

Industry Insider – How to make a living as a
children's author and illustrator
Thursday 1 October 2026



1

00:00:00,813 --> 00:00:04,736

Let's get started with
this Industry Insider,

2

00:00:04,760 --> 00:00:08,416

on how to make a living as a
children's author and illustrator.

3

00:00:08,440 --> 00:00:10,936

A title to raise a wry smile

4

00:00:10,960 --> 00:00:14,416

on all but the most
hardened of our breed.

5

00:00:14,440 --> 00:00:16,000

Um...

6

00:00:16,000 --> 00:00:18,000

Good morning, everyone.

7

00:00:18,000 --> 00:00:19,000

I'm Steve Cole.

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8

00:00:19,024 --> 00:00:23,416

I am a prolific British
children's author, it says here,

9

00:00:23,440 --> 00:00:25,456

with sales of over
3 million copies.

10

00:00:25,480 --> 00:00:28,776

My work has spanned many genres
from science fiction and adventure

11

00:00:28,800 --> 00:00:31,896

to 'cli-fi', comedy
and graphic novels.

12

00:00:31,920 --> 00:00:35,496

My latest book is called The
Wild Ones, which came out in July

13

00:00:35,520 --> 00:00:38,576

and became a bestseller,
which was very exciting.

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14

00:00:38,600 --> 00:00:40,775

In addition, I'm
also Creative Editor

15

00:00:40,799 --> 00:00:43,816

for the BBC Books list
of Doctor Who titles.

16

00:00:43,840 --> 00:00:47,000

And I live in Aylesbury Vale.

17

00:00:47,000 --> 00:00:48,376

My audio description,

18

00:00:48,400 --> 00:00:50,736

I am an aging white male

19

00:00:50,760 --> 00:00:53,616

with greying facial hair,

20

00:00:53,640 --> 00:00:56,216

average build

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21

00:00:56,240 --> 00:00:59,000

and a pair of black glasses.

22

00:00:59,000 --> 00:01:03,376

This event is part of the Society of
Authors Autumn/Winter 2026 programme

23

00:01:03,400 --> 00:01:04,656

and is in conjunction with

24

00:01:04,680 --> 00:01:08,000

the Society of Authors Children's
Writers and Illustrators Group.

25

00:01:08,000 --> 00:01:10,896

This online
event is free to all,

26

00:01:10,920 --> 00:01:12,216

but if you can afford to,

27

00:01:12,240 --> 00:01:15,776

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please consider donating to the
Society of Authors Access Fund,

28

00:01:15,800 --> 00:01:17,496

which provides grants to authors

29

00:01:17,520 --> 00:01:21,896

so that travel, subsistence,
childcare costs, and access needs

30

00:01:21,920 --> 00:01:24,056

aren't barriers to
authors taking part

31

00:01:24,080 --> 00:01:27,000

in events, residences
and retreats.

32

00:01:27,000 --> 00:01:31,000

We suggest a
minimum donation of £5.

33

00:01:31,000 --> 00:01:33,136

You can help the Society

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of Authors Access Fund

34

00:01:33,160 --> 00:01:36,000

by making a purchase
on our virtual book store

35

00:01:36,000 --> 00:01:37,736

on Bookshop.org,

36

00:01:37,760 --> 00:01:40,176

where you can find
books by writers taking part

37

00:01:40,200 --> 00:01:42,536

in the Society of Authors
Events programme,

38

00:01:42,560 --> 00:01:44,000

including this one.

39

00:01:44,000 --> 00:01:45,816

This session will
last 60 minutes or so,

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40

00:01:45,840 --> 00:01:48,776

including a 15-minute
Q&A session at the end,

41

00:01:48,800 --> 00:01:51,136

so you may want
to be thinking about

42

00:01:51,160 --> 00:01:53,256

your own questions
you'd like to ask us.

43

00:01:53,280 --> 00:01:55,856

Please do turn on the
closed captions option

44

00:01:55,880 --> 00:01:57,536

if you would
like live subtitles,

45

00:01:57,560 --> 00:02:01,000

although I was doing an event
at the Jersey Festival recently

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46

00:02:01,000 --> 00:02:04,736

and they did the text to speech
thing in front of 400 children

47

00:02:04,760 --> 00:02:08,856

and they made one of my words into one
that should never be said really in public,

48

00:02:08,880 --> 00:02:11,913

let alone in front of a
big bunch of children.

49

00:02:11,937 --> 00:02:15,096

So let's use that
technology with care people.

50

00:02:15,120 --> 00:02:16,856

The recording for this event

51

00:02:16,880 --> 00:02:19,216

will be available on the
Society of Authors website,

52

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00:02:19,240 --> 00:02:21,683

which is located on
their resources page.

53

00:02:21,707 --> 00:02:23,656

The recording will
also be emailed

54

00:02:23,680 --> 00:02:26,336

to all registered
attendees shortly after,

55

00:02:26,360 --> 00:02:28,096

along with the captions,

56

00:02:28,120 --> 00:02:30,000

provided they're clean.

57

00:02:30,000 --> 00:02:31,576

If you do have any questions,

58

00:02:31,600 --> 00:02:33,936

please do post
them in the Q&A box.

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59

00:02:33,960 --> 00:02:36,336

You can post them
anonymously, if you prefer,

60

00:02:36,360 --> 00:02:38,829

although what are you going
to be asking? I really don't know.

61

00:02:38,853 --> 00:02:42,000

So, do post your general
comments in the chat box.

62

00:02:42,000 --> 00:02:45,856

I would now like to
introduce you to today's panel.

63

00:02:45,880 --> 00:02:49,696

Tolá Okogwu, Rikin
Parekh and Joanna Nadin.

64

00:02:49,720 --> 00:02:52,776

Tolá is an award-winning,
best-selling children's author

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65

00:02:52,800 --> 00:02:57,000

Onyeka, Daddy Do My Hair
and Aziza's Secret Fairy Door.

66

00:02:57,000 --> 00:02:58,736

That's Lola Morayo series.

67

00:02:58,760 --> 00:03:00,496

A literacy advocate,

68

00:03:00,520 --> 00:03:03,016

she founded Read
Bold, Wide and Beyond,

69

00:03:03,040 --> 00:03:05,016

encouraging children
to build confidence

70

00:03:05,040 --> 00:03:07,376

and explore diverse genres.

71

00:03:07,400 --> 00:03:09,816

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Tolá lives in Kent
with her family.

72

00:03:09,840 --> 00:03:13,000

Would you like to give us a
short audio description, Tolá?

73

00:03:13,000 --> 00:03:16,136

-Yes, so, for my
audio description,

74

00:03:16,160 --> 00:03:19,416

I am a middle aged
black woman with locs,

75

00:03:19,440 --> 00:03:21,256

wearing a dark blue top

76

00:03:21,280 --> 00:03:23,000

and dark pink glasses.

77

00:03:23,000 --> 00:03:24,948

-Funky glasses, I would say.

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78

00:03:24,972 --> 00:03:26,000

[laughter]

79

00:03:26,000 --> 00:03:29,976

Rikin Parekh studied Foundation Studies
in Art at Camberwell College of Arts,

80

00:03:30,000 --> 00:03:33,176

and then Illustration at the
University of Westminster, Harrow.

81

00:03:33,200 --> 00:03:35,416

He primarily worked
as a storyboard artist

82

00:03:35,440 --> 00:03:37,296

and creature designer
in the film industry,

83

00:03:37,320 --> 00:03:38,976

while also working in retail

84

00:03:39,000 --> 00:03:41,000

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selling books for
a national chain.

85

00:03:41,000 --> 00:03:43,696

And then on a film
and TV streaming site.

86

00:03:43,720 --> 00:03:45,736

He currently spends his
time between working

87

00:03:45,760 --> 00:03:48,256

as a primary school SEND
Learning Support Assistant,

88

00:03:48,280 --> 00:03:51,776

caring for his mother, and
writing, illustrating children's books.

89

00:03:51,800 --> 00:03:52,976

When he's not drawing,

90

00:03:53,000 --> 00:03:56,000

you'll probably find him at

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the cinema, the zoo, a museum,

91

00:03:56,000 --> 00:03:59,416

dog sitting, or at a

Comic Con with friends.

92

00:03:59,440 --> 00:04:02,376

He's currently working on his

second author-illustrator picture book,

93

00:04:02,400 --> 00:04:04,592

and lots of other fun projects.

94

00:04:04,616 --> 00:04:07,000

Rikin, an audio description

from you, please.

95

00:04:07,000 --> 00:04:10,000

-Good morning. I'm a middle-aged

96

00:04:10,000 --> 00:04:13,176

Indian man

97

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00:04:13,200 --> 00:04:15,283

wearing--

98

00:04:15,307 --> 00:04:20,000

[inaudible, unstable connection]

99

00:04:20,000 --> 00:04:25,000

And wearing Trente
glasses, I think. Yes.

100

00:04:25,000 --> 00:04:26,816

-Also very funky.

101

00:04:26,840 --> 00:04:28,720

Joanna Nadin is a former--

102

00:04:28,744 --> 00:04:29,744

-Was that fine?

103

00:04:29,768 --> 00:04:32,896

-A former broadcast journalist and
special adviser to the Prime Minister.

104

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00:04:32,920 --> 00:04:36,296

Since leaving politics, she's written
more than 100 books for children,

105

00:04:36,320 --> 00:04:40,496

including The Sunday Times #1
bestselling Worst Class in the World Series

106

00:04:40,520 --> 00:04:42,056

and Joe All Alone,

107

00:04:42,080 --> 00:04:44,016

now a BAFTA-winning BBC drama,

108

00:04:44,040 --> 00:04:45,316

as well as an excellent novel.

109

00:04:45,340 --> 00:04:49,936

She is also Associate Professor of Creative
Writing at the University of Bristol.

110

00:04:49,960 --> 00:04:51,656

Jo, describe yourself.

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111

00:04:51,680 --> 00:04:53,000

[Joanna laughs]

112

00:04:53,000 --> 00:04:55,376

-Hello, I am also middle-aged.

113

00:04:55,400 --> 00:04:57,816

I am a white woman
with very short hair

114

00:04:57,840 --> 00:05:00,576

and black rimmed glasses,

115

00:05:00,600 --> 00:05:02,000

wearing a black top.

116

00:05:02,000 --> 00:05:05,147

I think the eyewear is
so funky for everyone.

117

00:05:05,171 --> 00:05:08,976

I'm feeling very, very lacking
with mine, I have to say.

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118

00:05:09,000 --> 00:05:10,816

But there we go.

119

00:05:10,840 --> 00:05:12,376

Well, what's
interesting about...

120

00:05:12,400 --> 00:05:14,616

What I thought was
interesting about all these bios

121

00:05:14,640 --> 00:05:15,936

is that we're not just saying,

122

00:05:15,960 --> 00:05:18,536

"Hello, I am a children's
writer slash illustrator

123

00:05:18,560 --> 00:05:20,862

"and I'm making all
my money from this."

124

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00:05:20,886 --> 00:05:23,336

It sounds like there are
other things going on.

125

00:05:23,360 --> 00:05:24,389

So...

126

00:05:24,413 --> 00:05:26,176

Tolá, I'd like to
start with you.

127

00:05:26,200 --> 00:05:30,376

Could you tell us how long you've
been in the children's writing sphere

128

00:05:30,400 --> 00:05:33,096

and how you got there
and how you decided

129

00:05:33,120 --> 00:05:34,576

to make this

130

00:05:34,600 --> 00:05:37,000

your preferred way

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of making a living?

131

00:05:37,000 --> 00:05:39,256

-So it's actually

10 years this month

132

00:05:39,280 --> 00:05:41,856

since I became a
published author.

133

00:05:41,880 --> 00:05:46,456

I started self-publishing, actually,
was how my journey began.

134

00:05:46,480 --> 00:05:49,056

It happened as a result of,

135

00:05:49,080 --> 00:05:51,296

and they invariably have
inspired a lot of my books,

136

00:05:51,320 --> 00:05:53,000

my children

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137

00:05:53,000 --> 00:05:57,336

And kind of being a massive
reader, loving books, but realising,

138

00:05:57,360 --> 00:05:59,736

at some point in my early 20s

139

00:05:59,760 --> 00:06:01,656

that I'd never once
read a book growing up

140

00:06:01,680 --> 00:06:03,536

that featured a character
that looked like me,

141

00:06:03,560 --> 00:06:04,976

which I thought was a bit odd.

142

00:06:05,000 --> 00:06:07,000

And so when I had my own

143

00:06:07,000 --> 00:06:09,256

kind of children,

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my eldest especially,

144

00:06:09,280 --> 00:06:11,776

I really wanted her to
have a different experience.

145

00:06:11,800 --> 00:06:15,016

And to be-- to be able to read
more widely than I was able to.

146

00:06:15,040 --> 00:06:16,376

So I went looking for books,

147

00:06:16,400 --> 00:06:19,256

books that would act
not just as windows,

148

00:06:19,280 --> 00:06:21,206

but also mirrors for her,
which is what I lacked.

149

00:06:21,230 --> 00:06:23,569

And it was a bit of a
struggle to find those books,

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150

00:06:23,593 --> 00:06:25,561

and I think I must have
been complaining too much,

151

00:06:25,585 --> 00:06:26,969

because my husband It was like,

152

00:06:26,993 --> 00:06:29,816

"Tolá, you know that journalism
degree and all that blogging

153

00:06:29,840 --> 00:06:32,376

"you've been doing for so long,
maybe you could put it to use?"

154

00:06:32,400 --> 00:06:33,976

And I was like,
oh, maybe I will.

155

00:06:34,000 --> 00:06:35,976

And so that's kind of
what planted the seed,

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156

00:06:36,000 --> 00:06:37,736

but it wasn't until

I saw an illustration

157

00:06:37,760 --> 00:06:41,000

that the title of the first

series, Daddy Do My Hair,

158

00:06:41,000 --> 00:06:42,789

kind of just dropped

into my head.

159

00:06:42,813 --> 00:06:45,056

And the words flowed out

of me in the space of an hour,

160

00:06:45,080 --> 00:06:46,816

and that's never happened since.

161

00:06:46,840 --> 00:06:48,816

And it's a rhyme series, so I...

162

00:06:48,840 --> 00:06:51,896

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And I hate writing in rhymes, so
definitely knew it was meant to happen.

163

00:06:51,920 --> 00:06:55,336

And that sort of kick-started it,
and I was like, okay, I've got this

164

00:06:55,360 --> 00:06:57,707

manuscript, I've got this
story. What do I do with it?

165

00:06:57,731 --> 00:06:58,976

Kind of did the research,

166

00:06:59,000 --> 00:07:01,456

all the stuff that
you're supposed to do,

167

00:07:01,480 --> 00:07:04,656

reached out to agents,
queried, etcetera.

168

00:07:04,680 --> 00:07:05,680

Cricketts.

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169

00:07:05,704 --> 00:07:09,016

And it was like, okay, does
it die here? What do I do?

170

00:07:09,040 --> 00:07:11,696

Luckily, my mum had
self-published a non-fiction book,

171

00:07:11,720 --> 00:07:13,263

so it was on my radar.

172

00:07:13,287 --> 00:07:15,000

I knew it was something
that could be done.

173

00:07:15,000 --> 00:07:17,456

And so together, given that
she wanted to do more books,

174

00:07:17,480 --> 00:07:19,256

we set up our own imprint,

175

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00:07:19,280 --> 00:07:20,679

Florence Elizabeth Publishing

176

00:07:20,703 --> 00:07:24,616

and together published the
first four books in that series.

