



# Liz Pichon doodled her way to the top of the bestseller list

From an article by Jane Warren published in *The Express*, Friday February 19, 2021

**SHE DOODLES** on her clothes, her shoes, her jewellery and the walls of her home in Brighton. And she loves practical jokes - including the famous Caramel Wafer trick (remove the choc bar and replace the empty wrapper carefully inside the packet).

Her name is Liz Pichon and she is a 57-year-old children's author and illustrator, but in her head she is 10-year-old schoolboy Tom Gates – star of a hugely popular book series.

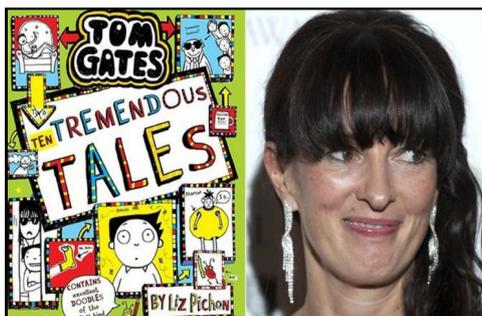
Talking to Liz, it soon becomes clear that all her plots featuring the doodling schoolboy beloved of generations of children, come straight from her own experience and feelings.

Liz ardently believes that whatever makes a child turn a page is a good thing.

"I try always to put the publishers out of my head and think about what I would want to read," says Liz, with her trademark enthusiasm.

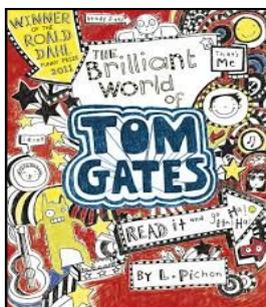
"I devoured *The Beano* growing up as I'm dyslexic and the squares of pictures really helped me to grasp the story.

Now I want every page to have a page-turning moment, as well as drawings, details, doodles and jokes."



Liz Pichon, dyslexic, visual - spatial skills

"I remember giving a talk in one school and being met by a teacher who laughed and said, 'We've had to work really hard to wean the children off your books'. It was intended as a compliment, but it made me sad. There is an idea that because picture books are full of drawings that they are not real books. But there is room for all types."



Tom Gates, hero of now 18 books by Liz and a TV series, *The Brilliant World of Tom Gates*.

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"Visual storytelling fires up your imagination, and really great picture books work on so many levels – from the font and layout to the artwork and story itself," she says.

The former graphic designer has turned generations of reluctant readers into children who realise that, maybe, reading might be for them after all...If reading can be like this.

**"The way you learn is by looking at things and copying them. They don't have to be perfect. My drawing is not the best – I've got friends who are illustrators and I could never draw like them."**



Each of Liz's 18 published books is designed to look like a child's dog-eared exercise book.



## Weekly Spelling lists; are they worth the effort?

From a Post by Misty Adoniou, Wednesday 26 February 2014, on the ABC news site

**What is it about the weekly, fortnightly spelling lists?**

Often, the lists are sprinkled with words the students have no use for and are of no interest to them; perhaps they don't even know their meaning.

Are middle / upper primary students likely to use **debauchery** (Year 5), **ebullient** (Year 6), **extraordinaire** (Year 7)?

Why not focus on the words they need, are interested in or are relevant to the daily topics they are learning about in other subjects?

Focus upon the relevant words as they go instead of a list of less 'relevant' words compiled by a some distant think tank.

In her article Misty Adoniou suggests teachers stop giving spelling tests and start teaching spelling instead.

*"As a result, I received hundreds of emails from parents and teachers.*

*"The parents told me of the angst the weekly*



**The best words for spelling work are the ones your children are interested in**

*spelling list was causing their children with no obvious improvement to their spelling. They wished teachers would stop sending them.*

*"The teachers told me that they knew their spelling lists/tests weren't improving the spelling of their struggling students. They wished parents would stop demanding them.*

*"English spelling is actually very systematic, and we all benefit from being shown the system. It also makes learning spelling fun and purposeful – more like a code breaking treasure hunt than a chore."*

Misty goes on to suggest a list of things you can do to help...

**"1. Make sure your children know the meaning of the words they are learning to spell.**

*(This, believe it or not, is often neglected in the classroom...good luck with 'debauchery')*

**"2. Look to see if there are meaningful parts within the word (these are the morphemes) and break the word into those meaningful parts.**

**"3. Look at the letter patterns in the word – and see what you can notice.**

**"4. Check out the word's origin – the story behind the word is often fascinating."**

Misty suggests you share the full article with your child's teacher: *"Start a conversation about what the two of you want to achieve with your child's spelling – I guarantee it will be the same thing, so now you can work together to achieve it."*

The complete article can be seen at <https://education.abc.net.au/newsandarticles/blog/-/b/704416>

