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THE LONELY ARTIST

Illustrating a children's book is an exciting, engaging project which can keep an artist busy for months or even years. It can also be a lonely, nerve wracking undertaking mainly because the responsibility for the final art rests solely upon the single artist. The book must be paginated (divided into pages with text designed attractively into the art); the artist must experiment with various media for creating the book, for instance watercolor, oil, pencil, chalk, digital, or graphic materials; character sketches must be developed and perfected for the characters to be depicted in the book; a "point of view" must be determined, there is usually reference work to be done at libraries and online to research period costumes, objects to be placed in the paintings such as furniture, environments, housing, or whatever, and the list continues. Literally millions of decisions have to be made by the artist.

MORE FUN FOLLOWS!



Right away we discovered that two artists working together on one project have certain advantages. Don and I are very different types of artists, my work is expressionistic and cartoony, Don's style is representational and sometimes quite realistic. Combining the best of both of those approaches resulted in a different look which was not exactly mine or Don's – it became very realistically rendered expressionistic cartoons. As the illustrations developed we both felt a third artist was at work in the studio.

With ELBERT'S BAD WORD, all decisions, from design to sketches to final art, were approached as a team. Basically we settled on the format of Audrey drawing the illustrations and Don rendering them in color. Don was careful not to "cheat," and replace the way I draw hands with the way he draws hands. Both of us learned from each other as we worked on one piece of

TWO FOR ART = FUN!

Don and I discovered the joy of co-illustration 22 years ago when we could not decide who should illustrate my manuscript, ELBERT'S BAD WORD. We liked my black and white sketches, but we were not enthusiastic about my color rendering. I tried several media, but none seemed to work. One day Don found a sketch I had thrown on the floor and he took it to his studio and colored it in for fun. He was trying to encourage me not to give up on the project and hoped to inspire me. When I saw the results – his coloring technique applied to my sketches -- I was stunned. "Lets illustrate Elbert together!" I suggested. We tried a serious sample piece and then sent it to our publisher. They liked the results and so the fun began.



art together. It was a wonderful experience. Art instruction long ago often consisted of copying the masters.



This method is usually discredited today because it lacks "creativity." Don said that he learned so much copying, or coloring in the work of another artist, that perhaps the learning technique of copying should be revisited. He had not colored in the work of another artist since he was in grade school, and the experience was unique and yielded insights into his coloring and modeling techniques.

One disadvantage of having ELBERT illustrated by this imaginary third artist is that compliments from fans, or positive reviews did not register, because we both had the feeling that "someone else did it."

It was so much fun that after a mere 22 years, we decided to try it again. The second book we co-illustrated was released just last fall. Once again I drew the illustrations, and Don painted in my drawings with acrylics for our 2010 title, PIGGY PIE PO with Harcourt.

Now, only 2 years later, we have just signed up to co-illustrate our third book, this time for Scholastic. I can't tell you what it is about yet, or even the title, but it's a fantasy and it has to do with birthdays. Here is a rough sketch.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Audrey Wood". The signature is stylized, with a large, five-pointed star-like shape on the left side.

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