177

00:07:24,640 --> 00:07:26,656

And it literally spread
by word of mouth

178

00:07:26,680 --> 00:07:29,096

because I think the
same as I had experienced,

179

00:07:29,120 --> 00:07:30,896

the lack of books like that,

180

00:07:30,920 --> 00:07:32,896

once people kind of
saw it, knew about it.

181

00:07:32,920 --> 00:07:34,776

They... They were fired up.

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182

00:07:34,800 --> 00:07:36,776

So, yeah, in those days,

183

00:07:36,800 --> 00:07:39,056

we were going to

festivals, Christmas fairs,

184

00:07:39,080 --> 00:07:41,576

hand selling, yeah,

all of that stuff.

185

00:07:41,600 --> 00:07:43,216

And I very quickly

realised, though,

186

00:07:43,240 --> 00:07:44,856

I wanted to write.

187

00:07:44,880 --> 00:07:47,469

And I was getting kind of

bogged down in a lot of the

188

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00:07:47,493 --> 00:07:49,216

publishing side of things,

189

00:07:49,240 --> 00:07:51,456

and just did not have the space

190

00:07:51,480 --> 00:07:54,000

to do as much writing as I
wanted to, so I decided to

191

00:07:54,000 --> 00:07:56,336

try the trad route again.

192

00:07:56,360 --> 00:07:57,696

Um...

193

00:07:57,720 --> 00:08:00,896

And I'd had an idea which
became the Onyeka series.

194

00:08:00,920 --> 00:08:03,496

And with that series,

195

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00:08:03,520 --> 00:08:05,536

I was able to sort
of get an agent,

196

00:08:05,560 --> 00:08:08,776

get that deal, and then
also I wrote for a packager

197

00:08:08,800 --> 00:08:09,936

called Storymix,

198

00:08:09,960 --> 00:08:12,536

and that's how the
Aziza fairy stories,

199

00:08:12,560 --> 00:08:14,126

and that was an
interesting year because

200

00:08:14,150 --> 00:08:16,696

Aziza was acquired at
the same time as Onyeka,

201

00:08:16,720 --> 00:08:18,303

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so I suddenly went from

202

00:08:18,327 --> 00:08:21,576

nothing to having to
deliver, I think, between...

203

00:08:21,600 --> 00:08:22,936

So I did the maths.

204

00:08:22,960 --> 00:08:26,216

I published 19 books so
far in the last ten years,

205

00:08:26,240 --> 00:08:28,884

and, uh...

206

00:08:28,908 --> 00:08:32,000

15 of them have been
in the last six years.

207

00:08:32,000 --> 00:08:35,856

So it's been a
bit of a treadmill.

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208

00:08:35,880 --> 00:08:38,896

And so that was
really interesting.

209

00:08:38,920 --> 00:08:40,376

It's a balancing act.

210

00:08:40,400 --> 00:08:43,416

And I didn't go into it
kind of thinking, oh yes,

211

00:08:43,440 --> 00:08:46,536

this is... I just kind of
wanted more stories,

212

00:08:46,560 --> 00:08:49,056

a story flowed out
of me and I realised,

213

00:08:49,080 --> 00:08:50,816

oh, I could do this
and I want to do this.

214

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00:08:50,840 --> 00:08:53,000

And then just kind
of following the ideas

215

00:08:53,000 --> 00:08:54,435

as they come.

216

00:08:54,459 --> 00:08:57,616

And so I was fully...
full-time writing

217

00:08:57,640 --> 00:09:01,896

up until Spring 2025,

218

00:09:01,920 --> 00:09:04,016

and then having kind of

219

00:09:04,040 --> 00:09:06,616

looked at everything,
looked at where I was,

220

00:09:06,640 --> 00:09:09,000

kind of I was
burnt out creatively.

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221

00:09:09,000 --> 00:09:11,256

Just because of the
lack of space to breathe,

222

00:09:11,280 --> 00:09:14,536

refill, I realised that I needed

223

00:09:14,560 --> 00:09:17,056

to create space because
I was burning out.

224

00:09:17,080 --> 00:09:19,016

I also didn't think
it was sustainable

225

00:09:19,040 --> 00:09:20,856

because the
landscape had changed,

226

00:09:20,880 --> 00:09:23,016

especially for the kind
of stories that I write.

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227

00:09:23,040 --> 00:09:26,132

I think the kind of stories
that I write benefited a lot

228

00:09:26,156 --> 00:09:27,736

from what happened in 2020.

229

00:09:27,760 --> 00:09:28,776

Um...

230

00:09:28,800 --> 00:09:31,000

But that sort of...

231

00:09:31,000 --> 00:09:34,416

Times have changed.
I'll just put it that way.

232

00:09:34,440 --> 00:09:37,176

And so kind of looking
more future planning,

233

00:09:37,200 --> 00:09:39,816

I was like, okay, I need to

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think about sustainability.

234

00:09:39,840 --> 00:09:41,656

How do I keep doing this

235

00:09:41,680 --> 00:09:43,776

and also creating that space.

236

00:09:43,800 --> 00:09:45,663

So I decided to

237

00:09:45,687 --> 00:09:47,343

get a part-time job

238

00:09:47,367 --> 00:09:49,736

in order to create

that space for me,

239

00:09:49,760 --> 00:09:52,849

because I was like, I need somewhere

where I'm not... it's not creatively driven

240

00:09:52,873 --> 00:09:55,136

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as well, that
would just allow me

241

00:09:55,160 --> 00:09:57,000
to kind of

242

00:09:57,000 --> 00:09:58,256
rest and recharge,

243

00:09:58,280 --> 00:10:00,656
but also create
some breathing room.

244

00:10:00,680 --> 00:10:05,616
And so that now is another
income stream that I have.

245

00:10:05,640 --> 00:10:07,616
And so I'd say
probably the split for me

246

00:10:07,640 --> 00:10:10,136
in terms of how I make my money

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247

00:10:10,160 --> 00:10:13,616

is 40% from writing,

248

00:10:13,640 --> 00:10:15,976

that's just like book

advances and stuff,

249

00:10:16,000 --> 00:10:18,576

40% from my part-time job,

250

00:10:18,600 --> 00:10:20,136

and 10% from events

251

00:10:20,160 --> 00:10:23,000

and other sort of peripheral

consulting, that kind of stuff.

252

00:10:23,000 --> 00:10:24,000

-Hmm.

253

00:10:24,000 --> 00:10:25,376

I mean, there's...

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254

00:10:25,400 --> 00:10:27,696

The thing is,

255

00:10:27,720 --> 00:10:30,256

is, like, it's not just "I

feel like writing a story",

256

00:10:30,280 --> 00:10:31,604

and, you know,

you write a story,

257

00:10:31,628 --> 00:10:34,006

and you send it off to someone,

and it becomes a bestseller,

258

00:10:34,030 --> 00:10:36,876

and you never have to work again. I

mean, there's so much graft involved

259

00:10:36,900 --> 00:10:40,736

at pretty much every stage.

Rikin, this seems to me that you've...

260

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00:10:40,760 --> 00:10:41,976

you've experienced...

261

00:10:42,000 --> 00:10:45,336

You've done so much in your time

262

00:10:45,360 --> 00:10:48,936

and finding what

you can specialise in or

263

00:10:48,960 --> 00:10:51,296

what areas remain open, I guess,

264

00:10:51,320 --> 00:10:54,127

is one of the challenges

that faces any creative.

265

00:10:55,000 --> 00:10:57,763

-Yeah, so I... I...

266

00:10:57,787 --> 00:11:01,496

After university, I wanted

to become a storyboard artist

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267

00:11:01,520 --> 00:11:03,456

and I wanted to work in films.

268

00:11:03,480 --> 00:11:07,000

So I did that for

a few years, but

269

00:11:07,000 --> 00:11:09,936

work in that sector

is so hard to get.

270

00:11:09,960 --> 00:11:12,376

It's... It's a...

271

00:11:12,400 --> 00:11:16,000

It's an industry where it

depends on who you know.

272

00:11:16,000 --> 00:11:18,096

So I did that for

a few years, and I

273

00:11:18,120 --> 00:11:19,896

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managed to get work at Pinewood

274

00:11:19,920 --> 00:11:24,000

and I worked on Charlie
and the Chocolate Factory,

275

00:11:24,000 --> 00:11:27,776

and done some storyboards
for on-spec scripts.

276

00:11:27,800 --> 00:11:30,896

So they would take these
scripts with my storyboards

277

00:11:30,920 --> 00:11:33,000

and take them to meetings for

278

00:11:33,000 --> 00:11:34,136

mainly monster films.

279

00:11:34,160 --> 00:11:38,136

But then after some
years, I... I couldn't

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280

00:11:38,160 --> 00:11:40,486

get a proper income from them,

281

00:11:40,510 --> 00:11:42,776

and I was working

in retail as well.

282

00:11:42,800 --> 00:11:46,936

And I was working in

the bookshop at Borders.

283

00:11:46,960 --> 00:11:50,000

And an independent publisher

284

00:11:50,000 --> 00:11:52,416

who just came towards the

285

00:11:52,440 --> 00:11:55,000

children's section

and we spoke and

286

00:11:55,000 --> 00:11:58,753

I illustrated some of

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his books for a few years.

287

00:11:58,777 --> 00:12:00,777

Um...

288

00:12:01,000 --> 00:12:03,296

And then I had an agent

289

00:12:03,320 --> 00:12:06,536

and I was still working in
retail all this time because

290

00:12:06,560 --> 00:12:12,000

I found that you can't just make
money straight away from your drawing.

291

00:12:12,000 --> 00:12:15,816

It's important to have something
that you can fall back on.

292

00:12:15,840 --> 00:12:19,256

And I had an agent.

293

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00:12:19,280 --> 00:12:22,256

So I had some work,
but then they let me go

294

00:12:22,280 --> 00:12:25,256

because my work wasn't at
the standard where it should be.

295

00:12:25,280 --> 00:12:26,896

And looking back, it's true.

296

00:12:26,920 --> 00:12:28,000

It was quite

297

00:12:28,000 --> 00:12:31,096

premature, quite early,

298

00:12:31,120 --> 00:12:32,616

so I took a few--

299

00:12:32,640 --> 00:12:37,376

I think I took about 6 months out
and I looked at my portfolio, I redid it.

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300

00:12:37,400 --> 00:12:38,816

Um...

301

00:12:38,840 --> 00:12:41,256

I submitted to about
three or four agents.

302

00:12:41,280 --> 00:12:44,000

So I got my current
agent, Claire, in 20... I think

303

00:12:44,000 --> 00:12:46,000

2016 or 2015.

304

00:12:46,000 --> 00:12:48,096

No, 20-- No...

305

00:12:48,120 --> 00:12:50,017

Yeah, and I think I've just been

306

00:12:50,041 --> 00:12:52,000

busy since then.

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307

00:12:52,000 --> 00:12:53,456

[laughs]

308

00:12:53,480 --> 00:12:56,000

But it's... it's... it's

been a tough journey.

309

00:12:56,000 --> 00:12:57,000

-Mmm.

310

00:12:57,024 --> 00:12:59,696

I think it's great if you have

those moments of sudden ignition

311

00:12:59,720 --> 00:13:03,000

where everything starts...

starts firing and coming together.

312

00:13:03,000 --> 00:13:06,216

-Yeah, it's also a...

313

00:13:06,240 --> 00:13:07,656

a lesson in not giving up,

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314

00:13:07,680 --> 00:13:09,449

especially when...

315

00:13:09,473 --> 00:13:12,696

I mean, I got... Probably
everyone on this call

316

00:13:12,720 --> 00:13:17,536

or in the publishing world has
their old rejection slips and letters,

317

00:13:17,560 --> 00:13:19,416

and I have mine in
a brown envelope

318

00:13:19,440 --> 00:13:21,813

and I have a look at
them now and then

319

00:13:21,837 --> 00:13:23,856

I see some people that
I'm working with right now,

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320

00:13:23,880 --> 00:13:26,056

and I'm like, oh,
wow, isn't that weird?

321

00:13:26,080 --> 00:13:29,776

But it's a, you know,
wonderful exercise

322

00:13:29,800 --> 00:13:32,216

in keeping a positive
mental attitude

323

00:13:32,240 --> 00:13:35,000

and just not giving up,
just not giving up and

324

00:13:35,000 --> 00:13:37,096

being strong.

325

00:13:37,120 --> 00:13:38,816

-Stubbornness...
-Yes.

326

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00:13:38,840 --> 00:13:41,056

-And... Yeah.

327

00:13:41,080 --> 00:13:44,216

I try not to accept that
those huge piles of humility

328

00:13:44,240 --> 00:13:47,046

that people want to sort of stick on,
and remembering that you're good.

329

00:13:47,070 --> 00:13:49,000

Jo, you've...

330

00:13:49,000 --> 00:13:51,096

I mean, your initial career

331

00:13:51,120 --> 00:13:53,016

is what I would term
a very grown-up job.

332

00:13:53,040 --> 00:13:54,816

It must have taken...

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333

00:13:54,840 --> 00:13:56,136

What did it take to, uh,

334

00:13:56,160 --> 00:13:58,040

to make you decide

to kind of leap from

335

00:13:58,064 --> 00:14:00,139

something into

something so... so different?

336

00:14:00,163 --> 00:14:02,776

Was it always a passion you'd

had in your spare time for this?

337

00:14:02,800 --> 00:14:04,130

Did you ever have any spare time?

338

00:14:04,154 --> 00:14:06,736

-No, no.

339

00:14:06,760 --> 00:14:07,976

So I had...

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340

00:14:08,000 --> 00:14:10,736

It never occurred to me
to be a children's writer.

341

00:14:10,760 --> 00:14:13,136

It never occurred to
me to be a fiction writer.

342

00:14:13,160 --> 00:14:14,256

I was...

343

00:14:14,280 --> 00:14:16,823

My entire career
from when I left uni,

344

00:14:16,847 --> 00:14:19,616

I'd been writing
for TV, for radio,

345

00:14:19,640 --> 00:14:23,000

and then in politics.

346

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00:14:23,000 --> 00:14:25,347

And when I was
a kid, I didn't...

347

00:14:25,371 --> 00:14:27,000

People like me weren't

348

00:14:27,000 --> 00:14:29,000

authors.

349

00:14:29,000 --> 00:14:30,216

So...

350

00:14:30,240 --> 00:14:31,936

But I'd wanted to be in a book.

351

00:14:31,960 --> 00:14:35,296

I read and read and read. I
wanted a life that was so exciting

352

00:14:35,320 --> 00:14:37,856

someone would write a
book about it, so I did a

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353

00:14:37,880 --> 00:14:40,136

degree in drama,
trying to be an actress.

354

00:14:40,160 --> 00:14:42,816

I went into telly, to
radio, and then into

355

00:14:42,840 --> 00:14:45,000

10 Downing Street.

356

00:14:45,000 --> 00:14:46,256

At which point I thought,

357

00:14:46,280 --> 00:14:48,216

oh, this isn't
like it is in books.

358

00:14:48,240 --> 00:14:50,296

It isn't like it is
in the West Wing.

359

00:14:50,320 --> 00:14:53,536

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And I went into
Downing Street in 2001

360

00:14:53,560 --> 00:14:55,856
just after we won the election,

361

00:14:55,880 --> 00:14:59,056
and then everyone went
on recess and I was bored.

362

00:14:59,080 --> 00:15:02,000
And it was literally
that boredom.

363

00:15:02,000 --> 00:15:04,456
And I thought, I've
got a number of weeks,

364

00:15:04,480 --> 00:15:06,176
what can I do in a
number of weeks.

