



A Q&A INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL BRIGHT AND NADIA SHIREEN

By *AndreaMReece*

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Article Author:

[Rachel Bright](#) [1]

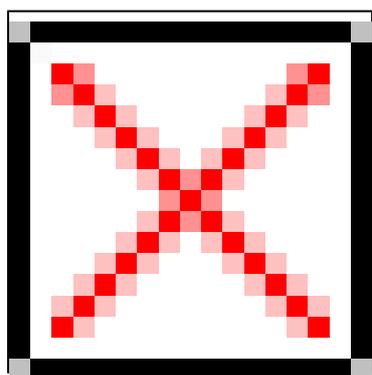
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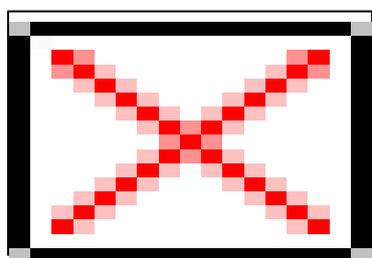
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Picture book superstars Rachel Bright and Nadia Shireen answer our questions on their first collaboration, **Slug in Love**.



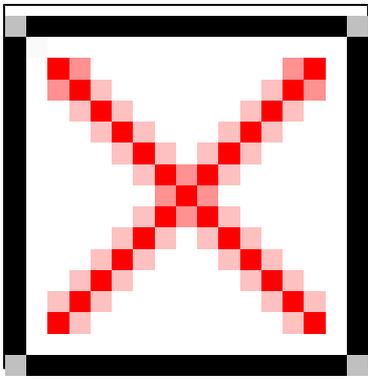
Picture book superstars **Rachel Bright** and **Nadia Shireen** collaborate for the first time in the creation of [Slug in Love](#) [4], a funny, charming and perfectly told picture book and a big favourite with the **Books for Keeps** team. They answer our questions on their book here.

Rachel, what did you think when you first saw Nadia's illustrations of Doug?



I mean?DELIGHTED! I instantly wanted to hug him! I think capturing charm and character in a slug is quite a gantlet for a writer to throw down for an illustrator! And do you know what? Nadia picked up that gauntlet and used it to create just the PERFECT character! Not only that, but she made Gail! Oh my, Gail?what a snail! You take one look at her and you know who she is! And Nadia makes it all look so effortless too! No wonder this isn't her first rodeo (although it might be her first Gastropod Rodeo!)

Nadia, how did you feel when you first read Rachel's text?



I knew straight away it was a text I could have a lot of fun with. Rachel's words give the story a lot of heart and humour, but also left me with so much space to have fun with and let my imagination fly. Also I thought it was pretty great that the main character was a slug and not a cute little bunny, for example. I was up for the challenge!

What is your favourite scene or spread in the book and why?

Rachel: I'm going to cheat and pick three! (impossible to choose one). It's the page where we (the reader) first meet Doug and he grins at us from the ice cream tub. I also love the spread where we meet Gail (she says so much without saying a word!) and the spread where Doug and Gail meet for the first time - which encapsulates everything about magic in picture books for me?this spread is the epitome of the golden space between where words start and pictures begin?it's so simple yet it's funny and profound!

Nadia: I like the page where we meet Gail for the first time. It's just such a funny page turn for some reason. I also like the spread where Doug is melodramatically howling on top of a log. It's sad but also so over the top it makes me giggle.

What would you say makes picture book perfection?

Nadia: I like a book which has the perfect balance of word and image. Everything should be telling the story; the colours, the way the page is designed, and of course the text. And books which leave the small reader space to wonder and question and explore.

Rachel: When the words and the pictures dance together effortlessly, whilst leaving just enough space for magic to happen in between (kind of like being in love!). If it's funny too and rhythmic to read out loud (it feels nice in your mouth to say it and good on the ear to hear it!) ? and can be enjoyed by big and small alike (many times over), then you've achieved true picture book alchemy. It's the holy grail for authors and illustrators. Hopefully Doug will strike gold in lots of hearts!

Who is the picture book author or illustrator you most admire and why?

Rachel: Oh my! There are so many. Past and Present. Some of my heroes include Dr. Seuss (a modern philosopher!), Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake (masters of humour), Andy Stanton (makes me and my kids laugh so much!), Maurice Sendak, Michael Ende (**Neverending Story**, amongst others). Though I'm perhaps the biggest fan of the illustrators I get to work with?Nadia, Jim Field, Chris Chatterton (to name but a few), because I get to see their process first-hand from sketches to final art? and it's really something to behold. I have admiration for all those following their creative passion. It takes real courage to do that.

Nadia: There are so many! I love [Brian Wildsmith](#) [5], [Jan Pienkowski](#) [6], [Oliver Jeffers](#) [7]. And there are so many talented people around at the moment; Kate Hindley, Jon Klassen, Christian Robertson, Mini Grey, Benji Davies, Ed Vere, Carson Ellis. I have to be careful with other picture books. If I look at too many I get a total crisis of confidence and bring on creative paralysis.

Tell us why Doug is such a good hero for our times.

Nadia: He is kind, hopeful, and puts himself out there. I suspect he also has a beautiful singing voice.

Rachel: Doug is the poster slug for hope and love! And isn't that the great purpose of our lives? To love and be loved in return? Doug keeps going until he finds that?or should I say?that finds him.

Slug in Love [4] is published by Simon and Schuster, 978-1471188602, £12.99 hbk.

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