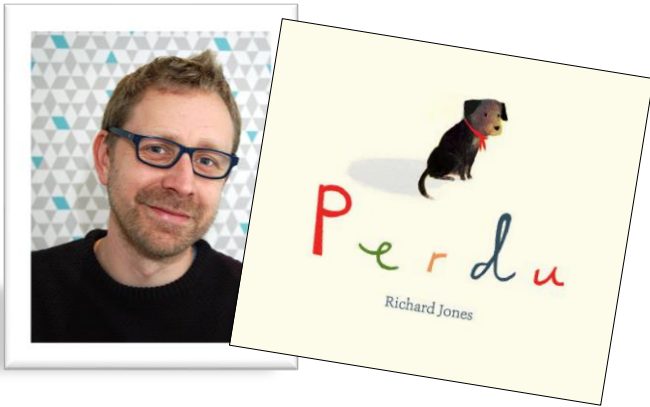

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT



Richard Jones on *Perdu*

ABOUT THE BOOK

Poor Perdu is all alone as he journeys from the countryside to the city in search of a home. The city is a big place when you are very small, but is it possible that someone is searching for a friend like Perdu?

In his debut as both author and illustrator, Richard Jones delivers a warmhearted and poignant story about loneliness, kindness, friendship, and finding a forever family.

Q: Congratulations on your debut as both author and illustrator! How does it feel to have your first authored book out in the world?

A: Thank you, it's a wonderful, magical feeling! It's something that I've worked towards for many years, so to see *Perdu* out and about in the real world is fabulous.

Q: What inspired you to write *Perdu's* story? Is there a real-life *Perdu* that inspired his character?

A: The media at the time was full of images of people fleeing conflict and persecution with some travelling many miles to find safety. It was at the same time heart-breaking and inspiring to witness, and the notions of

home and place were at the forefront of much of the reporting. *Perdu*, I decided, would be a displaced soul, a refugee of sorts, strong and brave. Looking back through my notes, I think I can see the moment when the story really began to take shape. In an early draft, the second line on the first page was to read "...little lost dog, trying to get home." However, I crossed that out and replaced it with "...little lost dog, trying to *find a home*."

Perdu wasn't exactly inspired by a single real-life dog, but for many years I had my own little *Perdu* sleeping besides my desk. Her name was Megan and she was a sort-of collie mixed with a kind-of whippet. We think she had been a stray as a puppy before moving in with us. She was sensitive, gentle, and sometimes a little bonkers!

Q: We loved finding the Snow Lion "Easter egg" in *Perdu*. How different was your creative process for *Perdu* compared to previous projects you've worked on?

A: You spotted him! I managed to smuggle him into *Paper Planes*, too! Surprisingly, I didn't find the creative process too dissimilar to other projects. There may have been one or two last minute tweaks, but the text was pretty much finalized by the time I started on the artwork, so from that standpoint I found myself in a familiar situation.

Q: From where did you draw inspiration for your illustrations in *Perdu*? Which spread is your favorite?

A: Inspiration is often hard to pin down; however, I did find myself watching many videos of people rescuing stray dogs. I was struck by how tiny they seemed against the backdrop of a busy city. So, when it came to putting the artwork together, I was mindful of how big *Perdu* would appear on the page and how his size might communicate how he's feeling in the story. When he's feeling scared or lonely he's often quite small against the looming background shapes.

It's tough to name a favorite! I think the page where the little girl reties his scarf is sweet.

Q: How would you describe your writing and illustrating style?

A: Minimal could be an appropriate adjective. I learned early on that fewer words are often more effective when describing difficult or complicated things. Allowing the space for the words and pictures to flow effortlessly back and forth is always the goal.

Q: When did you know you wanted study graphic communication and illustration? What led you to pursue children's books?

A: Although I also studied fine art at college, I have always felt most comfortable with illustration. I enjoy the discipline and parameters of a brief and I like working as part of a creative team. I've loved illustrated children's books since I was very young and have collected them for many years, but it was while I was working in a busy children's library shelving other people's books that I first thought that I should probably be making them myself!

Q: What does home mean to you? What makes you feel most at home?

A: For me, home means warmth, safety, and peace. I love visiting new places and meeting new people but I always look forward to coming home afterwards—back to my workroom and my garden.

Q: If you were Perdu, would you go to the city or stay in the country?

A: Perdu followed his instinct and went to the city. Although a city can be a busy, noisy place it can also be full of adventure and fun. I think he made the right choice. For me, however, I'm staying in the country!

Q: What do you hope readers will take away from Perdu?

A: Above all, the story is one of kindness and hope. It would be wonderful if readers were inspired not only by Perdu's bravery and determination but also by the compassion and patience of his friend the little girl.

Q: What's next for you?

A: I've just finished working on my second book as both author and illustrator and very much hope to share it with everyone one day soon!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Jones has more than 20 years of experience in the creative arts with a PhD in graphic communication. In his spare time, Richard enjoys bobbing about in the sea, feeding the cat, and licorice. He lives in England.

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