365

00:15:06,200 --> 00:15:07,707
I need to write

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366

00:15:07,731 --> 00:15:10,000

And so I wrote
a children's book.

367

00:15:10,000 --> 00:15:11,000

And...

368

00:15:11,000 --> 00:15:12,263

-Because it was short?

369

00:15:12,287 --> 00:15:15,096

-Because it was literally
because it was short.

370

00:15:15,120 --> 00:15:18,296

And also I had, when
I was at uni, tried...

371

00:15:18,320 --> 00:15:21,616

I thought I was going to
be the female Martin Amis,

372

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00:15:21,640 --> 00:15:25,856

and I tried to do some writing
for adults and it was so painful.

373

00:15:25,880 --> 00:15:29,287

And so I thought, well, I definitely can't
do that, so I'll try writing for kids.

374

00:15:29,311 --> 00:15:32,000

Maybe that's my emotional level.

375

00:15:32,000 --> 00:15:35,496

And yeah, that was in
2001 and I sent that out.

376

00:15:35,520 --> 00:15:37,936

I got... Like Rikin, I have

377

00:15:37,960 --> 00:15:41,391

79 rejection letters
in the attic and

378

00:15:41,415 --> 00:15:43,600

one acceptance from an agent

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379

00:15:43,624 --> 00:15:44,624

And...

380

00:15:44,648 --> 00:15:48,176

My first book was
published in 2003,

381

00:15:48,200 --> 00:15:51,000

so it's 23 years ago last week.

382

00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:54,603

-Gosh. Yes, I mean, I'm
horrified to work out that

383

00:15:54,627 --> 00:15:56,536

next March it'll be my...

384

00:15:56,560 --> 00:15:59,936

the 30th anniversary of my
first books being published,

385

00:15:59,960 --> 00:16:02,296

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which seems impossible.

386

00:16:02,320 --> 00:16:05,613

I mean, just briefly, I kind of came to...
to writing as one of those things I did

387

00:16:05,637 --> 00:16:07,250

in my spare time just for fun,

388

00:16:07,274 --> 00:16:10,867

and I started editing
magazines for children

389

00:16:10,891 --> 00:16:12,376

before I had many
children of my own.

390

00:16:12,400 --> 00:16:14,000

And then

391

00:16:14,000 --> 00:16:17,096

editing for BBC Books and
working across audio and video and,

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392

00:16:17,120 --> 00:16:18,816

you know, print media.

393

00:16:18,840 --> 00:16:22,256

And so my... my writing career

394

00:16:22,280 --> 00:16:24,000

started off writing, you know,

395

00:16:24,000 --> 00:16:27,456

adaptations of films like,

396

00:16:27,480 --> 00:16:30,896

you know, Shrek and The Incredibles
and Madagascar and stuff, you know,

397

00:16:30,920 --> 00:16:32,816

doing those books
for Dorling Kindersley,

398

00:16:32,840 --> 00:16:34,623

where they tell you
about the characters and

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399

00:16:34,647 --> 00:16:36,576

my first fiction was
for packages, like, uh...

400

00:16:36,600 --> 00:16:38,000

Like, um...

401

00:16:38,000 --> 00:16:41,936

Animal Ark, I became
172nd of Lucy Daniels

402

00:16:41,960 --> 00:16:46,353

and went on to do things like that
before I kind of found my own voice.

403

00:16:46,377 --> 00:16:49,697

So I think we all have... It's interesting
that we all have our sort of different ways

404

00:16:49,721 --> 00:16:51,646

into it, and different
motivations, whether it's...

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405

00:16:51,670 --> 00:16:53,000

But, Jo, I completely

406

00:16:53,000 --> 00:16:56,000

agree with you, the

breakthrough for me came when

407

00:16:56,000 --> 00:16:59,856

my agent told me that I had to

write a complete children's book,

408

00:16:59,880 --> 00:17:04,843

and so I chose a young reader because it

was shorter and I could write it quicker,

409

00:17:04,867 --> 00:17:07,516

because no one was paying me

to write it, of course, at that point,

410

00:17:07,540 --> 00:17:09,176

but that was a book

called Astrosaurs,

411

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00:17:09,200 --> 00:17:12,000

which ended up being
a kind of series that...

412

00:17:12,000 --> 00:17:14,079

I wrote 22 books
in that series, so

413

00:17:14,103 --> 00:17:16,496

you never know where
those acts of desperation

414

00:17:16,520 --> 00:17:17,976

are going to lead you.

415

00:17:18,000 --> 00:17:20,000

Um... So...

416

00:17:20,000 --> 00:17:21,856

Tolá, you mentioned the balance

417

00:17:21,880 --> 00:17:26,000

between the 40%, the 60%, but...

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418

00:17:26,000 --> 00:17:30,176

And in your case, it was taken more
because you were fearing burnout

419

00:17:30,200 --> 00:17:32,136

rather than because
it was from a...

420

00:17:32,160 --> 00:17:34,536

a kind of a dire financial need.

421

00:17:34,560 --> 00:17:36,000

Um...

422

00:17:36,000 --> 00:17:38,000

How do you think...

423

00:17:38,000 --> 00:17:41,536

What advice can you give to

424

00:17:41,560 --> 00:17:44,501

the people who are watching
at the moment who are thinking,

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425

00:17:44,525 --> 00:17:47,006

I would like to devote more
time to this, but at the same time,

426

00:17:47,030 --> 00:17:49,496

I have to obviously
pay the bills.

427

00:17:49,520 --> 00:17:52,176

Is there any advice you've got

428

00:17:52,200 --> 00:17:53,736

for how you kind
of manage all this,

429

00:17:53,760 --> 00:17:55,096

or how you kind
of juggle it all?

430

00:17:55,120 --> 00:17:57,216

-Oh, that's a really
good question

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431

00:17:57,240 --> 00:17:59,856

because I get asked that a
lot. How do you juggle it all?

432

00:17:59,880 --> 00:18:02,296

Because my life
is pretty hectic.

433

00:18:02,320 --> 00:18:04,816

I think I mentioned earlier, I
also home educate my children.

434

00:18:04,840 --> 00:18:09,136

And so it's a lot
of moving parts.

435

00:18:09,160 --> 00:18:11,376

And I think my background
in administration

436

00:18:11,400 --> 00:18:14,340

is probably what keeps all
those spinning plates kind of

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437

00:18:14,364 --> 00:18:16,300

up in the air.

438

00:18:16,324 --> 00:18:20,016

And so, so for me,
the decision to...

439

00:18:20,040 --> 00:18:22,096

So other than creative
burnout, it was a sense.

440

00:18:22,120 --> 00:18:24,776

I wasn't yet in a dire
financial situation,

441

00:18:24,800 --> 00:18:27,256

but I could easily
see that I could be

442

00:18:27,280 --> 00:18:29,256

if I didn't make some changes.

443

00:18:29,280 --> 00:18:31,000

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So it was also future

444

00:18:31,000 --> 00:18:33,026

sort of proofing things

445

00:18:33,050 --> 00:18:36,576

and making moves now so I
wouldn't be in that situation.

446

00:18:36,600 --> 00:18:38,736

And so I...

447

00:18:38,760 --> 00:18:41,616

I very much diarised.

448

00:18:41,640 --> 00:18:45,016

My whole life is diarised
in sort of to-do lists,

449

00:18:45,040 --> 00:18:48,000

and I have to be really
disciplined with myself, so

450

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00:18:48,000 --> 00:18:50,536

there's certain
things that can't shift.

451

00:18:50,560 --> 00:18:53,216

And so then the
items that can't move,

452

00:18:53,240 --> 00:18:54,896

everything is built around that.

453

00:18:54,920 --> 00:18:56,616

Actually, funnily enough,

454

00:18:56,640 --> 00:18:58,276

the flexibility that I have.

455

00:18:58,300 --> 00:19:01,816

So firstly, when I went into--
back into getting a job, it had to be...

456

00:19:01,840 --> 00:19:05,000

My two prior criteria was
that it had to be flexible

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457

00:19:05,000 --> 00:19:06,536

really flexible. So I work...

458

00:19:06,560 --> 00:19:09,496

I work for CLPE slash NLT, so

459

00:19:09,520 --> 00:19:12,496

it is, one, still

within literacy,

460

00:19:12,520 --> 00:19:15,856

still within children's

sort of writing, publishing,

461

00:19:15,880 --> 00:19:18,736

everything that I'm passionate

about, and that was really important

462

00:19:18,760 --> 00:19:22,000

to me, that it still be within

that sphere of what I was doing.

463

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00:19:22,000 --> 00:19:25,000

And it is also fully remote

464

00:19:25,000 --> 00:19:27,416

which also really helps

465

00:19:27,440 --> 00:19:31,056

and they're very understanding
when I have events and stuff like that.

466

00:19:31,080 --> 00:19:34,056

So that only works
because I have a role

467

00:19:34,080 --> 00:19:36,136

that really supports
everything else that I do.

468

00:19:36,160 --> 00:19:38,456

If I didn't, I think it
would be a lot harder.

469

00:19:38,480 --> 00:19:41,000

Um... And so...

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470

00:19:41,000 --> 00:19:44,656

I also have to give and take.

So when I'm on deadline,

471

00:19:44,680 --> 00:19:47,896

and I, you know,

I wake up at 4 AM

472

00:19:47,920 --> 00:19:51,256

and so that becomes

my writing time

473

00:19:51,280 --> 00:19:53,896

because between 4 AM and 7 AM,

474

00:19:53,920 --> 00:19:55,740

everybody in my house is asleep.

475

00:19:55,764 --> 00:19:57,016

And the world is asleep.

476

00:19:57,040 --> 00:19:59,896

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I can't get distracted by
social media and such and such.

477

00:19:59,920 --> 00:20:03,056

And so it's just kind
of dicing up my day

478

00:20:03,080 --> 00:20:06,616

and knowing exactly what I
need to do, when I need to do,

479

00:20:06,640 --> 00:20:08,816

and having very
understanding family,

480

00:20:08,840 --> 00:20:11,000

who are very supportive.

481

00:20:11,000 --> 00:20:14,456

And also being
honest with myself.

482

00:20:14,480 --> 00:20:17,536

I think what has been

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really hard for me,

483

00:20:17,560 --> 00:20:21,016

a few years ago, it felt like I was
super... I could do everything, somehow.

484

00:20:21,040 --> 00:20:23,769

I was just hitting those deadlines,
being where I was supposed to be,

485

00:20:23,793 --> 00:20:26,000

but age is just
catching up with me.

486

00:20:26,000 --> 00:20:28,176

Menopause has found me.

487

00:20:28,200 --> 00:20:31,896

And my brain, it is
not what it used to be.

488

00:20:31,920 --> 00:20:34,696

And I was... And I've been
like the biggest advocate.

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489

00:20:34,720 --> 00:20:37,256

I will scream it to
the hills about it,

490

00:20:37,280 --> 00:20:39,976

but I was like, I'm not actually
listening to myself. So all those

491

00:20:40,000 --> 00:20:42,416

things I keep saying yes
to because I could do it

492

00:20:42,440 --> 00:20:44,936

five years ago,
it's not the same.

493

00:20:44,960 --> 00:20:46,936

And I need to
actually realise that

494

00:20:46,960 --> 00:20:50,616

and start kind of creating that
room and being honest with myself

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495

00:20:50,640 --> 00:20:52,449

that Tola, yeah, that's
not going to happen.

496

00:20:52,473 --> 00:20:53,656

So just, yeah.

497

00:20:53,680 --> 00:20:56,000

So I think I've been really
blessed to have really

498

00:20:56,000 --> 00:20:59,016

supportive people
and systems around me,

499

00:20:59,040 --> 00:21:01,735

and then also just... It's...

500

00:21:01,759 --> 00:21:05,056

It's sitting down, deciding
what's important to you,

501

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00:21:05,080 --> 00:21:06,576

what you want to achieve,

502

00:21:06,600 --> 00:21:09,816

the different strands, and
then creating that plan,

503

00:21:09,840 --> 00:21:12,176

but knowing that it's going
to flex and it's going to shift

504

00:21:12,200 --> 00:21:13,656

because life just does.

505

00:21:13,680 --> 00:21:17,096

And you need to have that
sort of flexibility, and also

506

00:21:17,120 --> 00:21:19,136

grace with yourself as well.

507

00:21:19,160 --> 00:21:21,000

I don't know if that answers...

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508

00:21:21,000 --> 00:21:23,016

-I think it's what
you're saying is

509

00:21:23,040 --> 00:21:25,016

that you need discipline

510

00:21:25,040 --> 00:21:27,216

to really kind of
map out your days.

511

00:21:27,240 --> 00:21:30,868

And although I think some
people think that being a writer

512

00:21:30,892 --> 00:21:33,016

is just about having
endlessly creative thoughts

513

00:21:33,040 --> 00:21:35,000

and then retreating
to explore them fully...

514

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00:21:35,000 --> 00:21:36,000

-Oh!

515

00:21:36,000 --> 00:21:38,000

-The reality is a
very different thing.

516

00:21:38,000 --> 00:21:39,071

-Yeah, gosh, yes.

517

00:21:39,095 --> 00:21:40,376

People always ask--

518

00:21:40,400 --> 00:21:43,000

So, yeah, I think really
that discipline. So...

519

00:21:43,000 --> 00:21:45,936

I always say when
I'm in children's events

520

00:21:45,960 --> 00:21:49,126

and I'm talking to children and I get
asked that question, which comes up a lot,

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521

00:21:49,150 --> 00:21:51,776

I say, I can't rest and
rely on inspiration.

522

00:21:51,800 --> 00:21:54,736

I can't wait for it to find me. I
can't wait to feel like I want to write.

523

00:21:54,760 --> 00:21:57,016

Like, I literally just have
those blocks of time.

524

00:21:57,040 --> 00:21:59,029

I show up at my desk
and I start tapping away.

525

00:21:59,053 --> 00:22:01,096

Some days it's going
to be two words.

526

00:22:01,120 --> 00:22:03,736

Some days it's going
to be 5,000 words.

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527

00:22:03,760 --> 00:22:05,676

That's only ever
happened once, by the way.

528

00:22:05,700 --> 00:22:07,667

But... [laughs]

529

00:22:07,691 --> 00:22:08,776

-I want that to be my day.

530

00:22:08,800 --> 00:22:10,616

-Yeah, well, that's very rare,

531

00:22:10,640 --> 00:22:14,136

but the point is, I'm two words
further along than I was yesterday.

532

00:22:14,160 --> 00:22:16,296

Or 5,000 words. And they add up.

533

00:22:16,320 --> 00:22:17,492

But yeah, it is.

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534

00:22:17,516 --> 00:22:20,856

And often, once you
get into it, it'll happen.

535

00:22:20,880 --> 00:22:22,296

And...

536

00:22:22,320 --> 00:22:24,616

waiting for feeling like it

537

00:22:24,640 --> 00:22:28,096

or waiting for inspiration,
that has not worked for me,

538

00:22:28,120 --> 00:22:31,656

especially when you're busy, especially
if you suddenly have multiple deadlines.

539

00:22:31,680 --> 00:22:33,896

Series is a classic one.

540

00:22:33,920 --> 00:22:38,056

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When you write a series, you kind of
go into it, usually just the first book,

541

00:22:38,080 --> 00:22:40,688

but I don't often think
about the knock-on effect,

542

00:22:40,712 --> 00:22:43,000

that once that's
done, that's sold.

