard love to do when he was young?
  
- 2) What types of books does Richard write? Tick the correct answer:
  - Historical reports,
  - Adventures in 'other' worlds,
  - Radio plays,
  - Picture books for young children.
  
- 3) Richard says that his books are about good versus evil. Can you think of another story with a similar theme?
  
- 4) How long does it take Richard to finish writing the first draft of his books?
  
- 5) How many hours does Richard try to spend writing each day?
  
- 6) Why is Richard's favourite book always the one that he is writing at the moment?
  
- 7) Which parts of writing doesn't Richard always enjoy. Tick the correct answers:
  - Writing the first draft,
  - Correcting the errors,
  - Improving his writing,
  - Thinking of ideas.
  
8. Find two places where Richard gets ideas for his books.
  
9. Why does it help writers to be interested in the world around them?
  
10. Would you like to read one of Richard's books? Explain your answer...

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- 3) Richard says that his books are about good versus evil. Can you think of another story with a similar theme?  
**Answers will vary.**
- 4) How long does it take Richard to finish writing the first draft of his books?  
**Between three and six months.**
- 5) How many hours does Richard try to spend writing each day?  
**At least three hours.**
- 6) Why is Richard's favourite book always the one that he is writing at the moment?  
**Because it is exciting to discover it unfold as he goes along.**
- 7) Which parts of writing doesn't Richard always enjoy. Tick the correct answers:
  - Writing the first draft,
  - Correcting the errors,
  - Improving his writing,
  - Thinking of ideas.
8. Find two places where Richard gets ideas for his books.  
**Answers include: reading other books, listening to the radio and being interested in the world.**
9. Why does it help writers to be interested in the world around them?  
**Because your imagination can take all that knowledge and create something new that can be used in a story.**
10. Would you like to read one of Richard's books? Explain your answer...  
**Answers will vary.**

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*When did you first decide that you wanted to be a writer?*

I cannot remember! When I was young I loved to pretend. I pretended I was a secret agent, an adventurer and a detective. I made up stories and played with my father's tape recorders, making up radio plays and putting on silly voices.

*How would you describe your books?*

The books I write are adventures in 'other' worlds. I enjoy conjuring up a new universe for my characters to explore. The Splidge series of books are set in a world made up of elements from English history, somewhere between the 17th and 19th centuries. I borrow ideas, events and technology from those periods. My books are about good versus evil where a small hero fights against a powerful foe.

*How long does it take you to write a book?*

Each book can take a different time period to write. The Splidge series are full of detailed descriptions of places and objects and that takes time to research. This is because at the beginning of the book the reader needs to spend some time exploring the world. The first draft is really about getting the main ideas of the story down on paper and making sure that it flows with a beginning, middle and end. It takes about three to six months to get that first draft completed.

*How much time do you spend writing each day?*

The key to writing is to do it every day even when you do not feel like it. I try to spend at least three hours a day writing. I do not always manage it though! Sometimes I have spent an hour at my desk and come to the end of a scene and I know I don't have enough time to finish the next one, so I stop.

*Which of your own books is your favourite? Why?*

My favourite book is always the one I am currently writing. I work on several books at once. I may be writing the first draft of one novel, editing another one and proof-reading a third. The reason my favourite is the one I am currently writing is because it is exciting to discover it unfold as I go along. I don't know what is going to happen next because I do not plan them out in advance.

*What do you enjoy most about writing?*

The thing I enjoy most about writing is the incredible adventure you go on when you make things up in your head. I let the characters tell me what is happening next, so I am often just as surprised as they are when a new conflict occurs. I often end up at the end of the writing session thinking 'Golly, how are they going to get out of that?'



*Is there anything that you don't enjoy about writing?*

The first draft is the fun bit. Once the story has been worked out, the hard part is going back through it and correcting all the errors, making the language interesting, cutting out scenes that are no longer necessary. There is also a chance that other people won't enjoy the story as much as you do, so it can be hard trying to improve it all the time.

