



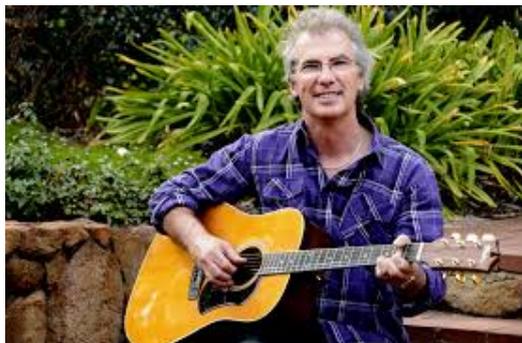
## [The Boomerang Books Blog](#)

Posted on [October 10, 2016](#) Author [Dimity Powell](#)

Founded in 2002, Boomerang Books is Australia's online independent bookstore, with a distinct focus on Australian books, Australian authors and Australian publishers.

### **Doodles and Drafts – Mark Carthew**

<https://blog.boomerangbooks.com.au/doodles-drafts-mark-carthew/2016/10>



Quiet achievers are those I admire most. [Mark Carthew](#) is one of those quiet achievers, except when he's strumming out a tune on his guitar and reading one of his crazy verse orientated picture books aloud. With more projects on the draft table than you can wobble a pencil at, I thought it was high time we got to know one of Australia's most consistent and talented children's authors.

His recent release, [Marvin and Marigold The Big Sneeze](#) with [Simon Prescott](#), exemplifies all that we've come to expect of a [Mark Carthew](#) picture book: clear, engaging story, lyrical text, and kid friendly pictures guaranteed to spark repeated readings. [The Big Sneeze](#) is the first in this mouse inspired cute critter series, ably introducing Marigold to her new neighbour, Marvin, who's in a pretty woeful way with the flu to begin with. Their friendship begins in a rather slow, fractured way until with a dash of empathy and a slathering of kindness, Marigold comes to accept the true mouse behind all the sneezes, snorts and snuffles. A little classic in the making (which are what [The Gobbling Tree](#) and [The Moose is Loose!](#) are to me). Let's find out how he does it.

**Welcome to the Draft Table, Mark!**

**Q: Who is [Mark Carthew](#)? Describe your writerly-self.**

I am passionate about words, pictures and music... and how each of these things resonates in its own special way to make images. The rhythm of language and the power of alliterative words and phrases shared out loud is something reflected in my stories, verse and songs.

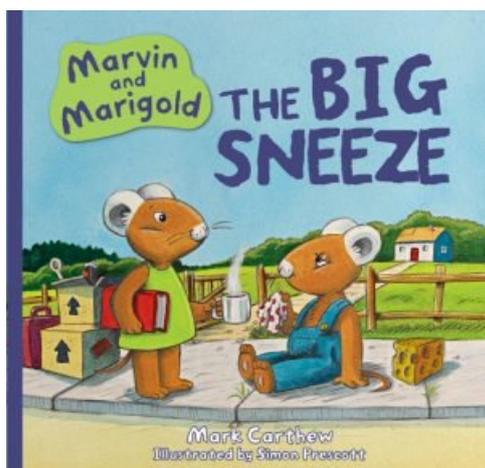


**Q: A hefty percentage of your children's titles are picture books. What draws you to creating this genre of children's literature?**

Working with and seeing wonderfully talented illustrators bring your ideas to life is one of the great pleasures of being children's picture book / illustrated text author. Each book is literally a birth; a special creation and much anticipated result of both vision and passion. Illustrators weave their own skills and magic into this creative process, making the genre a unique blend of two imaginations. I also enjoy working with editors, publishers and designers — and they need to get due credit; as they can bring significant (emotionally detached) insights and ideas to picture book projects.

**Q: What style of writing do you identify most strongly with; children's, poetry, song writing? Which style excites you the most to create?**

Hard question, as many of my works involve combinations of all three! My picture books, anthologies and plays regularly revolve around narratives with a strong sense of the poetic, alliterative and rhythmic; and more often than not they have a musical or song element that dovetails naturally.



**Q: *Marvin and Marigold: The Big Sneeze*, is the first in a new series of picture books featuring two new fun characters. Please tell us a bit about it. Why mice? Was this your original intention or is it a product of your collaboration with illustrator, Simon Prescott?**

At a meeting in Frenchs Forest Sydney, my Publisher at [New Frontier](#) Sophia Whitfield, suggested she would be interested in me developing a manuscript around two animal characters. Reflecting on this while returning on the Manly Ferry, some verses started to flow; and the Marvin & Marigold series began that very day. Some of the key alliterative and rhyming stanzas based around their names, ‘mice’ and ‘mouse houses’ were written on the way back to Circular Quay. New Frontier had just set up a UK office in London and it was Sophia who made the UK connection to Simon Prescott, based on his whimsical style and expertise in illustrating mice.

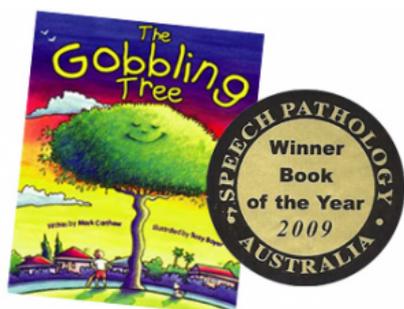
**Q: How did the concept of Marvin and Marigold come to being? What do you hope to portray in your stories about them?**

Children’s publishers in Australia and around the world have had great success with picture books concerning cute and endearing animal characters; interestingly quite often with titles featuring ‘two names’. As mentioned, New Frontier was keen to see if I could pen something original and engaging along similar lines with potential for a series.