543

00:22:43,000 --> 00:22:45,536

You're now on a
bit of a treadmill

544

00:22:45,560 --> 00:22:48,856

and you'd be expected
to write one, promote one,

545

00:22:48,880 --> 00:22:51,256

while you're writing the
second one, and it can...

546

00:22:51,280 --> 00:22:53,976

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So you have to have kind
of, like, those systems in place.

547

00:22:54,000 --> 00:22:57,259

-Sure. You have a
supportive family environment

548

00:22:57,283 --> 00:22:59,816

sounds like, Tola,
which is lovely.

549

00:22:59,840 --> 00:23:02,256

Rikin, I know you're a
carer for your mother.

550

00:23:02,280 --> 00:23:04,340

How does that affect you?

551

00:23:04,364 --> 00:23:06,089

I imagine if you're
sort of trying to, like,

552

00:23:06,113 --> 00:23:07,771

you know, maybe sort

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of book school events

553

00:23:07,795 --> 00:23:09,000

or set deadlines for yourself,

554

00:23:09,000 --> 00:23:12,176

if a caring need comes

on and takes priority,

555

00:23:12,200 --> 00:23:14,000

how do you manage that?

556

00:23:14,000 --> 00:23:17,896

-I have to grow an

extra pair of arms.

557

00:23:17,920 --> 00:23:19,000

[laughs]

558

00:23:19,000 --> 00:23:21,176

I have to become an octopus.

559

00:23:21,200 --> 00:23:22,496

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It can be quite...

560

00:23:22,520 --> 00:23:27,336

Not stressful, but

it's a good exercise in

561

00:23:27,360 --> 00:23:31,856

prioritising and learning

how to deal with things

562

00:23:31,880 --> 00:23:34,000

as and when.

563

00:23:34,000 --> 00:23:35,576

So very much like Tóla,

564

00:23:35,600 --> 00:23:37,216

sometimes I have

to wake up early,

565

00:23:37,240 --> 00:23:40,000

but I wake up at 3 AM, not 4 AM.

566

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00:23:40,000 --> 00:23:41,696

-Not a competition now, Rikin.

567

00:23:41,720 --> 00:23:44,376

Although I wake up at two,
I'm just saying, I'm just saying.

568

00:23:44,400 --> 00:23:45,656

[laughter]

569

00:23:45,680 --> 00:23:48,136

But I mean, it's...

570

00:23:48,160 --> 00:23:49,656

Weirdly enough,

571

00:23:49,680 --> 00:23:51,507

everything seems to

572

00:23:51,531 --> 00:23:53,056

fit into place.

573

00:23:53,080 --> 00:23:55,256

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It sounds weird,
but there's, like, a

574

00:23:55,280 --> 00:23:57,096
synchronicity that happens.

575

00:23:57,120 --> 00:23:59,056
So if I can...

576

00:23:59,080 --> 00:24:01,936
Like, if, for example, if I have
to take Mum to the hospital

577

00:24:01,960 --> 00:24:06,000
or the doctor's, the
GP for an appointment,

578

00:24:06,000 --> 00:24:09,576
that day, I know that maybe half
the day is going to be taken up,

579

00:24:09,600 --> 00:24:12,136
because it takes her time
to, you know, get ready,

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580

00:24:12,160 --> 00:24:15,256

and we have to take a bus, or
we walk it, and when she walks, it...

581

00:24:15,280 --> 00:24:18,216

it can take some time,
because she walks with crutches.

582

00:24:18,240 --> 00:24:21,489

So I usually know, okay,
it's gonna be half a day gone.

583

00:24:21,513 --> 00:24:24,256

So in that remaining
half a day, what can I do?

584

00:24:24,280 --> 00:24:26,416

So I don't go into
like any, you know,

585

00:24:26,440 --> 00:24:29,936

hard-- hardcore like
colouring or really intense stuff.

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586

00:24:29,960 --> 00:24:32,481

I try to cherry
pick what I can do.

587

00:24:32,505 --> 00:24:34,376

Like, maybe I can do
some roughs today.

588

00:24:34,400 --> 00:24:36,489

So I give myself a limit.
Maybe I can do, like,

589

00:24:36,513 --> 00:24:40,456

three or four sheets of roughs
and maybe answer some emails.

590

00:24:40,480 --> 00:24:43,896

So I think it's a
way of prioritising

591

00:24:43,920 --> 00:24:46,416

the situation as
and when it happens.

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592

00:24:46,440 --> 00:24:48,000

Um...

593

00:24:48,000 --> 00:24:50,216

And in my case, it can be quite

594

00:24:50,240 --> 00:24:53,976

up and down, if that makes
sense, because, you know,

595

00:24:54,000 --> 00:24:58,456

like mum might have an
inkling to do some cooking.

596

00:24:58,480 --> 00:25:00,896

So I have to go and
help her downstairs,

597

00:25:00,920 --> 00:25:03,627

you know, make some
chapatis or make some curry or...

598

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00:25:03,651 --> 00:25:06,736

whatever you... she feels like
doing because she wants to do that.

599

00:25:06,760 --> 00:25:08,016

Um...

600

00:25:08,040 --> 00:25:10,296

Then I have to prioritise
my time. So, okay,

601

00:25:10,320 --> 00:25:12,576

I... You know, she
wants to do that,

602

00:25:12,600 --> 00:25:15,096

so I have to do something
that doesn't really, you know,

603

00:25:15,120 --> 00:25:18,180

break my train of thought,
if that makes sense.

604

00:25:18,204 --> 00:25:19,496

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Um...

605

00:25:19,520 --> 00:25:20,936

So it can be quite...

606

00:25:20,960 --> 00:25:22,309

Every day is different.

607

00:25:22,333 --> 00:25:23,336

-Hmm.

608

00:25:23,360 --> 00:25:25,616

Okay, so Jo, you've

609

00:25:25,640 --> 00:25:29,216

gone on to be Associate

Professor of Creative Writing

610

00:25:29,240 --> 00:25:31,000

and I know that

611

00:25:31,000 --> 00:25:32,834

sometimes as authors,

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612

00:25:32,858 --> 00:25:35,589

because we spend a lot of our
time having to work on our own,

613

00:25:35,613 --> 00:25:38,386

which is partly motivated by wanting
to get out there and meet people.

614

00:25:38,410 --> 00:25:40,431

Was it something that
had always interested you,

615

00:25:40,455 --> 00:25:42,896

the idea of sharing what you
know about creative writing?

616

00:25:42,920 --> 00:25:45,000

And how important was it to,

617

00:25:45,000 --> 00:25:47,616

you know, to look
at this as a way

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618

00:25:47,640 --> 00:25:51,000

to generate additional income
from being a children's writer?

619

00:25:51,000 --> 00:25:55,096

-It was... When I took
the decision to do my PhD

620

00:25:55,120 --> 00:25:59,016

so that I could then teach, it
was a purely financial decision

621

00:25:59,040 --> 00:26:02,656

because I had sat down
with my royalty statements.

622

00:26:02,680 --> 00:26:05,000

I couldn't work out why I
was selling more books and

623

00:26:05,000 --> 00:26:07,656

getting less money.

624

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00:26:07,680 --> 00:26:10,373

And hey, the answer was Amazon.

625

00:26:10,397 --> 00:26:12,536

And I just thought,
this isn't sustainable,

626

00:26:12,560 --> 00:26:16,456

because at one point I was
writing 10 books in a year, which is...

627

00:26:16,480 --> 00:26:18,416

it was impossible. It was...

628

00:26:18,440 --> 00:26:20,553

You know, I was a
single mother at the time.

629

00:26:20,577 --> 00:26:24,776

I didn't have the brain capacity
to keep that up in order to

630

00:26:24,800 --> 00:26:27,176

pay bills because

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children's books

631

00:26:27,200 --> 00:26:30,000

don't pay huge
amounts for most of us.

632

00:26:30,000 --> 00:26:33,016

So that was very, very
much a financial decision,

633

00:26:33,040 --> 00:26:35,000

but I will add that

634

00:26:35,000 --> 00:26:40,136

the best advice my first agent
gave me on the day that I met her

635

00:26:40,160 --> 00:26:42,136

was never give up your day job

636

00:26:42,160 --> 00:26:45,287

until your advance is
three times your salary.

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637

00:26:46,000 --> 00:26:47,496

It's never happened.

638

00:26:47,520 --> 00:26:50,190

I mean, admittedly, I was working
in Downing Street at the time,

639

00:26:50,214 --> 00:26:51,376

so I did have a nice salary,

640

00:26:51,400 --> 00:26:53,656

but I have never
had that luxury.

641

00:26:53,680 --> 00:26:55,136

So I have...

642

00:26:55,160 --> 00:26:58,176

I carried on having a day
job when I gave up work

643

00:26:58,200 --> 00:27:00,054

and moved down to Bath

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644

00:27:00,078 --> 00:27:01,420
and started...

645

00:27:01,444 --> 00:27:03,696
I say I was a full-time writer,

646

00:27:03,720 --> 00:27:05,576
but I wasn't a full-time
children's writer.

647

00:27:05,600 --> 00:27:07,776
I wrote speeches for
government ministers,

648

00:27:07,800 --> 00:27:12,000
because that pays a lot better
than children's books did. So...

649

00:27:12,000 --> 00:27:14,656
Throughout my writing career,

650

00:27:14,680 --> 00:27:18,176

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these 23 years, I have
had another day job.

651

00:27:18,200 --> 00:27:20,296

That day job now happens to be

652

00:27:20,320 --> 00:27:23,296

a Professor in Creative
Writing, which is a joy.

653

00:27:23,320 --> 00:27:26,376

It means I don't have to
write speeches any more,

654

00:27:26,400 --> 00:27:29,169

it means I don't have to do
as many school visits any more.

655

00:27:29,193 --> 00:27:31,647

I love school visits, but

656

00:27:31,671 --> 00:27:32,816

like Tola,

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657

00:27:32,840 --> 00:27:34,616

menopause came for me.

658

00:27:34,640 --> 00:27:37,456

It's tiring. I don't
have the energy

659

00:27:37,480 --> 00:27:39,016

to travel around the country.

660

00:27:39,040 --> 00:27:41,736

I don't have the energy to be
in a primary school all day.

661

00:27:41,760 --> 00:27:43,000

So...

662

00:27:43,000 --> 00:27:46,000

Doing 3 hours with

663

00:27:46,000 --> 00:27:48,016

over 21-year-olds

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664

00:27:48,040 --> 00:27:51,000

is... it's a lot easier

665

00:27:51,000 --> 00:27:54,096

that 100 7-year-olds, basically.

666

00:27:54,120 --> 00:27:55,456

-No, I can...

667

00:27:55,480 --> 00:27:57,016

Yes, I relate to that.

668

00:27:57,040 --> 00:28:01,056

I've just been doing quite a
lot of free events for promotions.

669

00:28:01,080 --> 00:28:04,000

It's one of those moments when
you're in the school and you realise

670

00:28:04,000 --> 00:28:07,296

only me and the children
are not being paid to be here.

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671

00:28:07,320 --> 00:28:08,656

[laughter]

672

00:28:08,680 --> 00:28:10,903

It's one of those great
things about children's writing.

673

00:28:10,927 --> 00:28:12,000

So...

674

00:28:12,000 --> 00:28:14,856

We've been talking about
different income streams,

675

00:28:14,880 --> 00:28:17,496

because, yes, being
a children's author

676

00:28:17,520 --> 00:28:19,656

isn't... You're not
guaranteed riches,

677

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00:28:19,680 --> 00:28:22,176

either straight
away or indeed ever.

678

00:28:22,200 --> 00:28:24,616

Or if you do, there's always

679

00:28:24,640 --> 00:28:26,846

ups and downs in the whole
thing, a bit of ebb and flow.

680

00:28:26,870 --> 00:28:29,000

And I remember, when I was

681

00:28:29,000 --> 00:28:34,191

18 and I'd written some, you know, just
some fiction, really, just to amuse myself,

682

00:28:34,215 --> 00:28:37,256

but my English teacher, a new--
a published children's author.

683

00:28:37,280 --> 00:28:39,616

Still going, Julia

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Jarman, if you know Julia.

684

00:28:39,640 --> 00:28:42,016

Class Two at The Zoo.

685

00:28:42,040 --> 00:28:43,894

And many others, and
she'd written a book

686

00:28:43,918 --> 00:28:46,000

called Ollie and the
Bogle, I think, and she...

687

00:28:46,000 --> 00:28:48,000

I remember going to her.

688

00:28:48,000 --> 00:28:50,016

I asked to talk to her
about children's publishing.

689

00:28:50,040 --> 00:28:53,736

This would have been
1989, I think, '88, '89.

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690

00:28:53,760 --> 00:28:56,056

And she was saying then that

691

00:28:56,080 --> 00:28:57,896

she didn't just

get to write novels,

692

00:28:57,920 --> 00:29:01,016

she had to write

educational workbooks.

693

00:29:01,040 --> 00:29:02,696

She had to write

694

00:29:02,720 --> 00:29:05,260

reports for other

publishers on their slush pile.

695

00:29:05,284 --> 00:29:08,656

But by doing these things

that weren't necessarily what she

696

00:29:08,680 --> 00:29:11,416

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had gone into it
to do, enabled her

697

00:29:11,440 --> 00:29:13,696

to not have to look
for a job elsewhere.

698

00:29:13,720 --> 00:29:18,416

So I think there are other
sort of like adjacent careers

699

00:29:18,440 --> 00:29:21,000

that we can do, whether
it's teaching, whether it's

700

00:29:21,000 --> 00:29:23,136

starting up a
publishing imprint,

701

00:29:23,160 --> 00:29:26,680

whether it's
self-publishing, whether it's,

702

00:29:26,704 --> 00:29:28,136

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you know, whatever it is.

703

00:29:28,160 --> 00:29:29,183

I mean, there's...

704

00:29:29,207 --> 00:29:31,000

There's all sorts of
ways to do it. Should

705

00:29:31,000 --> 00:29:34,136

people really think
about children's publishing

706

00:29:34,160 --> 00:29:36,096

as a part-time career

707

00:29:36,120 --> 00:29:38,736

rather than something
that anyone can do full-time

708

00:29:38,760 --> 00:29:41,976

is a question that I
find myself wondering.

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709

00:29:42,000 --> 00:29:45,269

I've had moments where I felt I'm
kind of clinging on by my fingertips

710

00:29:45,293 --> 00:29:47,249

and other times where
it's been much easier.

711

00:29:47,273 --> 00:29:50,696

But I know I have editing of
books that I can fall back on,

712

00:29:50,720 --> 00:29:53,956

because that's one
of the things that I do.

713

00:29:53,980 --> 00:29:57,009

I just wanted to
put it to you people

714

00:29:57,033 --> 00:30:01,296

about ghostwriting as well
as a... as another stream.

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715

00:30:01,320 --> 00:30:03,216

And I know, Jo,
you've done some...

716

00:30:03,240 --> 00:30:06,456

some credited
ghostwriting, as... as have I.

717

00:30:06,480 --> 00:30:07,496

Um...

718

00:30:07,520 --> 00:30:10,376

How far should people

719

00:30:10,400 --> 00:30:13,136

kind of look into going down
that route, would you say?

720

00:30:13,160 --> 00:30:15,000

Has it been a rewarding
experience for you?

721

00:30:15,000 --> 00:30:17,216

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-I've been very lucky. I've...

722

00:30:17,240 --> 00:30:20,136

I had an amazing
experience with Chris Hoy.

723

00:30:20,160 --> 00:30:23,096

He is as lovely as
you expect him to be.

