

Help! We Need a Title!

Q&A with Author-Illustrator Hervé Tullet



Photo by Franck Strömme

Both *Press Here* and *Help! We Need a Title!* are playful and interactive. Where do you find inspiration for your innovative story ideas?

After spending a lot of time in schools, I've come to realize that there are endless possibilities for ideas. When I'm thinking about a new idea for a book, it helps to interact with children. When I spend more time with kids, I can better tell if they will follow a certain idea. I get a sense of how far I can go with it and where I can take it. That's the great thing about the interactive field I'm in.

What motivated you to explore the idea of unfinished characters?

All of my books, especially *Press Here* and *Help! We Need a Title!*, play with the book form. What is a book? How are we going to turn the page? What is going to happen? How do we read? What is an author? *Help! We Need a Title!* is metafictional, dealing with the writing of books, where ideas for stories come from, and what is missing (the story) versus what is already there (the characters). It's a journey into the cogs of an author's brain when a story is still being developed.

Can you talk a bit about your art style in this book?

I love art when it's in its rawest form, such as folk art and sketches created by children. There's so much energy in those drawings. It's not always just about style; I value the energy in art more than the style. When I have an idea, I turn to paper to express myself through my drawings, and I try not to worry about what they look like or if they are beautiful. I do hope that this book will spark within others a desire to draw without fear. It should be about creating something that is expressive, sincere, and authentic, and not something that is perfect. In *Help! We Need a Title!*, my illustrations are full of scribbles, stains, crossed-out words, and so on. Perhaps this book will help children feel confident and joyful about creating, and the act of drawing will seem less intimidating.

What inspired you to include yourself in the story?

When I began to think of how to "draw" the character of the author, I thought a photo of me, the real author, could work well. Maybe because I understand what I do as an author, what I give, and what I express in my books. Both of us—the real author *and* the fictional author—have a message to share!

What is your favorite thing to doodle in your notebooks?

I am forever searching for ideas for sketches. Ideas are my fuel! When I observe an object and put pen to paper, I feel like I can't really draw what I see. But ideas! I draw them much more easily.