*Where do you get ideas for the characters, settings and storylines in your books?*

The imagination is wonderful and will conjure up plenty of ideas and fun characters if one allows it freedom to be creative. The truth is that most of the ideas are from real life. I love to read and enjoying listening to radio documentaries. Being interested in the world around you is good for a writer because your knowledge and experiences often come out as the starting point for a story or character.

*What do you think makes a good story?*

People, how they think, what they do, why and how they do it, is what a reader is interested in. So a boy or girl that finds a killer robot and tames it to do their bidding becomes interesting; a man or woman that decides to paint a mysterious rock and enter it into a competition suddenly engages the reader's curiosity; a building that resists being destroyed fascinates us when the demolition engineer starts to talk to the building.

*Have you had any feedback from people who have read your books?*

I have had some good feedback from others. It is always nice to learn what people think about your books. You should never let their thoughts change the way you write, unless you really agree with their criticism. Not everyone is going to like what you write and that's OK.

*Do you have to do any research when you are writing?*

I research all the time when I am writing. It is important that you get your facts right, even in fantasy novels where you can make everything up. A sword, even in a fantasy story, is most likely going to be made from metal but checking to see what type of metal is used to make swords is well worth it. A hero fighting a rock monster might suffer a defeat with a sword made of lead or aluminium.

*What kinds of books do you like to read?*

I like to read a wide range of novels, from classics like Charles Dickens to more modern authors like Michael Frayn. I do this because it introduces me to lots of different styles of writing and storytelling. The language one author uses is different from another.

*How do you like to spend your time when you're not writing?*

I have many projects on the go at the same time. I enjoy making videos when I am not writing and I occasionally perform comedy too.

*Do you have any tips or advice to help others become better writers?*

Read. Read some more and then read some more! After that it is about putting your bottom on a chair and getting the ideas in your head on to paper and not worrying about the outcome. A book will take many revisions before it is finished and so the first draft does not have to be perfect. It simply contains the beginning of an idea. Remember the more you write, the better it will get. It simply takes time. Good luck.

## **Author Interview - Richard Vobes**

- 1) Who did Richard pretend to be when he was young?
  
- 2) What did Richard use his father's tape recorders for? Tick the correct answers:  
 Listening to stories,  
 Making up radio plays,  
 Putting on silly voices,
  
- 3) Which periods of English history does Richard borrow ideas from?
  
- 4) According to Richard, what is the key to writing?
  
- 5) Why doesn't Richard always know what is going to happen next in his books?
  
- 6) Richard gives three examples of interesting story ideas in the ninth paragraph. Which of these is most interesting to you? Explain your answer...
  
- 7) Richard explains that it is important to get your facts right in your stories. What example does he give to illustrate this?
  
- 8) Why does Richard like to read a wide range of novels?
  
- 9) What type of text is this?
  
- 10) Would you like to read one of Richard's stories? Explain your answer using information from the text.

## **Author Interview - Richard Vobes**

- 1) Who did Richard pretend to be when he was young?  
**A secret agent, an adventurer and a detective.**
  
- 2) What did Richard use his father's tape recorders for? Tick the correct answers:  
 Listening to stories,  
 Making up radio plays,  
 Putting on silly voices,
  
- 3) Which periods of English history does Richard borrow ideas from?  
**Between the 17th and 19th centuries.**
  
- 4) According to Richard, what is the key to writing?  
**To do it every day even when you do not feel like it.**
  
- 5) Why doesn't Richard always know what is going to happen next in his books?  
**Because he doesn't plan them out in advance.**
  
- 6) Richard gives three examples of interesting story ideas in the ninth paragraph. Which of these is most interesting to you? Explain your answer...  
**Answers will vary.**
  
- 7) Richard explains that it is important to get your facts right in your stories. What example does he give to illustrate this?  
**Checking the type of metal used in a sword, because a lead or aluminium sword may affect the outcome of a battle with a rock monster.**
  
- 8) Why does Richard like to read a wide range of novels?  
**Because it introduces him to lots of different styles of writing, storytelling and language.**
  
- 9) What type of text is this?  
**An interview.**
  
- 10) Would you like to read one of Richard's stories? Explain your answer using information from the text.  
**Answers will vary.**

## **Author Interview - Richard Vobes**



*When did you first decide that you wanted to be a writer?*

I cannot remember when I first decided I wanted to be a writer. When I was young I loved to pretend. I pretended I was a secret agent, an adventurer and a detective. I made up stories and occasionally dressed up in costume. I used to play with my father's reel to reel tape recorders, making up radio plays and dramas and putting on silly voices. I was probably about eight or nine.

