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Encore, Mr William Shakespeare!

Meet the author and illustrator – Marcia Williams



Tell us a little bit about yourself?

Most importantly – I am a Patron of Shakespeare Week! I am also an author and illustrator with a variety of books to my name: novels, diaries, comic-strip retellings and histories. I have also created several retellings of Shakespeare's plays including Mr William Shakespeare's Plays and Bravo, Mr William Shakespeare and this new book Encore Mr William Shakespeare!.

Did you always want to be a writer and illustrator?

When I was at school I dreamed of being an actor. I loved art and writing, but my best friend was better than me at both of these things - I was better at acting! Anyway, life takes many twists and turns and I ended up writing and illustrating books and eventually, rewriting and illustrating Shakespeare's plays. As I began this process I suddenly realized that by creating comic strip versions of his plays, with an audience, I was at last fulfilling my childhood dream: I had become an actor. Only it was better than that: I got to act all the parts, direct the play and be the costume designer - what could be more fun?

What do you like about your job?

Illustrating is such a fun thing to do, I look forward to getting into my studio and hanging out with my paints and my dog. My dog is called Joanie and is super naughty, but very kind to me and good company. She hates being left alone and loves it when I am working on a project, because she gets to sleep next to me in the studio all day. Apart from the fun of drawing and painting, one of the best things about being an illustrator is meeting young people and hearing what inspires them. I especially love to see the stories they write and their illustrations. I find young people's work very inspirational and often wish I had come up with their ideas!

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When you create a character, what do you need to know about them before you draw?

I think that when you create a character for a Shakespeare play, or any story, you really need to try and get into the character's mind. Forget being you and try to be them! Try talking like them, quoting some of their lines, maybe moving or sitting as you imagine they would. Look in the mirror and see what happens to your face. Do your eyes and mouth narrow when you pretend to be as mean as them? If they are happy, what happens to your face then? You can even think about the things your character might like to eat. For instance I think Lady Macbeth might have liked jellied eels, whereas the fairy queen Titania might have liked to drink dewdrops and eat blackberries! All these things build a picture of your character and help with your artwork.

Who is your favourite Shakespeare character and why?

I am never sure if I have a favourite Shakespeare character as there are so many and they are all so different. I do like some of his strong women characters like Hermia from a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or Juliet from *Romeo and Juliet*. But I also like King Lear, who is so vulnerable and makes such bad choices.



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