724

00:30:23,120 --> 00:30:25,656

And I'd ghost written
for all the ministers before,

725

00:30:25,680 --> 00:30:28,000

so I was very used to

726

00:30:28,000 --> 00:30:32,376

doing all the work and then
taking the back seat a little bit,

727

00:30:32,400 --> 00:30:36,336

and not-- I have no
problem with that.

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728

00:30:36,360 --> 00:30:38,000

It is

729

00:30:38,000 --> 00:30:41,406

far better paid

than my own writing.

730

00:30:41,430 --> 00:30:44,039

-Yeah, the celebrities can pull in
the advances, can't they? Yeah.

731

00:30:44,063 --> 00:30:45,063

-Um...

732

00:30:45,087 --> 00:30:46,656

Certainly, and

733

00:30:46,680 --> 00:30:51,096

I've also... I've also written Angry
Birds tie-ins under other name.

734

00:30:51,120 --> 00:30:54,000

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It's... I... I sort of...

735

00:30:54,000 --> 00:30:56,000

I am a writer for hire,

736

00:30:56,000 --> 00:30:57,816

because I love writing.

737

00:30:57,840 --> 00:31:02,000

-Yeah, no, I have the same
attitude myself, I have to admit.

738

00:31:02,000 --> 00:31:03,176

Um...

739

00:31:03,200 --> 00:31:04,936

How about Rikin and Tola,

740

00:31:04,960 --> 00:31:08,813

would you write
for somebody else?

741

00:31:08,837 --> 00:31:10,809

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Is it something you think
you would like to do?

742

00:31:10,833 --> 00:31:12,896

-I don't think I would right now

743

00:31:12,920 --> 00:31:15,096

because I don't
think my writing's

744

00:31:15,120 --> 00:31:17,816

there because
mostly it's drawing.

745

00:31:17,840 --> 00:31:19,256

But I'd like to.

746

00:31:19,280 --> 00:31:20,816

It's something that I've seen

747

00:31:20,840 --> 00:31:22,343

and heard about.

748

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00:31:22,367 --> 00:31:24,696

And I think I could
write some funny stuff,

749

00:31:24,720 --> 00:31:26,736

but not right now, I think.

750

00:31:26,760 --> 00:31:29,000

I could probably draw a ghost.

751

00:31:29,000 --> 00:31:30,407

If that makes sense, but...

752

00:31:30,431 --> 00:31:32,420

[laughter]

753

00:31:32,444 --> 00:31:34,000

-That could be it.

754

00:31:34,000 --> 00:31:36,496

-Yeah, it's absolutely something
that I would, because I do...

755

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00:31:36,520 --> 00:31:39,976

Also, I mean, I've done,
it's not quite ghost writing,

756

00:31:40,000 --> 00:31:41,776

but the work that
I did with Storymix,

757

00:31:41,800 --> 00:31:43,296

which is a packager,

758

00:31:43,320 --> 00:31:45,656

sort of basically involved

759

00:31:45,680 --> 00:31:48,296

being given the...

760

00:31:48,320 --> 00:31:49,576

Um...

761

00:31:49,600 --> 00:31:53,816

Well, the world is created, the
characters are created, and I'm just...

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762

00:31:53,840 --> 00:31:57,216

I'm kind of creating
the narrative and

763

00:31:57,240 --> 00:31:58,456

filling it all in.

764

00:31:58,480 --> 00:32:00,296

So that kind of gave
me an experience

765

00:32:00,320 --> 00:32:04,136

of what that is like to not have
it entirely be my own creation.

766

00:32:04,160 --> 00:32:05,376

And I quite enjoyed it.

767

00:32:05,400 --> 00:32:07,136

I call it my palette cleanser

768

00:32:07,160 --> 00:32:09,096

because I'd kind of dip

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in and out between that,

769

00:32:09,120 --> 00:32:11,356

and then my one that
required all of the brain work

770

00:32:11,380 --> 00:32:12,396

and I was like, ah!

771

00:32:12,420 --> 00:32:14,000

Um, so...

772

00:32:14,000 --> 00:32:16,136

Yeah, and because I write,

773

00:32:16,160 --> 00:32:18,576

like, in so many
different genres and stuff,

774

00:32:18,600 --> 00:32:20,736

it is interesting to me.

775

00:32:20,760 --> 00:32:22,616

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So it is something
that if it did,

776

00:32:22,640 --> 00:32:24,536
if the right project

777

00:32:24,560 --> 00:32:27,640
came my way, then yeah, I
would absolutely be interested in it.

778

00:32:27,664 --> 00:32:28,936
-That's interesting, isn't it?

779

00:32:28,960 --> 00:32:31,496
Yeah, I found Tim Peak was...

780

00:32:31,520 --> 00:32:33,426
the astronaut, was a
lovely person to work with.

781

00:32:33,450 --> 00:32:36,416
I have had experiences with
others which were less lovely,

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782

00:32:36,440 --> 00:32:40,176

where they kindly offered to credit me and
I said, no, please don't credit me on this.

783

00:32:40,200 --> 00:32:43,656

I don't want to have anything
to do with this, actually.

784

00:32:43,680 --> 00:32:45,000

Um...

785

00:32:45,000 --> 00:32:47,496

I don't know, I want to
get on to another topic

786

00:32:47,520 --> 00:32:51,536

about how much,
as children's authors,

787

00:32:51,560 --> 00:32:54,136

we're expected to do for free.

788

00:32:54,160 --> 00:32:57,176

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Either because it's a good cause

789

00:32:57,200 --> 00:33:00,707

or because it's sort of

790

00:33:00,731 --> 00:33:01,936

people expect it.

791

00:33:01,960 --> 00:33:04,576

Whether that's to advise on

792

00:33:04,600 --> 00:33:05,896

someone else's work

793

00:33:05,920 --> 00:33:09,363

or whether it's to

turn up at a school, and...

794

00:33:09,387 --> 00:33:11,856

What is... I'd like to go around
the panel, each of you in turn,

795

00:33:11,880 --> 00:33:13,740

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and just sort of find out

796

00:33:13,764 --> 00:33:15,456

where you feel your boundaries

797

00:33:15,480 --> 00:33:16,732

lie with this.

798

00:33:16,756 --> 00:33:18,640

Jo, how about yourself?

799

00:33:18,664 --> 00:33:21,856

-So I will not look at other
people's work for nothing

800

00:33:21,880 --> 00:33:25,656

because that's literally
my paid daytime job at uni,

801

00:33:25,680 --> 00:33:29,000

and I just don't
have the energy.

802

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00:33:29,000 --> 00:33:30,496

to do it.

803

00:33:30,520 --> 00:33:32,616

I also don't want to really...

804

00:33:32,640 --> 00:33:36,136

I do it for a couple of close friends
who already published and we

805

00:33:36,160 --> 00:33:39,000

brainstorm ideas,
but I'm not doing it

806

00:33:39,000 --> 00:33:41,176

at other times,
because it's really...

807

00:33:41,200 --> 00:33:43,576

I put a lot of work into it

808

00:33:43,600 --> 00:33:46,336

and I just don't have the time.

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809

00:33:46,360 --> 00:33:49,896

In terms of doing
things for nothing,

810

00:33:49,920 --> 00:33:53,456

I will do the primary school
that my daughter went to,

811

00:33:53,480 --> 00:33:56,136

I will do one event
a year for them,

812

00:33:56,160 --> 00:33:58,056

and they work you really hard.

813

00:33:58,080 --> 00:34:01,656

And that's-- I sort of feel
that's my charitable act.

814

00:34:01,680 --> 00:34:05,000

I am contracted by my...

815

00:34:05,000 --> 00:34:08,136

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Most of us, you're
contracted by your publisher

816

00:34:08,160 --> 00:34:10,856

to do events for two
weeks around publication,

817

00:34:10,880 --> 00:34:13,776

and you rarely
get paid for those.

818

00:34:13,800 --> 00:34:16,520

They pay all your
travel and stuff like that.

819

00:34:16,544 --> 00:34:18,936

And so I will contractually

820

00:34:18,960 --> 00:34:20,936

do those whilst muttering

821

00:34:20,960 --> 00:34:22,416

under my breath,

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822

00:34:22,440 --> 00:34:24,536

but I will not do
any other events

823

00:34:24,560 --> 00:34:28,776

if I'm not paid. I won't
do a festival if I'm not paid.

824

00:34:28,800 --> 00:34:30,816

Our time is worth something.

825

00:34:30,840 --> 00:34:33,296

I don't think it sets
a good precedent

826

00:34:33,320 --> 00:34:35,776

to ask people to do
something for nothing.

827

00:34:35,800 --> 00:34:38,136

You don't ask your
plumber to work free,

828

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00:34:38,160 --> 00:34:40,856

so I feel very strongly

829

00:34:40,880 --> 00:34:43,000

about not doing...

830

00:34:43,000 --> 00:34:46,096

Yeah, just not giving
money up like that.

831

00:34:46,120 --> 00:34:48,256

-Absolutely. And I
think it takes some time

832

00:34:48,280 --> 00:34:50,536

to... to find the...

833

00:34:50,560 --> 00:34:53,976

the self-worth to say, no, hold on a
minute, my time is worth something.

834

00:34:54,000 --> 00:34:55,176

You know,

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835

00:34:55,200 --> 00:34:57,936

just because I think being
sensitive sorts that we are,

836

00:34:57,960 --> 00:35:00,776

you know, we do kind
of feel, oh, yes, I will.

837

00:35:00,800 --> 00:35:04,256

We say to ourselves, well, it'll
be good exposure, perhaps, or...

838

00:35:04,280 --> 00:35:07,136

But it's also... There's a
thin line, I feel, between,

839

00:35:07,160 --> 00:35:09,616

yes, being taken advantage of,

840

00:35:09,640 --> 00:35:13,186

or, you know, or
doing it because it's...

841

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00:35:13,210 --> 00:35:14,656

It's the right thing to do.

842

00:35:14,680 --> 00:35:17,336

And we also have to think
about other authors as well,

843

00:35:17,360 --> 00:35:19,933

and if we do something for
nothing, that means that down the line

844

00:35:19,957 --> 00:35:22,096

someone else will ask them
to do something for nothing

845

00:35:22,120 --> 00:35:24,166

and say, well, they did,
so why shouldn't I ask you?

846

00:35:24,190 --> 00:35:27,296

So yeah, I think it's definitely
worth asking for a fee.

847

00:35:27,320 --> 00:35:29,656

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Or if you're doing, like, a
school event for nothing,

848

00:35:29,680 --> 00:35:31,000
you should at least

849

00:35:31,000 --> 00:35:32,816
be allowed to have a book sale,

850

00:35:32,840 --> 00:35:35,336
and sell books either yourself

851

00:35:35,360 --> 00:35:38,000
or through a local bookshop.

852

00:35:38,000 --> 00:35:41,056
Rikin, do you have
a local bookshop

853

00:35:41,080 --> 00:35:44,000
that you do events with
when you promote your...

854

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00:35:44,000 --> 00:35:45,000

your work?

855

00:35:45,000 --> 00:35:48,756

-No, sadly, there aren't any
local bookshops in Wembley.

856

00:35:48,780 --> 00:35:50,000

[laughs]

857

00:35:50,000 --> 00:35:53,336

There's lots of
casinos, but I mean...

858

00:35:53,360 --> 00:35:55,569

-Crossover opportunities
going on here.

859

00:35:55,593 --> 00:35:58,336

But there are a few in like...

860

00:35:58,360 --> 00:36:01,936

There's one in Ealing, there's
obviously the Waterstones.

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861

00:36:01,960 --> 00:36:03,656

But there's one in...

862

00:36:03,680 --> 00:36:07,296

There's a Pitshanger
bookshop in Ealing.

863

00:36:07,320 --> 00:36:08,456

But I mean...

864

00:36:08,480 --> 00:36:11,000

I don't tend to get out much

865

00:36:11,000 --> 00:36:12,616

If that makes sense,

866

00:36:12,640 --> 00:36:14,696

because most of the
time I'm tied to my desk.

867

00:36:14,720 --> 00:36:16,856

But if I...

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868

00:36:16,880 --> 00:36:19,896

I mean, every bookshop
that I interact with,

869

00:36:19,920 --> 00:36:22,016

if I have to go do a signing

870

00:36:22,040 --> 00:36:24,096

or if there's some
sort of event,

871

00:36:24,120 --> 00:36:26,000

I try to help them and I...

872

00:36:26,000 --> 00:36:28,936

I promote them as much
as I can on social media.

873

00:36:28,960 --> 00:36:30,833

Um...

874

00:36:30,857 --> 00:36:34,216

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But just going back on
the events and things,

875

00:36:34,240 --> 00:36:35,256

I'm very much like Jo.

876

00:36:35,280 --> 00:36:38,176

I won't do something
like an event for free.

877

00:36:38,200 --> 00:36:41,216

But I have gone to like

878

00:36:41,240 --> 00:36:43,296

a few schools for
free and just done a,

879

00:36:43,320 --> 00:36:46,000

you know, a few talks to
like Year One or Year Two.

880

00:36:46,000 --> 00:36:48,816

Especially when
my brother works.

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881

00:36:48,840 --> 00:36:50,296

My brother works in a school,

882

00:36:50,320 --> 00:36:52,329

so they've asked me

a few times to go.

883

00:36:52,353 --> 00:36:54,000

-My sister does

that to me. Yeah.

884

00:36:54,000 --> 00:36:56,776

-Yeah, and it's fun

885

00:36:56,800 --> 00:36:58,936

because the teachers

are really supportive and

886

00:36:58,960 --> 00:37:00,776

they brought lots of my books.

887

00:37:00,800 --> 00:37:02,176

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So I got to sign the books

888

00:37:02,200 --> 00:37:05,176

and then done drawings
with the children and...

889

00:37:05,200 --> 00:37:07,696

Obviously, because
I work as a TA in LSA,

890

00:37:07,720 --> 00:37:09,096

I know how they operate.

891

00:37:09,120 --> 00:37:10,376

So it's just like going

892

00:37:10,400 --> 00:37:12,496

back to like my second job.

893

00:37:12,520 --> 00:37:13,776

Um...

894

00:37:13,800 --> 00:37:18,016

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So I tend to do as
many as I can fit in,

895

00:37:18,040 --> 00:37:19,976

but I don't go crazy
and do, like, them, like,

896

00:37:20,000 --> 00:37:21,416

you know, 10, 20 a year.

897

00:37:21,440 --> 00:37:23,747

I do, like, you know,
if I've got, like, the odd

898

00:37:23,771 --> 00:37:25,278

half a day free

899

00:37:25,302 --> 00:37:28,000

and I think my
workload can manage it,

900

00:37:28,000 --> 00:37:31,456

then I'll go in, you know,
and I'll do it as a favour.

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901

00:37:31,480 --> 00:37:34,256

But most of the time, I'm just...

902

00:37:34,280 --> 00:37:37,056

I'm just so busy, I

can't do many things

903

00:37:37,080 --> 00:37:39,000

like that.

904

00:37:39,000 --> 00:37:41,816

-It's interesting to, you know,

give your take on that mix.

905

00:37:41,840 --> 00:37:43,456

Tolá, is there anything

that you would...

906

00:37:43,480 --> 00:37:45,056

Anything you haven't done yet

907

00:37:45,080 --> 00:37:47,536

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that you feel that you
would like to explore

908

00:37:47,560 --> 00:37:50,656

which might make a useful
extra, additional income

909

00:37:50,680 --> 00:37:52,496

in the world of
children's publishing?

910

00:37:52,520 --> 00:37:54,216

-Um...

