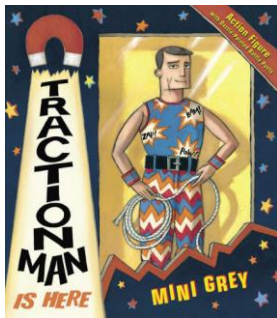


What inspired the writer? Mini Grey explains how she came to write Traction Man



The idea for *Traction Man is Here* came from a real thing that happened when I worked as a teacher. I was on playground duty and a little boy called Midge zoomed up to me. He had brought his Action Man into school and his Action Man was wearing a new, home-made outfit (knitted by Midge's granny, I think).

The outfit was a suit, knitted out of emerald green wool with big buttons. And because it was knitted it looked just like a green romper suit that a baby might wear.

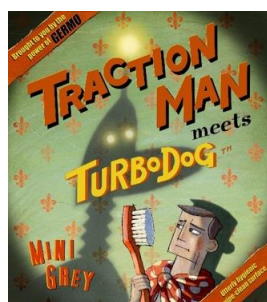


The Action Man was clearly trying to rise above the suit and stay brave and heroic nonetheless. And I felt sorry for the Action Man and hoped it would get to home-time without anyone laughing at him.

Years later, I remembered Midge and his Action Man in the playground and that is where the story started.

TM Meets Turbodog: entering the Bin

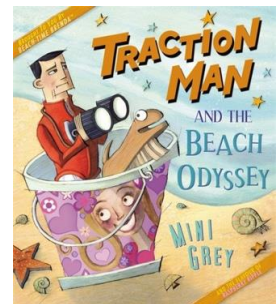
The fun of making stories about Traction Man comes from imagining being only about 20cm high – which transforms everyday situations into adventures. One of my favourite Traction Man locations to draw was inside the Bin, in Traction Man meets TurboDog.



The Bin was really a kind of underworld, and the thrown-away foods inside it could become creatures not exactly alive but not exactly dead. Undead, maybe. I wanted the Bin to be bit like a low-budget horror movie.

TM Beach odyssey: TM leaves the house!

I wanted a summer adventure for Traction Man, so he really had to go to the beach. And what would happen to you if you were 20cm high at the beach? Well, being swept out to sea by a giant wave, of course.



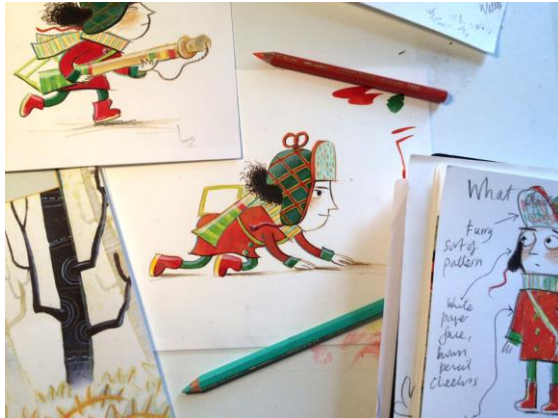
The challenge in this story was that Traction Man was going to be separated from his Boy; and, away from his boy – who is his animator, he would be powerless to do anything. So, I decided that even though he'd be immobile, Traction Man would still be able to think & communicate with Scrubbing Brush. Here they are decorated with shells and being plied with ice cream in the dollies' castle.





The Last Wolf

Often, when I'm looking for inspiration, I go looking in Fairy tales and nursery rhymes. Classic fairy tales and nursery rhymes are familiar territory; we feel like we know the characters. So, they're great material to respond to, to use as a launch pad for a new story, to imagine those characters in new situations.



The Last Wolf, my latest book, came from thinking about Red Riding Hood. And also, asking 'What if' is a good way to get a story started, so I wondered – "What if ... Red was going into the woods, not to deliver goodies but to catch a wolf?" Would she find one in woods in Britain today? No, she wouldn't. The last wolf in Britain was seen hundreds of years ago ... But what if one wolf was left? And it was living in a tree. With the Last Bear ... and the Last Lynx...

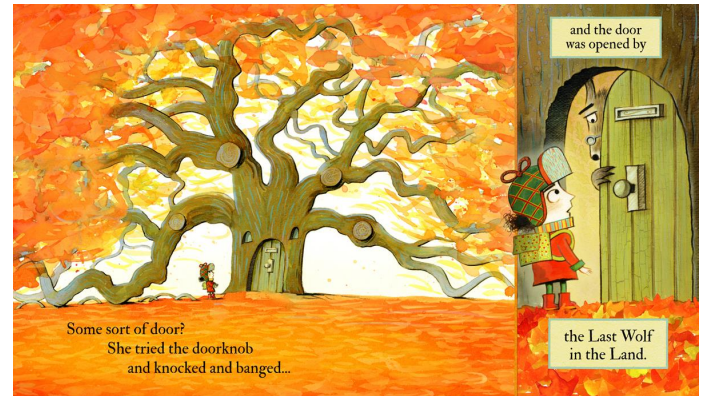


The Last Wolf was living in a cosy tree-cave, along with the Last Lynx, and the Last Bear.

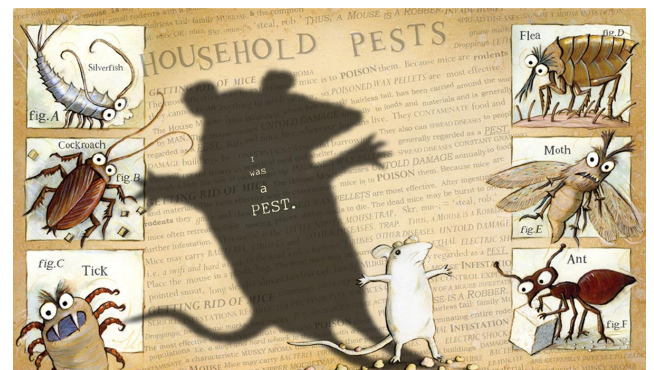
The wolf has had a deeply unfair deal in fiction. Fairy Tales are guilty of giving wolves a really bad time – wolves are not dangerous monsters. Fairy tales should be ashamed of themselves!

Since the 1970s, more than half of the wild vertebrate animals on Earth have quietly disappeared. In Britain, so many of our animals – especially predators – have become nearly or completely extinct. Amazingly, some

– like otters, for example – are returning to British landscapes. Maybe, at last, we can learn now to be a bit more wildlife tolerant and give more space to nature – it will be our mattress, our crash mat, and the more nature we have the more resilience the world has against climate change.



Picture Book Detectives



Words and pictures are the great double act. In picture books, Words and Pictures are each doing a different job, maybe even telling a different story – but you need both of them to have the whole story.

And even the youngest people are expert readers of pictures.

So, in pictures, you can say very complex things, things that it would take an enormous number of words to explain.

So, when you're reading picture books, it is great to be a Picture Book Detective and ask questions like: In this picture, who's doing the looking? Who are you? What's happening? What are we not seeing? What's beyond the page? There is no right answer when you're talking about a picture: the picture is a world of possibility.



The pictures feed the words, and the words feed the pictures, in a collaborative relationship, each adding depth to the other and, subsequently, to writing.



Mini Grey, April 2019

The pictures



