

Squiz Kids Q+A with author Aaron Blabey

Hello and welcome to this Squiz kids Q&A, the show where you, the kids of Australia, get to ask the questions. I'm Bryce Corbett. Today's guest has a lot to answer for a spectacularly badly behaved pug, a gang of scary looking animals trying to do good, and now pets. We apparently can't trust. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's Aaron Blabey, the Australian author and illustrator behind *Pig the Pug*, the *Bad Guys*, and *Thelma the Unicorn*. His latest adventure involves an eleven-year-old boy called Griff, a talking axolotl called Bob, and an intergalactic game show that puts the world in danger. So just a quiet week, then, for everyone involved. Book one in Aaron's new *Game of Pets* series, *The Boy Who Knew Too Much* is available now from wherever you get your books. Aaron Blabey. Welcome back to the Squiz kids Q&A hot seat. You survived it in twenty twenty-two. Let's see how you go. Second time around, shall we?

I can't wait.

Let's start then with how this all began.

Bella: Hi, my name is Bella and I'm nine years old and I live in Brisbane in Queensland. My question is, what made you want to become an author and how you come up with all the clever characters?

Oh well, I'm glad you asked, Bella. How did I become an author? The answer is really silly, but it's true. I just wrote a book. That's all. To become an author, pretty much. And anyone could do that. And as for the characters and the things, I don't really know where they come from. But I, a lot of my characters are bits of me. They're bits of people I know. They're bits of people I've seen on the streets or overheard or, and then I just sort of mix them together. And then sometimes they turn into animal characters, but they're very much like Mr. Wolf and Mr. Snake are both me, you know? They're both two different sides of me. And those, those two sides argue with each other. And that's kind of how that works.

All right. Question number two. Now, Ava has been wondering about the other jobs that you might have done if you hadn't become an author.

What would I be doing if I wasn't an author? I think... I play a lot of music, so I think I'd probably do that. But my first job I used to, there was a thing back in the olden times called a video store, and I used to work. I remember those. I used to work in video stores because I've seen every movie ever, ever made. I'm a little bit obsessive. So yeah, I was the video nerd guy you'd go with and to hire films and I could, I could tell you which ones to get. So that was my first job. And you gotta remember, I grew up in the nineteen eighties, and there was a thing that we didn't have in the eighties called parental supervision. So I, I, so I would go to the video store all by myself and come home with all kinds of crazy things. So I like horror movies, I like comedies, I like rom coms, I like like all kinds of stuff. Action films, it depends. Depends. I kind of cover the whole gamut. As long as it's good, I don't I don't really care what kind of movie it is.

Question number three now from Ivy.

Ivy: Hi, my name is Ivy. I am nine years old and I live in Kipparing, Queensland. My question is, has Pig the Pug ever learned his lesson?

Well, Ivy pig is, he's certainly... well, in the last book, I guess he appears to have learned his lesson. I'm not sure I fully trusted him, but he he's not.... He's not big on, um personal growth pig. And yeah, he is um there have been no further books about Pig and I don't think there will be, but I suspect at some point before too long there will be a TV show about Pig, which will be really, really fun.

Well that's exciting.

He lends himself to being a in a TV show more than a movie, because in a movie, a character starts a journey and then learns things and then becomes a different kind of character. Pig is better for TV because he's an idiot all the way through, and then they

just reboot and he does it again. So I think, yeah, I think Pig is going to be a TV star at some point.

Well, look forward to that. Let's go to Hugo now, who's eight and from Riverton in Western Australia.

Hugo: Hi, my name is Hugo. My question is in the bad guys. Why did you make Doctor Marmalade a guinea pig? And why were there so many butts,

Hugo? It was. Yes. Hugo. Um. Uh, the idea. I think a friend of mine, when they were a kid in this is also back in the eighties, they had a guinea pig named Marmalade, and I just thought that was a cute name. And I thought the way my brain works is if it's a cute guinea pig, they have to be a diabolical villain somehow. So that's where that came from. And why did he have so many butts? Um, I just that just struck me as very, very funny. The idea of an alien who. And if you've read the books, you guys will know that they're not bots, they're his hands, but that no one will believe him because that's what they look like. Um, and that just that just tickled me. So I that's how that happened.

Now Harvey, who's nine years old and from Mount Mee in Queensland, is asking you now to make a little bit of a tricky choice.

Harvey: Hi, my name is Harvey. I'm nine years old and I live in Mount Mee in Queensland. My question is, which of the books you've written is your favourite?

Oh, um, what book is my favourite? I really love the last Bad Guys book. Bad guys twenty. That that one. It's it's funny, but it's also it's kind of if you've been invested in their world, it's a little bit sad when they all say goodbye. So I like that one. All the pieces tie up. You get to see where everybody heads off to. I really love it. It must be hard to say goodbye when you spend so much time with them. Yeah, it was time though. It was time like I, I knew I always knew it was twenty parts. I always knew that's what the shape was going to be. And um, yeah, and it was fun figuring out how

to get there. But yeah, when it was done, I was relieved and also a little sad to say goodbye.

Yeah. I'll bet. Let's go to David now. Hi, my name is David. I am eleven years old and I live in Phila in New South Wales. My question for Aaron Blabey is why did you choose a wolf, a snake, a shark, and a piranha to be the saviours of the world? Thank you.