911

00:37:54,240 --> 00:37:56,000

Oof...

912

00:37:56,000 --> 00:37:58,256

I've been... It's not that
I haven't done it before,

913

00:37:58,280 --> 00:38:00,576

but I am interested
in doing more

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914

00:38:00,600 --> 00:38:02,980

because one of the things that I...

915

00:38:04,000 --> 00:38:05,856

kind of notice

916

00:38:05,880 --> 00:38:09,136

that's peculiar about
children's publishing

917

00:38:09,160 --> 00:38:10,696

is that who were writing for

918

00:38:10,720 --> 00:38:12,696

isn't who's buying the books.

919

00:38:12,720 --> 00:38:14,935

And that makes
promotion and marketing

920

00:38:14,959 --> 00:38:16,856

particularly interesting.

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921

00:38:16,880 --> 00:38:19,000

And so I'm always like,

922

00:38:19,000 --> 00:38:21,176

when it comes to

who's the target

923

00:38:21,200 --> 00:38:24,456

and the different types of

marketing and who are they targeting.

924

00:38:24,480 --> 00:38:27,656

And so for me, I've been doing more

sort of speaking engagements to adults.

925

00:38:27,680 --> 00:38:30,536

And I'm like, well,

you're the purse holders

926

00:38:30,560 --> 00:38:32,016

and you're the budget holders.

927

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00:38:32,040 --> 00:38:35,000

So it's actually you I
need to convince that

928

00:38:35,000 --> 00:38:36,176

my book,

929

00:38:36,200 --> 00:38:39,296

it would be perfect for your
child, as much as your children.

930

00:38:39,320 --> 00:38:41,976

And so it's fascinating
to me to do more

931

00:38:42,000 --> 00:38:44,376

conferences, more
corporate events,

932

00:38:44,400 --> 00:38:47,416

where I'm actually speaking to the
adults, because there's that issue of

933

00:38:47,440 --> 00:38:50,216

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parents not really
knowing the landscape

934

00:38:50,240 --> 00:38:52,000
of children's publishing and who

935

00:38:52,000 --> 00:38:54,776
the current authors are.
They're not as widely read.

936

00:38:54,800 --> 00:38:57,176
They fall back on what they
read when they were young

937

00:38:57,200 --> 00:38:59,576
or the biggest
celebrity book that is,

938

00:38:59,600 --> 00:39:02,376
you know, pasted in front
of them in the supermarket.

939

00:39:02,400 --> 00:39:04,000
And so

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940

00:39:04,000 --> 00:39:05,816

I think that avenue

941

00:39:05,840 --> 00:39:07,856

and being able to

speak directly to parents

942

00:39:07,880 --> 00:39:09,896

and broaden their knowledge of

943

00:39:09,920 --> 00:39:11,776

how much

944

00:39:11,800 --> 00:39:14,000

more inclusive and also

945

00:39:14,000 --> 00:39:15,816

interesting and modern

946

00:39:15,840 --> 00:39:17,616

children's publishing is now

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947

00:39:17,640 --> 00:39:19,340

is really exciting to me.

948

00:39:20,000 --> 00:39:22,136

-Beautiful. Well, we have...

949

00:39:22,160 --> 00:39:24,976

We have Q's and
we have A's, I hope.

950

00:39:25,000 --> 00:39:27,496

We have the A's, but
we certainly have the Q's.

951

00:39:27,520 --> 00:39:29,656

So let's turn to

952

00:39:29,680 --> 00:39:31,176

see what people are saying.

953

00:39:31,200 --> 00:39:33,736

First of all, there was a question
that was sent in in advance.

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954

00:39:33,760 --> 00:39:37,000

So if, Liz Anelli is... is...

955

00:39:37,000 --> 00:39:39,456

in, we'll just go over this,
it's quite a specific one.

956

00:39:39,480 --> 00:39:42,976

She says, "Although I am still
making books for the Australian market,

957

00:39:43,000 --> 00:39:45,296

"I am finding breaking
into the UK very difficult,

958

00:39:45,320 --> 00:39:47,176

"and my income
level has plummeted.

959

00:39:47,200 --> 00:39:50,000

"I'm relying on the
public lending right

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960

00:39:50,000 --> 00:39:53,787

"and copyright from
Australia to top up my royalties."

961

00:39:53,811 --> 00:39:54,811

Uh...

962

00:39:54,835 --> 00:39:57,576

"Although all of which is
subject to withholding tax

963

00:39:57,600 --> 00:39:59,296

"from the Australian
Taxation Office.

964

00:39:59,320 --> 00:40:00,696

"Can I, and if so how,

965

00:40:00,720 --> 00:40:03,616

"do I get my withholding tax
from overseas earnings back,

966

00:40:03,640 --> 00:40:06,336

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"and is there tax treaty
paperwork I should know about?"

967

00:40:06,360 --> 00:40:10,000

Well, I've... I did some
work on this recently myself.

968

00:40:10,000 --> 00:40:13,056

Because, yeah, there
is normally a tax treaty,

969

00:40:13,080 --> 00:40:15,056

a reciprocal agreement
with another country.

970

00:40:15,080 --> 00:40:16,976

I've been dealing
with the French.

971

00:40:17,000 --> 00:40:19,176

The French will take,

972

00:40:19,200 --> 00:40:20,776

if they publish your book,

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973

00:40:20,800 --> 00:40:22,576
will take 26%

974

00:40:22,600 --> 00:40:23,896
of the money they will pay you,

975

00:40:23,920 --> 00:40:26,896
unless you prove that you're
resident in the United Kingdom,

976

00:40:26,920 --> 00:40:29,000
in which case that
26% drops to nought.

977

00:40:29,000 --> 00:40:30,016
Now...

978

00:40:30,040 --> 00:40:32,376
So it's therefore
well worth doing.

979

00:40:32,400 --> 00:40:34,376

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So, it's definitely
worth checking

980

00:40:34,400 --> 00:40:38,056

that Australia knows
your UK tax residence.

981

00:40:38,080 --> 00:40:40,416

The HMRC can give you
a certificate of residence,

982

00:40:40,440 --> 00:40:41,889

which you can then
pass on to them,

983

00:40:41,913 --> 00:40:43,896

because I believe
they do take a 5%

984

00:40:43,920 --> 00:40:47,000

of your earnings
without... without question.

985

00:40:47,000 --> 00:40:49,136

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So it might not be
able to reduce it to zero,

986

00:40:49,160 --> 00:40:52,056

but if you're being charged
substantially more than 5%,

987

00:40:52,080 --> 00:40:54,656

I would query that with
the Australian Tax Office

988

00:40:54,680 --> 00:40:56,246

that's trying to take
the money off you.

989

00:40:56,270 --> 00:40:59,216

And I'd check PLR
and ELR separately,

990

00:40:59,240 --> 00:41:01,176

because those payments
aren't necessarily treated

991

00:41:01,200 --> 00:41:04,416

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in exactly the same way as
conventional copyright royalties.

992

00:41:04,440 --> 00:41:07,136

-Right, so let's get
on to the Q's now.

993

00:41:07,160 --> 00:41:09,336

We've got Sabrina Shah
has sent in a few things.

994

00:41:09,360 --> 00:41:10,936

Hello, Sabrina.

995

00:41:10,960 --> 00:41:12,576

She was once one of...

996

00:41:12,600 --> 00:41:14,016

one of my cows

997

00:41:14,040 --> 00:41:16,616

as part of my Cows
in Action book.

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998

00:41:16,640 --> 00:41:17,843

Yeah, we did a, uh...

999

00:41:17,867 --> 00:41:20,196

There was this... There used
to be this tradition, I think,

1000

00:41:20,220 --> 00:41:23,000

where different publishers
would dress up their staff

1001

00:41:23,000 --> 00:41:24,056

as a character from a book

1002

00:41:24,080 --> 00:41:26,776

and walk around London
on a kind of pub crawl.

1003

00:41:26,800 --> 00:41:28,976

And when my Cows in
Action series came out,

1004

00:41:29,000 --> 00:41:30,416

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I was surrounded by

1005

00:41:30,440 --> 00:41:32,776

Random House's 12 cows.

1006

00:41:32,800 --> 00:41:35,816

They had got me
a special cow outfit,

1007

00:41:35,840 --> 00:41:38,806

which made me look like I was the
prima donna who insisted on standing out.

1008

00:41:38,830 --> 00:41:40,000

I remember this

1009

00:41:40,000 --> 00:41:42,976

massive scabrous udder, sort
of, like, hanging down, thinking...

1010

00:41:43,000 --> 00:41:44,000

[laughs]

1011

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00:41:44,024 --> 00:41:46,128

But we won. We won,
and Jacqueline Wilson

1012

00:41:46,152 --> 00:41:48,256

was standing in the
DJ booth at Tiger Tiger,

1013

00:41:48,280 --> 00:41:49,886

the club in London,
to give us the prize,

1014

00:41:49,910 --> 00:41:53,000

which sounds like a fever
dream, but actually it all happened.

1015

00:41:53,000 --> 00:41:54,296

She wanted to ask,

1016

00:41:54,320 --> 00:41:56,256

"When it comes to
KidLit marketing material,

1017

00:41:56,280 --> 00:41:59,616

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"how much effort should a debut put
into selling or promoting their books

1018

00:41:59,640 --> 00:42:01,736

"if the publisher hasn't
got the budget to?"

1019

00:42:01,760 --> 00:42:04,000

And we were just
touching on this.

1020

00:42:04,000 --> 00:42:05,856

It comes down to
your conscience.

1021

00:42:05,880 --> 00:42:07,936

Obviously, you want your
book to do the best it can.

1022

00:42:07,960 --> 00:42:09,000

Um...

1023

00:42:09,000 --> 00:42:10,696

And I think, wherever possible,

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1024

00:42:10,720 --> 00:42:13,560

maybe look at ways to...

1025

00:42:14,000 --> 00:42:16,221

make sure there's a bookseller
actually selling the book

1026

00:42:16,245 --> 00:42:18,816

so that you're not giving your
time for nothing, you're giving it

1027

00:42:18,840 --> 00:42:21,776

in the cause of actually
properly promoting that book.

1028

00:42:21,800 --> 00:42:25,136

It's worth approaching local
press, I would think, as well.

1029

00:42:25,160 --> 00:42:27,096

And they always
want to get behind

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1030

00:42:27,120 --> 00:42:29,696

a local person who
makes good type story.

1031

00:42:29,720 --> 00:42:32,336

The rest of panel,
have you got any...

1032

00:42:32,360 --> 00:42:34,136

any ideas on this?

1033

00:42:34,160 --> 00:42:36,456

How much effort
should a debut author

1034

00:42:36,480 --> 00:42:39,000

put into the selling of
promoting of their books?

1035

00:42:39,000 --> 00:42:40,656

I think that's...

1036

00:42:40,680 --> 00:42:44,096

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If I was a debut, i.e. younger,

1037

00:42:44,120 --> 00:42:46,776

I would probably
put a lot more effort

1038

00:42:46,800 --> 00:42:49,296

than I put in now.

1039

00:42:49,320 --> 00:42:51,000

I...

1040

00:42:51,000 --> 00:42:54,000

I think, again, because
I have a day job,

1041

00:42:54,000 --> 00:42:56,496

I am much more...

1042

00:42:56,520 --> 00:42:59,736

Well, I've written the book,
it's not my job to sell it.

1043

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00:42:59,760 --> 00:43:02,976

I don't have the skills, I
don't have the confidence.

1044

00:43:03,000 --> 00:43:04,000

Um...

1045

00:43:04,000 --> 00:43:06,736

But certainly 20 years ago,

1046

00:43:06,760 --> 00:43:09,736

I'd made much more
effort getting school visits,

1047

00:43:09,760 --> 00:43:13,656

I made much more effort in
contacting bookshops myself,

1048

00:43:13,680 --> 00:43:16,256

whereas now I just
sit here and think,

1049

00:43:16,280 --> 00:43:17,936

well, if they contact me, fine,

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1050

00:43:17,960 --> 00:43:20,816

but otherwise I'm just going to
get on with writing the next book,

1051

00:43:20,840 --> 00:43:22,505

because that's what I do best.

1052

00:43:22,529 --> 00:43:25,000

I don't enjoy publicity, so...

1053

00:43:25,000 --> 00:43:30,000

-Yeah, I think that must surely
play a part in that if you love

1054

00:43:30,000 --> 00:43:33,536

talking in front of strangers.
If you enjoy that, that's good.

1055

00:43:33,560 --> 00:43:35,656

It doesn't always come
easy to all of us, though, and

1056

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00:43:35,680 --> 00:43:37,456

it's interesting
that, as authors,

1057

00:43:37,480 --> 00:43:41,056

we're expected to go out
and enthuse and perform,

1058

00:43:41,080 --> 00:43:43,696

but we possibly don't always...

1059

00:43:43,720 --> 00:43:47,776

you know, feel that comfortable
about... about doing so.

1060

00:43:47,800 --> 00:43:50,296

I'd like to... We've
got so many questions.

1061

00:43:50,320 --> 00:43:51,656

It's good to get
through them all.

1062

00:43:51,680 --> 00:43:54,046

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And this one I think, Rikin,
you might be able to help with.

1063

00:43:54,070 --> 00:43:55,496

Sandra Russell asks,

1064

00:43:55,520 --> 00:43:59,336

"On average, how many and what type of
illustration should I have in my portfolio?"

1065

00:43:59,360 --> 00:44:01,976

"I haven't been brave enough to
send my work to any agents yet.

1066

00:44:02,000 --> 00:44:04,000

"Should I apply to all in one go

1067

00:44:04,000 --> 00:44:06,000

"or just a couple at a time?"

1068

00:44:06,000 --> 00:44:09,856

-Hmm, interesting. So I
had this same situation

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1069

00:44:09,880 --> 00:44:11,456

when I started and

1070

00:44:11,480 --> 00:44:16,056

I got a copy of the

Children's Writers Yearbook,

1071

00:44:16,080 --> 00:44:18,816

-A classic resource

available in the library.

1072

00:44:18,840 --> 00:44:20,856

-Yeah, so when I

worked as a bookseller,

1073

00:44:20,880 --> 00:44:24,896

I would see that book all-- You know,
everywhere in Starbucks, on the floor.

1074

00:44:24,920 --> 00:44:26,816

Yes, in the wrong
shelving section.

1075

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00:44:26,840 --> 00:44:28,696

And, um...

1076

00:44:28,720 --> 00:44:31,936

And I bought a copy just
before I had my first agent.

1077

00:44:31,960 --> 00:44:35,576

And I think some of
the pieces of advice

1078

00:44:35,600 --> 00:44:37,456

stated about 10 to 12

1079

00:44:37,480 --> 00:44:39,616

sheets of... of paper

1080

00:44:39,640 --> 00:44:43,496

in your portfolio, which
was similar to what I

1081

00:44:43,520 --> 00:44:45,776

remember when I was
at uni and at art college,

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1082

00:44:45,800 --> 00:44:47,616

because after some time,

1083

00:44:47,640 --> 00:44:49,936

the person looking
at your portfolio

1084

00:44:49,960 --> 00:44:52,000

would get bored if
there's too many sheets.

1085

00:44:52,000 --> 00:44:55,456

So I would say about
10, 10 to 12 sheets,

1086

00:44:55,480 --> 00:44:58,776

and a mix of black
and white and colour.

1087

00:44:58,800 --> 00:45:02,256

-[inaudible] is that?
Or just for visual?

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1088

00:45:02,280 --> 00:45:04,776

Is that to sort of highlight
your versatility or more...?

