



I Wish I'd Written? Ottoline and the Yellow Cat

Article Author:

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Article Category:

I Wish I'd Written

Byline:

Paul Stewart chooses Chris Riddell's **Ottoline and the Yellow Cat**.

Paul Stewart on an illustrated story that is 'engaging, funny and endlessly digressive'?

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Chris Riddell and I have been working together for fifteen years. Originally, he simply illustrated my texts. These days, however, we plot, plan and write together. A while back, he told me about an idea for a 'picture novel' - a highly illustrated chapter book for kids just beginning to read - that he was planning to write and illustrate himself. The result is **Ottoline and the Yellow Cat** - and it is a triumph!

Ottoline is a feisty heroine who, with the help of her friend, Mr Monroe - a hairy creature from a bog in Norway - becomes caught up in an intricate series of jewel heists, involving lapdogs and the eponymous yellow cat. The book is brought to life by wonderful illustrations - from Ottoline's odd shoe collection to a preposterous cross-dressing bear.

As for the story, it is engaging, funny and endlessly digressive. Chris has created a world for Ottoline to inhabit that is both self-contained and believable, while weaving a plot that, though intriguing, is easy enough for the youngest reader to follow. Every word is perfectly judged. Of course, I expected no less. I taught Chris everything he knows about writing, but he's been a good student. **Ottoline and the Yellow Cat** is a gem, and I wish that I had written it!

Ottoline and the Yellow Cat by Chris Riddell is published by Macmillan (978 1 4050 5057 9, £8.99 hbk).

[image:Paul Stewart.jpg:left]

Paul Stewart's latest book **Barnaby Grimes: The Legion of the Dead** (978 0 385 61193 0, £8.99 hbk), illustrated by Chris Riddell, is published by Random House.



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