I like the idea of scary animals, um, having sort of shady pasts and then trying to prove that they were good. Why those specific animals is actually really interesting. It's because of things that scared me when I was a kid. When I was four, I remember being let out of a cinema like this because there were posters on the wall for jaws two, which is a shark movie, and I just couldn't look at the poster. I was terrified of it. And so that was the shark. Um, there was a very silly poster when I was a kid for a movie called piranhas Two Flying Killers, which is outrageous, directed by James Cameron, weirdly, who made Titanic. Eventually he made a real journey. But I loved that poster. I have it in my studio. Um, when I was a kid, there was a film called Raiders of the Lost Ark, and there's a famous scene where Indiana Jones lands in a pit full of snakes, and I found that really scary. Yeah. And, um, and the wolf when I was nine years old, that lack of parental supervision I was talking about, I went to a nine year old birthday party when I was nine. I was in charge of picking the movie and I brought American Werewolf in London, which is terrifying. And, uh, watch that and scared everybody in the room, myself included, because I was only nine. Um, so the wolf and the shark and the snake and the piranha, that's where they all came from, I think was those places they, they always been in my head as being scary when I was a kid.

So this is essentially the bad guys is essentially a form of therapy. It is. Yeah. Yeah. Impressive. Very impressive. June is in Maidstone in Victoria.

Jude: Hi, my name is Jude. I am nine years old and I live in Maidstone in Victoria. My question is, what was the biggest challenge you faced when wanting to be an author? Thanks. Bye.

Um, the biggest challenge, June, to becoming an author. You know, even when you get published, sometimes books can come out. I had lots of books that weren't. I have a section on my website, which is my older books, and I the website says he's older and frankly less popular books. And it's true, you know, every book I've ever made, I've kind of put everything into it, and sometimes they come out and just sort of disappear, you know? And that can be really hard because you love it just as much as, you know, something that's really successful. So the trick is to just make stuff that you love and sort of release it like a little bird and, and hope that lots of people go, oh, look, you know, and that's, that's, that's the trickiest part, I think is just accepting that sometimes everybody goes, yay! And sometimes everybody goes, what? You know, and it, it doesn't, doesn't, you know, explode. But that's. Yeah, that's all right. It's, it's the, the main thing I always focus. I never focus on the, the coming out bit of books. I just focus on making them. I'm always, I've always got like four or five books happening at once, you know.

Mhm. Excellent advice. Ella, who's twelve and from Beecroft in New South Wales, has a question now. And she's giving you the chance to step inside a book. But there's a rule.

Ella: Hi, my name is Ella and I am twelve years old and I live in Beecroft in New South Wales. My question is, if you were to become a character in a book you have read, apart from the ones you authored, which character and book would it be?

I know that when I was twelve, the book that I would have stepped into or wanted to step into would have been Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. I thought that was brilliantly clever and funny and things and like big, crazy adventure. When I was a little younger than that, it would have been a Tintin book, probably. Um, secret of the unicorn.

Oh yeah. That. Yeah, that's a great one. Yeah, it sounds like we have very similar tastes, Mr. Blabey. Um, question nine is from Sanvik in New South Wales. Who wants to take us from the bookshelf to the big screen. And his question is, how did you find out the bad guys was going to become a movie? And how did that make you feel?

Yeah. Um, that was that was really crazy. Lots of the some movie studios in Hollywood. Lots of them. Um, were interested in the bad guys. They were all sort of wanted it. I had this crazy week where I went to all the studios and met the bosses of all the studios. Um, and I talked to all of them. And the, the one that felt right at the time and continued to feel right was Dreamworks. Those guys just had a, they kind of got it, you know, and, um, then we worked on it for ages. It takes a long time to make an animated film. Um, and then, you know, there's been two of them now and it's so exciting when you see it kind of blow up on this sort of giant scale. It's the, it's the, it's the coolest thing ever. It's so much, it's so much fun. Um, yeah. So yeah, it's, it's, it's really, it's a very strange feeling, but a really exciting one.

Our final question comes from Ayla, who's ten years old and from Brisbane in Queensland. And after hearing about Game of Pets, I think we could all use the answer to this question.

Ayla: Hi, my name is Ayla. I am ten years old and I live in Kalinga in Queensland. My question is what are signs and appearance changes that our pets will make if they are part of an intergalactic game show?

Uh. You don't need to look for signs. They're all involved. It's all of them. No matter how nice they seem. They're all, they're all. They're all working for a terrible and diabolical intergalactic cabal. Um, yeah. No, it's, uh, it's that it's that's one of my favourite things is coming up because this is a book about, you know, it's sort of about the environment. Well, it is about the environment and, but I don't know how my brain makes the connection between intergalactic game show and that. But it did. It did somehow. And it's it's so much fun to write. But yeah, don't trust any of them. None of them. They're all up to no good. My own pets. They're just. It's a disaster. Yeah.

And so how, what's the, what's the, what's the, what's the link then to the, to the environment and the intergalactic game show?

So the story is Griff is a kid. He gets a pet. Yeah. It's an axolotl. Axolotl to his horror can speak. And not only that, but it tells him that every pet on the planet is in service to this game show. And they're all using mind control on us to get us to make poor ecological choices. So they're telling you, don't recycle that, just put it in the bin. So we do, and it's like these tiny little bad suggestions all across the world is making it. And the purpose of the game show is the players of the game are trying to get us little humans to destroy our planet as quickly as possible. And this one kid knows the truth and he has to convince everybody. But he he he's axolotl told him this, so nobody believes him.

Aaron, thank you for braving the Squiz kids Q&A hotseat again and for helping us keep an eye on our pets. And a big thank you to all the Squiz kids who sent in questions. You have definitely kept Aaron on his toes. Now, if you'd like to meet Griff and Bob the axolotl and find out what those suspicious pets are up to. Game of Pets book one The Boy Who Knew Too Much is out now in all good bookstores. Now, Aaron, before you escape, there's one final job we always like to ask our guests in Squiz kids Q and A's to sign off with the traditional Squiz kids sign off. Can you help us out?

Now get out there and have yourself a most excellent day.

Brilliant. Over and out.