1089

00:45:04,800 --> 00:45:05,976

-Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I...

1090

00:45:06,000 --> 00:45:08,096

Yeah, yeah, just show
that you can do, you know,

1091

00:45:08,120 --> 00:45:10,776

black and white stuff for
middle grade or whatever,

1092

00:45:10,800 --> 00:45:12,496

and, you know, um...

1093

00:45:12,520 --> 00:45:15,176

And also having

1094

00:45:15,200 --> 00:45:18,416

a strong piece at the

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beginning, something memorable.

1095

00:45:18,440 --> 00:45:19,696

And at the end,.

1096

00:45:19,720 --> 00:45:24,000

Which was something, again, that
was taught to us at uni and at art college.

1097

00:45:24,000 --> 00:45:25,016

Um...

1098

00:45:25,040 --> 00:45:27,456

So I would say any
more than 10 to 12

1099

00:45:27,480 --> 00:45:30,056

and the person looking at
your portfolio gets bored.

1100

00:45:30,080 --> 00:45:31,176

Um...

1101

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00:45:31,200 --> 00:45:35,000

So, yeah, and to
also make sure it's

1102

00:45:35,000 --> 00:45:36,873

quite, um...

1103

00:45:38,000 --> 00:45:41,016

Not too overpowering,
if that makes sense.

1104

00:45:41,040 --> 00:45:43,496

So it's, you know, it's quite

1105

00:45:43,520 --> 00:45:44,689

easy to look at.

1106

00:45:44,713 --> 00:45:46,566

-I guess it can function
too as a calling card.

1107

00:45:46,590 --> 00:45:49,776

And if you have like a web
space where you post your work,

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1108

00:45:49,800 --> 00:45:51,696

it can be, you know,
you can put a link to that.

1109

00:45:51,720 --> 00:45:54,526

And if they're interested, then
they can look at the rest of your stuff

1110

00:45:54,550 --> 00:45:57,296

and get a larger sense
of your work, I guess.

1111

00:45:57,320 --> 00:45:59,896

-Yeah. Oh, and...

1112

00:45:59,920 --> 00:46:01,376

And the second
part to that question,

1113

00:46:01,400 --> 00:46:04,376

I would go applying in blocks,

1114

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00:46:04,400 --> 00:46:06,696

so maybe three
or four agents first.

1115

00:46:06,720 --> 00:46:10,176

Then another three or four and

1116

00:46:10,200 --> 00:46:11,856

keep a spreadsheet if you can,

1117

00:46:11,880 --> 00:46:15,000

or some sort of tally or
record of who you've applied to.

1118

00:46:15,000 --> 00:46:19,056

When you send the stuff,
what did they respond.

1119

00:46:19,080 --> 00:46:22,136

Because then, you know,
if you send it to everyone,

1120

00:46:22,160 --> 00:46:24,216

it can get quite confusing,

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1121

00:46:24,240 --> 00:46:25,983

and yeah, that's not fun. So...

1122

00:46:26,007 --> 00:46:28,223

-You don't want to get
turned down twice either, so...

1123

00:46:28,247 --> 00:46:30,045

That would be tough.

1124

00:46:30,069 --> 00:46:33,256

We have another one
from Sabrina on Storymix.

1125

00:46:33,280 --> 00:46:36,016

Now, Tqlá, did you say that you'd
done some stuff with StoryMix?

1126

00:46:36,040 --> 00:46:37,040

-Yes.

1127

00:46:37,064 --> 00:46:38,802

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-Sabrina's asking if
you've already sent

1128

00:46:38,826 --> 00:46:40,564

a sample a few years
ago and heard nothing,

1129

00:46:40,588 --> 00:46:43,656

Is it worth resending
new material to them

1130

00:46:43,680 --> 00:46:46,000

and getting back on their radar?

1131

00:46:46,000 --> 00:46:47,416

-Yeah, I would say so,

1132

00:46:47,440 --> 00:46:50,616

because, as writers, we're constantly
growing, we're constantly evolving.

1133

00:46:50,640 --> 00:46:53,896

So it is always sort
of worth reaching out

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1134

00:46:53,920 --> 00:46:57,016

because you just never know
what will happen there. So,

1135

00:46:57,040 --> 00:46:58,615

I mean, always shoot your shot.

1136

00:46:58,639 --> 00:47:01,000

What's the worst that
you're going to hear? "No."

1137

00:47:01,024 --> 00:47:02,336

-Nothing to [inaudible].

-Yeah.

1138

00:47:02,360 --> 00:47:04,336

-If it's been a few years
in particular then yeah.

1139

00:47:04,360 --> 00:47:07,776

You've changed, they've
changed. Keep on going.

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1140

00:47:07,800 --> 00:47:09,416

Question here,

1141

00:47:09,440 --> 00:47:13,056

"If you were 50 years old and just
written your first middle grade novel

1142

00:47:13,080 --> 00:47:14,896

"with some
publishing reputation,

1143

00:47:14,920 --> 00:47:16,607

"but in mostly
unrelated markets,

1144

00:47:16,631 --> 00:47:18,816

"what would you do
with your manuscript?

1145

00:47:18,840 --> 00:47:21,216

"Slush piles or self-publish?

1146

00:47:21,240 --> 00:47:23,000

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"Help!"

1147

00:47:23,000 --> 00:47:24,296

Um...

1148

00:47:24,320 --> 00:47:26,016

That's an interesting one.

1149

00:47:26,040 --> 00:47:27,376

I mean,

1150

00:47:27,400 --> 00:47:28,736

there's so many...

1151

00:47:28,760 --> 00:47:30,456

so many things you could do.

1152

00:47:30,480 --> 00:47:32,532

I mean, we haven't
mentioned the SCBWI,

1153

00:47:32,556 --> 00:47:35,456

the Society of Children's

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Book Writers and Illustrators.

1154

00:47:35,480 --> 00:47:38,096

But I always think that if
someone has written something

1155

00:47:38,120 --> 00:47:40,000

and, you know,
especially if they do have a...

1156

00:47:40,000 --> 00:47:42,336

other publishing experience,
or even if they don't,

1157

00:47:42,360 --> 00:47:46,856

it's always good to be able to get
feedback from peers, from other writers.

1158

00:47:46,880 --> 00:47:49,516

There's opportunities
there as well, of course,

1159

00:47:49,540 --> 00:47:52,176

at their conferences to

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meet agents and editors,

1160

00:47:52,200 --> 00:47:54,456

find out what sort of
thing they're looking for.

1161

00:47:54,480 --> 00:47:58,000

Find out, you know, getting some
honest feedback on what you've done.

1162

00:47:58,000 --> 00:47:59,807

So...

1163

00:47:59,831 --> 00:48:02,656

I would suggest that's
one way of doing that.

1164

00:48:02,680 --> 00:48:06,000

Anyone want to add
anything else on that one?

1165

00:48:06,000 --> 00:48:07,896

-I would second that

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1166

00:48:07,920 --> 00:48:09,936

because that's

where I started as well.

1167

00:48:09,960 --> 00:48:12,096

With groups, with SCBWI,

1168

00:48:12,120 --> 00:48:16,136

and I went to their events and

it helped me get up the ladder,

1169

00:48:16,160 --> 00:48:20,176

if that made sense, and understand

the environment, the industry,

1170

00:48:20,200 --> 00:48:24,000

and make some good

contacts and friends and

1171

00:48:24,000 --> 00:48:26,536

the writing, the crit

groups are really helpful.

1172

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00:48:26,560 --> 00:48:28,323

So yeah, I would second that.

1173

00:48:28,347 --> 00:48:30,616

-Good. That's...

That is very useful.

1174

00:48:30,640 --> 00:48:32,256

We're having a lot
of comments about

1175

00:48:32,280 --> 00:48:35,656

school visits and...

1176

00:48:37,000 --> 00:48:40,256

It should-- I mean, it's always...
It's always a fun one, isn't it?

1177

00:48:40,280 --> 00:48:42,536

School visits are

1178

00:48:42,560 --> 00:48:44,656

obviously a valuable
part of our income.

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1179

00:48:44,680 --> 00:48:47,313

They can be if you can

1180

00:48:47,337 --> 00:48:48,976

get a fee out of
them, of course.

1181

00:48:49,000 --> 00:48:50,856

Some people do
accept a very small fee,

1182

00:48:50,880 --> 00:48:52,736

others want... want more.

1183

00:48:52,760 --> 00:48:54,000

Um...

1184

00:48:54,000 --> 00:48:55,687

But, uh...

1185

00:48:56,453 --> 00:48:57,616

Yeah.

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1186

00:48:57,640 --> 00:48:59,576

Do we think-- How important

1187

00:48:59,600 --> 00:49:01,856

would you say, each
of you, that school visits

1188

00:49:01,880 --> 00:49:04,256

have been materially

1189

00:49:04,280 --> 00:49:07,287

in your careers as writers?

1190

00:49:08,000 --> 00:49:09,000

[cross-chatter]

1191

00:49:09,000 --> 00:49:10,000

-For me-- Oh, sorry.

1192

00:49:10,000 --> 00:49:11,000

-No, no. You go.

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1193

00:49:11,000 --> 00:49:12,856

-Well, I think
they're incredible.

1194

00:49:12,880 --> 00:49:15,536

I mean, I also happen to
really enjoy doing them.

1195

00:49:15,560 --> 00:49:17,496

And I had to say,

1196

00:49:17,520 --> 00:49:20,976

I don't want to toot my own horn,
but I have pretty strong school visits.

1197

00:49:21,000 --> 00:49:22,376

So I found that they've been...

1198

00:49:22,400 --> 00:49:25,176

I mean, some
opportunities that have come

1199

00:49:25,200 --> 00:49:27,700

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as a result of me
doing a school visit

1200

00:49:27,724 --> 00:49:30,976

and the impact that I've had,
like, that has been immeasurable.

1201

00:49:31,000 --> 00:49:33,816

And so I really...

1202

00:49:33,840 --> 00:49:35,736

And I think the thing
is, though, boundaries.

1203

00:49:35,760 --> 00:49:38,776

Those-- That's been the most
important thing because I think,

1204

00:49:38,800 --> 00:49:41,729

and we mentioned
it as I'm getting older,

1205

00:49:41,753 --> 00:49:43,601

it's really important

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that I set my boundaries.

1206

00:49:43,625 --> 00:49:45,343

And schools, they
will always push.

1207

00:49:45,367 --> 00:49:46,776

They will always
try and get more.

1208

00:49:46,800 --> 00:49:48,496

And they will always kind of...

1209

00:49:48,520 --> 00:49:49,536

Um...

1210

00:49:49,560 --> 00:49:52,000

Yeah, so I have contracts.

1211

00:49:52,000 --> 00:49:53,576

I do not do a school visit--

1212

00:49:53,600 --> 00:49:56,056

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Every school that I do a
visit with signs a contract,

1213

00:49:56,080 --> 00:49:57,816

and that contract
very clearly lays out

1214

00:49:57,840 --> 00:50:00,256

what my expectations
are, what they're getting.

1215

00:50:00,280 --> 00:50:04,000

Little things like,
if you want an...

1216

00:50:04,000 --> 00:50:05,736

a virtual visit for me

1217

00:50:05,760 --> 00:50:08,576

and you insist that I use
Teams, because I hate Teams,

1218

00:50:08,600 --> 00:50:09,776

I'm a Zoom person,

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1219

00:50:09,800 --> 00:50:12,376

then there's a extra surcharge.

1220

00:50:12,400 --> 00:50:14,336

And if Teams works okay,

1221

00:50:14,360 --> 00:50:16,096

then you will get
that money back.

1222

00:50:16,120 --> 00:50:18,856

Usually, they won't fight
me to use Zoom [laughs]

1223

00:50:18,880 --> 00:50:20,087

once they see that.

1224

00:50:20,111 --> 00:50:22,176

So there's little
things that you can do.

1225

00:50:22,200 --> 00:50:23,200

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-That's a great tip.

1226

00:50:23,224 --> 00:50:25,736

-I only-- So I have half day
rates, I have a full day rate.

1227

00:50:25,760 --> 00:50:28,696

A half day, I only do
two visits-- two events.

1228

00:50:28,720 --> 00:50:30,856

A full day is three events.

1229

00:50:30,880 --> 00:50:32,576

And because of the
books that I write,

1230

00:50:32,600 --> 00:50:34,896

I can do right up through from

1231

00:50:34,920 --> 00:50:36,000

EYFS.

1232

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00:50:36,000 --> 00:50:38,216

In fact, all the way
through to Key Stage 3.

1233

00:50:38,240 --> 00:50:39,336

And so,

1234

00:50:39,360 --> 00:50:42,456

the way I've built it is with a primary
school, for example, in a full day,

1235

00:50:42,480 --> 00:50:44,416

I can hit every
single year group

1236

00:50:44,440 --> 00:50:47,696

and speak to all of them
using a different book.

1237

00:50:47,720 --> 00:50:51,256

So, I will always steer
them and stuff, but I'm quite

1238

00:50:51,280 --> 00:50:52,433

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kind of...

1239

00:50:52,457 --> 00:50:54,216

You know, I will make it work,

1240

00:50:54,240 --> 00:50:56,093

be very helpful, but

these are the rules.

1241

00:50:56,117 --> 00:50:58,616

And as long as they stick to
them, everybody has a great time.

1242

00:50:58,640 --> 00:51:00,456

So I think know your boundaries,

1243

00:51:00,480 --> 00:51:03,856

hold the line,
and they can be...

1244

00:51:03,880 --> 00:51:05,649

And also don't do it
if you don't enjoy it,

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1245

00:51:05,673 --> 00:51:08,056

because if it's not your forte,

1246

00:51:08,080 --> 00:51:09,688

don't buy into it

that you have to do it.

1247

00:51:09,712 --> 00:51:10,793

If it's not your forte,

1248

00:51:10,817 --> 00:51:13,256

you will be miserable,

the kids will be miserable,

1249

00:51:13,280 --> 00:51:15,376

and that's not

worth it for anybody.

1250

00:51:15,400 --> 00:51:16,656

So if it is something that...

1251

00:51:16,680 --> 00:51:18,496

And it is very much

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performance-based.

1252

00:51:18,520 --> 00:51:20,776

So, because I have a... I
was that theatre kid in school.

1253

00:51:20,800 --> 00:51:23,576

So that side of me comes out
when I'm doing school visits.

1254

00:51:23,600 --> 00:51:26,000

So I think it's also knowing
your strengths, as well.

1255

00:51:26,000 --> 00:51:27,496

-Yes, very true.

1256

00:51:27,520 --> 00:51:29,606

And I think that the
boundaries thing is so important

1257

00:51:29,630 --> 00:51:33,216

because if you say, oh yeah, no, I'll
turn up and do something every lesson,

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1258

00:51:33,240 --> 00:51:36,416

you know, you will not be respected
for that and you will be exhausted.

1259

00:51:36,440 --> 00:51:37,856

You will be taken advantage of.

1260

00:51:37,880 --> 00:51:39,776

So it's always
worth, I would say,

1261

00:51:39,800 --> 00:51:41,496

setting those boundaries.

1262

00:51:41,520 --> 00:51:43,242

Won't talk too much
about school visits here

1263

00:51:43,266 --> 00:51:46,127

because the Society of Authors
has just created a fantastic resource

1264

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00:51:46,151 --> 00:51:48,616

which is essentially a
handbook on how to do

1265

00:51:48,640 --> 00:51:50,136

school visits successfully.

1266

00:51:50,160 --> 00:51:52,976

As Tola mentions, there's
information on contracts,

1267

00:51:53,000 --> 00:51:55,913

on what rules you
can set down there.