*How would you describe your books?*

The books I write are adventures in 'other' worlds. I live in the real world, so I enjoy conjuring up a new world or universe for my characters to explore. The Splidge series of books are located in a world consisting of elements from English history, somewhere between the 17th and 19th centuries. I borrow ideas, events and technology from those periods and weave them into my made up world. Essentially, my books are about good versus evil where a small hero fights against a powerful foe.

*How long does it take you to write a book?*

How long is a piece of string? Each book can take a different time period to write. The Splidge series are full of detailed descriptions of places and objects and that takes time to research and find the right way of bringing into the story. This is because the reader isn't familiar at the start of the books with the universe my character inhabits, so it is necessary to spend additional time exploring their world. The first draft is really about getting the main ideas of the story down on paper and not worrying too much if I make mistakes or cannot find the best way to describe everything. The key is to get a story that flows and has a beginning, middle and end. It takes about three to six months to get that first draft completed.

*How much time do you spend writing each day?*

The key to writing is to do it every day even when you do not feel like it. I try to spend at least three hours hammering out original material. I often do not achieve this for several reasons. Sometimes I have spent an hour at my desk and come to the end of a scene. I may not wish to start the next scene because I know it will take much longer to write and I do not want to lose the flow when I do. Other times it is simply that I have other things to do that day.

*Which of your own books is your favourite? Why?*

My favourite book is always the one I am currently writing. My trouble is that I have several books on the go at once. I may be writing the first draft of one novel, editing or correcting/rewriting another one and proof-reading a third. The reason my favourite is the one I am currently writing is because it is exciting to discover it unfold as I go along. I don't know what is going to happen next because I do not plan them out in advance as some writers do.

*What do you enjoy most about writing?*

The thing I enjoy most about writing is the incredible adventure into your imagination you go on when you make things up in your head. As I mentioned above, I do not set out with any concrete ideas for the characters or the plot in advance. I let the characters tell me what is happening next, so I am often just as surprised as they are when a new conflict occurs. I often end up at the end of the writing session thinking 'Golly, how are they going to get out of that?'



*Is there anything that you don't enjoy about writing?*

Writing is hard work. You might not so because all that is required is to sit at a computer and let your fingers tap the keyboard. The first draft is the fun bit, but once the story has been worked out, the hard part is going back through it and correcting all the errors, making the language and sentences interesting, correcting the grammar, cutting out scenes that are no longer necessary. There is also a chance that other people won't enjoy the story as much as you do, so it can be hard trying to improve it all the time.

*Where do you get ideas for the characters, settings and storylines in your books?*

The imagination is a wonderful thing and can conjure up plenty of ideas and fun characters if one allows it freedom to be creative. The truth is that most of the ideas are from real life —at least part of them are. I love to read and enjoying listening radio documentaries. I enjoy history and heritage. Being interested in the world around you is good for a writer because knowledge and experience is lapped up by the brain and often come out as something new, giving a starting point for a story, a character or plot.

*What do you think makes a good story?*

Stories are about people. Even stories about animals are really about people's characteristics. A story about a machine, a rock or an empty building is boring without people. People, how they think, what they do, why and how they do it, is what a reader is interested in. So a boy or girl that finds a killer robot and tames it to do their bidding becomes interesting; a man or woman that decides to paint a mysterious rock and enter it into a competition suddenly engages the reader's curiosity; a building that resists being destroyed fascinates us when the demolition engineer starts to talk to the building.

*Have you had any feedback from people who have read your books?*

I have had some good feedback from others. It is always nice to learn what people think about your books. You should never let their thoughts change the way you write, unless you really agree with their criticism. Not everyone is going to like what you write and that's OK.

