



3 to win!

OUR DOG BENJI

By Pete Carter | Illustrated by James Henderson

EXISLE PUBLISHING, RRP \$19.99

Benji will eat anything (from daffodils to brussels sprouts, ice cream to avocados, sandwiches to bones...) but his young owner isn't quite so adventurous. *Our Dog Benji* is a warm, funny story about a child and a much-loved pet dog.

UPSTART
TOP
TITLES

We caught up with Kiwi author Pete Carter...

What do you love most about your own two dogs?

Sadly the old one died late last year, aged 14 and a half, which was a good, long life. With dogs generally, it's that sense of joy with the simple things in life. A happy dog has food, kindness, exercise and sleep. Humans should be more like dogs in this respect.

If you were a dog, what kind would be and why?

My wife says I'd be like Hercules Morse from *Hairy McLary* – in other words, a mastiff with a large head and large body. My daughter, who is kinder, suggested a golden retriever. I think I'd actually be a mongrel with a good portion of labrador in me. James, who illustrated the book, said he'd be a retired greyhound – skinny but slow!

In your book, Benji will eat anything. What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

I have eaten grasshoppers and snails, which are both commonly eaten in different parts of the world. I prefer grasshoppers.



Illustrator James Henderson is Pete Carter's nephew, making this picture book a family affair.

What's the best part about being a writer? I'm 56 and I still get a buzz when someone tells me they've enjoyed reading something I've written. It doesn't matter if it's my blog, an essay, an article or *Our Dog Benji*.

What advice can you give to kids who want to be writers? Write. Just write stuff down, it doesn't matter what. Stories, poems, a diary, just stuff that you see or hear. And read when you're not writing. Read anything, but especially read books.

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5 sets of the first 3 books to win!

DARKMOUTH SERIES | By Shane Hegarty
HARPERCOLLINS, RRP \$16.99

Darkmouth is the last town where human-eating monsters of myth – properly called Legends – still invade. The town’s safety has somehow been left in the hands of 12-year-old Finn, an unlikely hero who can’t even put his armour on straight. Books number one and two in this series are available now, with three and four coming later this year. And in more exciting news, the books are going to be made into an animated movie!

We had a quick chat with author Shane Hegarty...

What is the most interesting thing about Finn?

It might seem to be that he’s a 12-year-old from a family of monster hunters and that he has to chase down Minotaurs before school. But I think the most interesting thing is that he doesn’t want to do it (he wants to be a vet instead) and he’s not very good at it anyway. Nevertheless, he has to do it and be a hero whether he likes it or not.

PHOTO: ROISIN MACKEN-PRICE



“YOU’D BE AMAZED WHAT GREAT IMAGINATION YOU HAVE”

How do you feel about your books being made into a movie?

It is fantastic! I love the movies and I still can’t believe I’ll be able to go to the cinema, buy a box of popcorn bigger than my head, and then watch the world of Darkmouth come alive on the big screen. It’s going to be animation, made by brilliant people who’ve helped draw *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Big Hero 6*, *Toy Story*, *Moana* and lots more amazing movies. I’ve seen some of the drawings and I’m not supposed to tell anyone about them but... they’re incredible!

What’s your number one tip for getting started in writing?

This sounds really obvious, but my number one tip is to just sit down and write. You’d be amazed what great imagination you have, so let it flow onto the page and don’t worry if it’s perfect the first time, because you can always change it. When I was starting *Darkmouth* I wasn’t sure I could do it, but now I just let the adventure, jokes and cliff-hangers escape onto the page, throw some monsters, heroes, villains, pets, ice cream and rollercoasters in there and see what happens! It’s great fun.

Outside of a dog, a book is a man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read – GROUCHO MARX

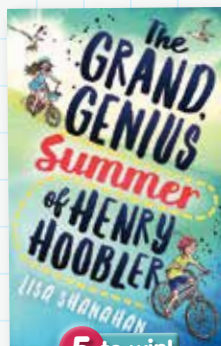
Maiki's book picks!



THE GRAND, GENIUS SUMMER OF HENRY HOUBLER

By Lisa Shanahan

Henry’s family can’t wait for him to ride his new silver bike with no training wheels. But Henry has never ridden a bike without training wheels and is hesitant at the idea of it. When he finds



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out that his summer is going to be filled with bugs, spiders, sharks, octopi and other icky creatures, he is reluctant to go camping with his family at the beach.

Henry – or as his family call him, Heno – is a worrisome kid who fears adventure and trying new things, but his dad is hell-bent on making this summer one to remember.

Soon Henry meets Cassie, a friend who shows him that living on the edge is the best way to enjoy life. Through all

of the enthralling experiences he has, Henry learns to let go of his worry and begins to try new things – and he also makes a new life-long friend.

The Grand, Genius Summer of Henry Hoobler, recommended for ages 6-10, is a thrilling story of the many tales shared between Henry, Cassie and Henry’s family. ALLEN & UNWIN, RRP \$16.99

MARGE AND THE PIRATE BABY

By Isla Fisher

Written from the point of view of Jemima Button, this daring story tells us about a crazy, rainbow-haired babysitter and her adventures with even crazier kids!



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Marge is no ordinary babysitter; she’s said to be the family’s ‘gold in a pile of coal’. One day, on one of her passionate adventures, a curve ball is thrown at her. She meets baby Zara, a little cousin who sleeps and steals treasure... Marge begins to think she’s a pirate.

With a naughty cousin in the family and an eccentric babysitter, Jemima Button wonders whether or not she will be able to save her uncle’s wedding and keep both the kids and the sitter in check.

Recommended for ages 7 to 9, this novel is filled with laughs!

ALLEN & UNWIN, RRP \$16.99