1268

00:51:55,937 --> 00:51:56,937

Um...

1269

00:51:56,961 --> 00:52:01,656

So check that out. It's on the Society
of Authors website under the resources.

1270

00:52:01,680 --> 00:52:03,696

It's been put together by

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1271

00:52:03,720 --> 00:52:08,000

Abi Elphinstone and
also some fantastic

1272

00:52:08,000 --> 00:52:09,176

information is in there.

1273

00:52:09,200 --> 00:52:11,056

So go and check that out.

1274

00:52:11,080 --> 00:52:12,540

Um...

1275

00:52:13,000 --> 00:52:14,056

Leigh Manly says,

1276

00:52:14,080 --> 00:52:16,416

"Given what you have all
explained about juggling jobs

1277

00:52:16,440 --> 00:52:18,376

"and the difficulty in

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maintaining energy levels,

1278

00:52:18,400 --> 00:52:20,136

"what advice can
you give to someone

1279

00:52:20,160 --> 00:52:22,096

"living with a long-term
health condition

1280

00:52:22,120 --> 00:52:24,456

"or disability trying to
write for young people?

1281

00:52:24,480 --> 00:52:27,773

"Is there a real danger of a lack
of diversity within the industry?

1282

00:52:27,797 --> 00:52:29,736

"And what can we
all do about this?"

1283

00:52:29,760 --> 00:52:31,336

Interesting.

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1284

00:52:31,360 --> 00:52:33,000

Rikin, have you got any

1285

00:52:33,000 --> 00:52:34,536

views on... on that one?

1286

00:52:34,787 --> 00:52:36,407

-Um...

1287

00:52:38,000 --> 00:52:39,616

I think, um...

1288

00:52:39,640 --> 00:52:43,016

Probably just do

the best as you can

1289

00:52:43,040 --> 00:52:45,296

and don't overexert yourself

1290

00:52:45,320 --> 00:52:47,000

because it can be quite

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1291

00:52:47,000 --> 00:52:50,496

exhausting if you have a
disability, I can imagine.

1292

00:52:50,520 --> 00:52:51,536

Um...

1293

00:52:51,560 --> 00:52:54,576

I think the good thing is
that you've got social media,

1294

00:52:54,600 --> 00:52:57,000

so you can reach

1295

00:52:57,000 --> 00:52:58,856

readers, or, you know,

1296

00:52:58,880 --> 00:53:01,176

you can see what's
happening via social media.

1297

00:53:01,200 --> 00:53:03,416

So that could be an option.

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1298

00:53:03,440 --> 00:53:05,027

Um...

1299

00:53:06,000 --> 00:53:07,927

I think...

1300

00:53:07,951 --> 00:53:09,816

I think just pacing yourself

1301

00:53:09,840 --> 00:53:11,196

is probably the
best way to do it,

1302

00:53:11,220 --> 00:53:13,000

not to exert, you know,

1303

00:53:13,000 --> 00:53:14,496

too much on yourself.

1304

00:53:14,520 --> 00:53:15,753

Um...

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1305

00:53:16,173 --> 00:53:19,096

I think that's the best

I can advise, I think.

1306

00:53:19,120 --> 00:53:20,143

-Realistic.

1307

00:53:20,167 --> 00:53:21,216

-Yeah.

1308

00:53:21,240 --> 00:53:23,216

-Aims and achievements in mind.

1309

00:53:23,240 --> 00:53:26,216

But, it is a tricky one,

and it is a hard one,

1310

00:53:26,240 --> 00:53:28,056

but also that lived experience

1311

00:53:28,080 --> 00:53:31,296

can, you know, make something

very special in your own writing.

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1312

00:53:31,320 --> 00:53:33,736

It can offer a window
onto something

1313

00:53:33,760 --> 00:53:35,526

that a lot of people
aren't so familiar with.

1314

00:53:35,550 --> 00:53:38,776

So... You know, it's
definitely worth sticking with.

1315

00:53:38,800 --> 00:53:40,756

Matthew Keller is asking,

1316

00:53:40,780 --> 00:53:42,251

"While it's fantastic
that you've all

1317

00:53:42,275 --> 00:53:45,120

"historically managed to find other
ways to make money via your writing,

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1318

00:53:45,144 --> 00:53:47,876

"the landscape of work has changed
dramatically in the last two years

1319

00:53:47,900 --> 00:53:49,856

"in terms of finding
or acquiring work.

1320

00:53:49,880 --> 00:53:53,000

"Do you know of any
places or resources such work

1321

00:53:53,000 --> 00:53:54,936

"could be found in
today's landscape?"

1322

00:53:54,960 --> 00:53:56,016

Well, it's the, um...

1323

00:53:56,040 --> 00:53:58,696

the million dollar
question, or more likely the

1324

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00:53:58,720 --> 00:54:00,896

£75.50 question,

1325

00:54:00,920 --> 00:54:02,136

um... for... for us.

1326

00:54:02,160 --> 00:54:04,000

But, um...

1327

00:54:04,000 --> 00:54:05,696

What are the options?

1328

00:54:05,720 --> 00:54:07,536

I was thinking of
this. The other day,

1329

00:54:07,560 --> 00:54:08,936

I was in a school and

1330

00:54:08,960 --> 00:54:12,216

a local writer
who self-published

1331

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00:54:12,240 --> 00:54:15,216
was doing a drama group
with the children at lunchtime,

1332

00:54:15,240 --> 00:54:18,616
and was inventing her own
texts and running over them.

1333

00:54:18,640 --> 00:54:20,000
That struck me as a...

1334

00:54:20,000 --> 00:54:23,936
as a good way of creating
another income stream.

1335

00:54:23,960 --> 00:54:27,016
You visit local schools, you run
little lunchtime drama classes.

1336

00:54:27,040 --> 00:54:31,536
Primaries don't often have
a dedicated drama teacher,

1337

00:54:31,560 --> 00:54:34,296

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so it's a good way of
presenting a point of difference.

1338

00:54:34,320 --> 00:54:37,000

That struck me as something
that I might have liked to have

1339

00:54:37,000 --> 00:54:38,056

done at some
point.

1340

00:54:38,080 --> 00:54:40,000

In other ways,

1341

00:54:40,000 --> 00:54:42,256

anyone else got any ideas

1342

00:54:42,280 --> 00:54:45,776

of what's out there that we
might be able to grab for?

1343

00:54:45,800 --> 00:54:48,269

Jo, have you got any experience
with this from your students,

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1344

00:54:48,293 --> 00:54:49,376

who presumably you... you...

1345

00:54:49,400 --> 00:54:51,896

after you've taught them
and you encourage them,

1346

00:54:51,920 --> 00:54:56,380

do they then feed back on what they've
gone on to do and made ends meet?

1347

00:54:56,404 --> 00:54:58,016

-So yeah, there's a...

1348

00:54:58,040 --> 00:55:01,696

I mean, I've always been very
lucky that my other job has been

1349

00:55:01,720 --> 00:55:04,176

writing as well
in different ways.

1350

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00:55:04,200 --> 00:55:05,616

It wouldn't be now

1351

00:55:05,640 --> 00:55:08,456

because AI has taken all
of those copywriting jobs

1352

00:55:08,480 --> 00:55:10,856

and those speech writing jobs.

1353

00:55:10,880 --> 00:55:13,376

I know from talking to

1354

00:55:13,400 --> 00:55:15,329

my students that
actually what they...

1355

00:55:15,353 --> 00:55:17,776

They work in cafes,
they work in bars,

1356

00:55:17,800 --> 00:55:19,136

because what they don't want

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1357

00:55:19,160 --> 00:55:21,256

is a job in the day

1358

00:55:21,280 --> 00:55:24,496

that takes up a lot
of mental energy,

1359

00:55:24,520 --> 00:55:27,336

and when they come home,
they're still having to think about it.

1360

00:55:27,360 --> 00:55:29,651

They want a job that
they just literally do

1361

00:55:29,675 --> 00:55:31,369

for those 7, 8 hours,

1362

00:55:31,393 --> 00:55:32,853

and then they can come home

1363

00:55:32,877 --> 00:55:34,136

and write,

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1364

00:55:34,160 --> 00:55:37,767

and it means that
you keep them slightly

1365

00:55:37,791 --> 00:55:41,456

separate. And I think that's
important in just thinking about

1366

00:55:41,480 --> 00:55:44,576

the way we think of the
income from children's books.

1367

00:55:44,600 --> 00:55:47,176

If you are relying on the
children's books to make...

1368

00:55:47,200 --> 00:55:48,656

to pay all your bills,

1369

00:55:48,680 --> 00:55:50,176

you lose the love for it,

1370

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00:55:50,200 --> 00:55:52,096

because you become

1371

00:55:52,120 --> 00:55:55,247

worried all the time

and obsessed, and...

1372

00:55:56,000 --> 00:55:59,296

Even though there have been many
years where I have made enough money

1373

00:55:59,320 --> 00:56:02,976

from the children's books, I still
try to think of them as my joyful

1374

00:56:03,000 --> 00:56:05,256

sideline thing,

1375

00:56:05,280 --> 00:56:07,736

because I don't want to...

1376

00:56:07,760 --> 00:56:11,376

Because I said I'd had that year where I
wrote 10 books, it wasn't joyful any more.

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1377

00:56:11,400 --> 00:56:14,016

I was just churning things out.

1378

00:56:14,040 --> 00:56:15,456

So...

1379

00:56:15,480 --> 00:56:18,576

Yeah, trying to think of them
as separate entities, I think,

1380

00:56:18,600 --> 00:56:21,000

is the only way to do it. And...

1381

00:56:21,000 --> 00:56:24,536

I know many authors
who work in bookshops,

1382

00:56:24,560 --> 00:56:26,696

very successful
children's authors.

1383

00:56:26,720 --> 00:56:28,976

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Fleur Hitchcock works
in our Waterstones here

1384

00:56:29,000 --> 00:56:31,753

and is a fantastic
children's bookseller.

1385

00:56:31,777 --> 00:56:34,656

So I think-- And she
gets to be around books

1386

00:56:34,680 --> 00:56:37,256

all day, but again,
it's not a job, I think...

1387

00:56:37,280 --> 00:56:40,216

Well, I would hope, that she
takes home and has to worry about,

1388

00:56:40,240 --> 00:56:43,653

and so it doesn't feed
into her writing in that way.

1389

00:56:43,654 --> 00:56:44,975

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-Hmm.

1390

00:56:45,000 --> 00:56:46,416

So, there you go, Matthew.

1391

00:56:46,440 --> 00:56:49,856

There's no easy answer to that
one, but it might be a case of...

1392

00:56:49,880 --> 00:56:53,296

of looking to do something
totally different from the writing,

1393

00:56:53,320 --> 00:56:55,296

just in order to preserve
your own energy levels

1394

00:56:55,320 --> 00:56:57,296

and your focus
on your own stuff,

1395

00:56:57,320 --> 00:56:59,253

because, I mean,
this is it, I mean...

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1396

00:57:00,000 --> 00:57:02,516

We want to make a
living from our work,

1397

00:57:02,540 --> 00:57:04,789

but sometimes, you know,
we have to take on other things.

1398

00:57:04,813 --> 00:57:07,467

I find it very difficult now to...

1399

00:57:07,491 --> 00:57:10,536

take on fresh work if I'm in
the middle of another project,

1400

00:57:10,560 --> 00:57:12,656

and that kind of holds me back.

1401

00:57:12,680 --> 00:57:14,000

But, um...

1402

00:57:14,000 --> 00:57:16,296

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As Tola was saying,
you need the discipline.

1403

00:57:16,320 --> 00:57:18,696

As Rikin's been saying,
you also need the...

1404

00:57:18,720 --> 00:57:22,456

the flexibility to lend
your focus elsewhere.

1405

00:57:22,480 --> 00:57:25,000

As Jo's been saying, you can

1406

00:57:25,000 --> 00:57:27,776

go into with like a sideline

1407

00:57:27,800 --> 00:57:30,656

which allows you to kind
of like share your skills

1408

00:57:30,680 --> 00:57:33,216

and also probably discover
stuff about your own skills as well,

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1409

00:57:33,240 --> 00:57:35,056

by talking to your students,

1410

00:57:35,080 --> 00:57:37,336

which then keeps you fresh

1411

00:57:37,360 --> 00:57:38,467

and refreshed.

1412

00:57:38,491 --> 00:57:39,518

Um...

1413

00:57:39,542 --> 00:57:40,926

I would like to

1414

00:57:40,950 --> 00:57:45,056

say a big thank you to Tola and Rikin
and Jo for joining me for today's event,

1415

00:57:45,080 --> 00:57:50,000

and thank all of you for
joining us this morning.

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1416

00:57:50,000 --> 00:57:52,696

Thank you to Hope Norman
for moderating today's event.

1417

00:57:52,720 --> 00:57:54,976

She has been the
ghost in the machine,

1418

00:57:55,000 --> 00:57:57,896

wriggling around
and posting links

1419

00:57:57,920 --> 00:58:00,496

and helping
everything run safely.

1420

00:58:00,520 --> 00:58:02,656

The Society of Authors'
next online event

1421

00:58:02,680 --> 00:58:05,000

takes place tomorrow afternoon

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1422

00:58:05,000 --> 00:58:07,296

with a Feel Good

Friday draw along

1423

00:58:07,320 --> 00:58:10,056

with joint ALCS Educational

Writers' Award winner,

1424

00:58:10,080 --> 00:58:11,496

Ellen Surrey,

1425

00:58:11,520 --> 00:58:13,250

which is going to be

fantastic. So for more,

1426

00:58:13,274 --> 00:58:16,536

head to societyofauthors.org/events

1427

00:58:16,560 --> 00:58:19,840

to book or check out

our events programme.

1428

00:58:20,320 --> 00:58:22,616

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Just a reminder, the
online event is free for all,

1429

00:58:22,640 --> 00:58:24,416

but if you can afford to,

1430

00:58:24,440 --> 00:58:27,976

please consider donating to the
Society of Authors Access Fund,

1431

00:58:28,000 --> 00:58:30,416

where we suggest a
minimum donation of £5.

1432

00:58:30,440 --> 00:58:32,000

It does good work.

1433

00:58:32,000 --> 00:58:34,237

You can help that fund
by making a purchase

1434

00:58:34,261 --> 00:58:35,776

on our virtual book store

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1435

00:58:35,800 --> 00:58:37,096
on Bookshop.org,

1436

00:58:37,120 --> 00:58:39,256
where you can find
books by writers taking part

1437

00:58:39,280 --> 00:58:41,856
in the Society of Authors
Events programme

1438

00:58:41,880 --> 00:58:44,736
like Tola, like Rikin,
like Jo, like myself.

1439

00:58:44,760 --> 00:58:47,626
Another big thank you
to Tola, Rikin, and Joanna,

1440

00:58:47,650 --> 00:58:49,816
and all of you that have
joined us for today's event.

1441

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00:58:49,840 --> 00:58:52,376

Let's continue this
conversation on social media.

1442

00:58:52,400 --> 00:58:54,016

You can use the
festival hashtag,

1443

00:58:54,040 --> 00:58:56,976

#SoAatHome.

1444

00:58:57,000 --> 00:58:59,180

"S-O-A at Home."

1445

00:59:00,000 --> 00:59:01,736

Goodbye everybody

1446

00:59:01,760 --> 00:59:03,456

and thank you
for your attention.

1447

00:59:03,480 --> 00:59:04,936

-Thank you.

-Bye bye.

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