*Do you have to do any research when you are writing?*

I research all the time when I am writing. It is important that you get your facts right, even in fantasy novels where you can make everything up. For example, a sword, even in a fantasy story, is most likely going to be made from metal. Checking to see what type of metal is used to make swords is well worth it. A hero fighting a rock monster might come a cropper with a sword made of lead or aluminium. Always check things you think you know. It is amazing how often you are wrong!

*What kinds of books do you like to read?*

I write children's stories, but I rarely read children's books. I have read them, of course, but I like to read a wide spectrum of novels, from classics like Charles Dickens to more modern authors like Michael Frayn. I do this because it introduces me to lots of different styles of writing and storytelling. The language one author uses is different from another. I enjoy novels, adventure, romance and ghost stories as well as nonfiction books, such as history.

*How do you like to spend your time when you're not writing?*

I have many projects on the go at the same time. I enjoy making videos when I am not writing and I occasionally perform comedy too.

*Do you have any tips or advice to help others become better writers?*

My tips for writers are as follows. Read. Read some more and then read some more. After that it is about putting your bottom on a chair and getting the ideas in your head on to paper and not worrying about the outcome. A book will take many revisions before it is finished and so the first draft does not have to be good at all. It simply contains the germ of an idea. Remember the more you write, the better it will get. It simply takes time. Good luck.

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- 1) How old was Richard when he began making up radio plays and dramas?
  
- 2) *'Essentially, my books are about good versus evil where a small hero fights against a powerful foe.'*  
Think of a word that has a similar meaning to *foe*.
  
- 3) Why does Richard answer the third question with another question: *'How long is a piece of string?'*
  
- 4) Every day, Richard spends *'at least three hours hammering out original material.'*  
What does this tell you about his work? Tick the correct answer:  
 It is easy to write for this long,  
 It takes lots of effort.
  
- 5) Name three tasks that Richard does when he has finished the first draft.
  
- 6) Richard explains that it is important to get your facts right in your stories and uses an example of a metal sword to illustrate this. Can you think of another example?
  
- 7) Why does Richard like to read a wide range of novels?
  
- 8) Richard mentions two activities that he does when he is not writing. What are they?
  - 1)
  - 2)
  
- 9) Richard's first drafts *'simply contain the germ of an idea'*. Why is Richard referring to germs in this description of his writing?
  
- 10) Do you think that Richard enjoys writing? Explain your answer using quotes from the text.

## **Author Interview - Richard Vobes**

- 1) How old was Richard when he began making up radio plays and dramas?  
**About eight or nine.**
- 2) *'Essentially, my books are about good versus evil where a small hero fights against a powerful foe.'*  
Think of a word that has a similar meaning to *foe*.  
**Enemy, adversary, rival, antagonist.**
- 3) Why does Richard answer the third question with another question: *'How long is a piece of string?'*  
**Because there isn't a fixed answer to the original question. Each book takes a different length of time to write.**
- 4) Every day, Richard spends *'at least three hours hammering out original material.'*  
What does this tell you about his work? Tick the correct answer:  
 It is easy to write for this long,  
 It takes lots of effort.
- 5) Name three tasks that Richard does when he has finished the first draft.  
**Answers include correcting errors, making the language and sentences interesting, correcting the grammar and cutting out scenes that are no longer necessary.**
- 6) Richard explains that it is important to get your facts right in your stories and uses an example of a metal sword to illustrate this. Can you think of another example?  
**Answers will vary.**
- 7) Why does Richard like to read a wide range of novels?  
**Because it introduces him to lots of different styles of writing, storytelling and language.**
- 8) Richard mentions two activities that he does when he is not writing. What are they?
  - 1) **Making videos,**
  - 2) **Performing comedy.**
- 9) Richard's first drafts *'simply contain the germ of an idea'*. Why is Richard referring to germs in this description of his writing?  
**Answers will vary but may refer to the idea in the first draft being very small (like a germ), which develops into something much bigger / more important.**
- 10) Do you think that Richard enjoys writing? Explain your answer using quotes from the text.  
**Answers will vary.**