While still involving word play and strong rhyme; these narratives also explore some deeper thinking around familiar life scenarios, situations and personal challenges — as well as important themes such as family, relationships, kindness and empathy. A series with two next-door neighbours and friends, a boy and a girl, provides the perfect vehicle.

**Q: You mentioned that you ‘*enjoy making books that encourage play with language, words and images*’. Do you find it easier to ‘tell stories in song’ when developing a picture book as opposed to writing in prose? Describe the process for us.**

My creativity seems to flow when I write in a lyrical, rhyming style and I think my love of verse texts, poetry and song writing has influenced my desire to share stories in sympathetic mediums. Poetic stanzas often bounce around in my head like a ‘third eye’ or voice. However, I am also very keen to extend my writing into a more prose based, graphic narrative style for the older primary readership and I have a couple of projects on the draft table in that regard.



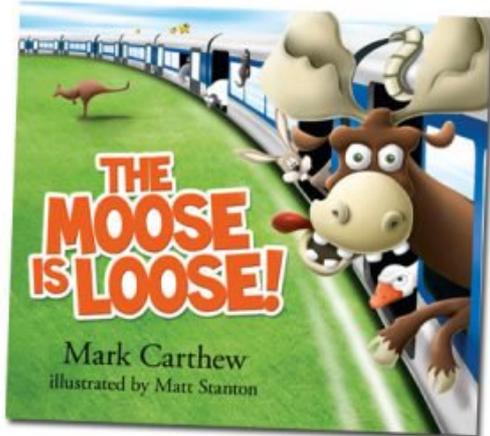
**Q: Your picture books in particular have strong appeal for lower primary and pre-primary aged readers, providing plenty of predictive reading possibilities and moments of fun to crow over again and again. What is the attraction for writing for this age group?**

Younger audiences respond naturally to call and response, alliteration and the use of strong rhyming, onomatopoeic phrases that are part of my writing style. That natural early childhood interest in shared language and interaction excites me as a writer and allows me the privilege and space to enjoy the fun of word play mixed with drama, music, movement and spoken words.

**Q: What's on the draft table for Mark?**

2017 will be a big year with three picture books as well as various other poetry and writing projects in production or development.

My long long term illustrator friend [Mike Spoor](#) (UK) and I will be releasing a speciality art style picture book *Six Little Ducks* (with song), a project which evolved from our 2013 Australian tour. The second book in the Marvin and Marigold series, *Marvin & Marigold: A Christmas Surprise* will be released in the lead-up to Christmas 2017 and *The Great Zoo Hullabaloo* illustrated by [Anil Tortop](#) (Qld) will be out in April 2017. That project was developed during my May Gibbs Children's Literature Trust Fellowship and is in essence the sequel to [The Moose is Loose!](#) — but with a different publisher, illustrator and a new twist!



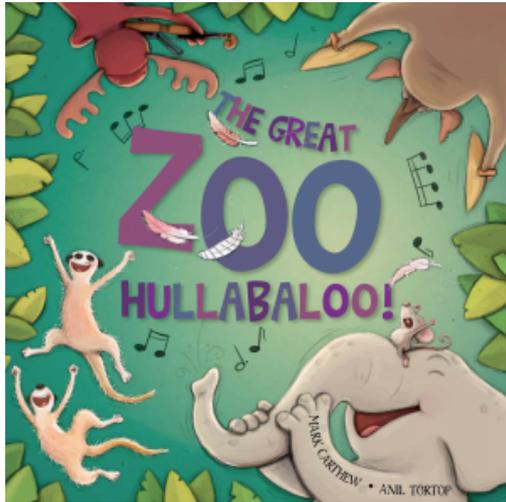
With the assistance of Karen Small from Small but Mighty Productions, I am planning to produce a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of my CBCA Honour Book and anthology, *Can you keep a Secret? Timeless rhymes to share and treasure*. I hope to do that in both eBook & hard copy.

I am also working on some new poetry anthologies and a graphic novel / crossover text for older primary readers.

**Q: When not scribbling stories for children, who / what do you like to read?**

I enjoy magical realism, folkloric and action / fantasy novels... and reading other writer's illustrated books!

**Q: Just for fun question (there's always one): If you had to choose to be one of your picture book characters for a week, whom would you choose and why?**



Mmmm... most of my current characters are animals, so that is a tricky question! I'd probably be Jack in my upcoming title – *The Great Zoo Hullabaloo*. He's a zookeeper who enjoys being around animals, as well as playing the drums!

**PS:** Mark has lots of information, activities and free material on his wonderful website — [www.markcarthew.com.au](http://www.markcarthew.com.au)

Thanks, Mark!

[Marvin and Marigold The Big Sneeze](#) is available, [here](#).

[New Frontier Publishing](#)

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**Published by**

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Dimity Powell likes to fill every spare moment with words. She writes and reviews stories exclusively for kids and is the Managing Editor for Kids' Book Review. Her word webs appear in anthologies, school magazines, junior novels, as creative digital content, and picture books. Her junior novel, *PS Who Stole Santa's Mail?* debuted in 2012. *The Fix-It Man* is her first published picture book with EK Books in 2017. Dimity is a useless tweeter, sensational pasta maker and semi-professional chook wrangler. She believes picture books are food for the soul and should be consumed at least 10 times a week. [View all posts by Dimity Powell](#)

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