

Henry Morris Memorial Trust

Children's Book Report

By Bethanie Agnes and Greta Bonnaud

Introduction & Background

This report describes the process we used to create a children's book with the support of a grant from the Henry Morris Memorial Trust.

The process began with our application in January 2022 followed by an interview in March. We have worked on illustrating the book for 6 months from March through to September.

This has been a collaborative project between Beth Agnes and Greta Bonnaud, both aged 15.

Over the four years we have known each other, we have often talked together about illustration and our dream to write and illustrate our own children's books when we're older. Much of the bonding in our friendship came from our shared passion for art and the storytelling you can do through it. However, with all the time and money that goes into producing books, it was always just a dream – something we could only achieve when we grew up. That changed when the Henry Morris Memorial Trust presented us with an opportunity that we couldn't pass by. £300 would allow us to print a book and then sell it with the proceeds going to charity.

After lots of ideas and brainstorming to create our pitch to the board, Beth went into the interview with our proposal and not long after we were rewarded with the funding to create and print our very own children's book. But for it to be printed we had to do the creating first!

Project Concept

The basic idea for our story was a little girl stuck at home in the rain who finds a box of objects that lead her to imagine herself in various settings which are presented to the reader as though they were really happening.

Before deciding on the story idea we came up with some basic criteria for what we wanted this book to achieve:

- Relatable characters
- Diversity
- A thought-provoking point of view
- A clear storyline
- Interesting details
- A good step up for beginner readers
- Pleasing to look at
- A fun combination of two styles
- Playing with the idea of imagination
- Uplifting

Writing

When working on such an involved project like story writing, communication and collaboration are really important. In each part of the process we ensured this in different ways. Using tools like Google docs where we could work on something at the same time from different devices allowed us to keep up with the other's progress. Having agreed the main steps of the story, we decided to each try writing our own version (1) which would allow us to fully express our own creativity with no rules or restraints to start off with. To get two basic full drafts of the story we each worked independently, before then meeting up a couple of times on a free weekend in the spring term to combine the drafts.

To carry out this process most efficiently we went through each other's drafts and highlighted the lines that stood out to us (2) and which we really wanted to include in the final draft. Collecting them all in chronological order we placed them onto a different document where we could start fleshing out the writing together based on this scaled back version. This allowed us to both have a large part of our writing in the final draft and the rest of the writing worked on together as a joint effort (3). We followed the same process for the blurb.

1. The rain outside poured on drip drip drip, whilst the cat lay cosy on the bed. Mika sat on the cold floor. Sigh... the clock went by tick tick tick.
A silver buckle shone out in the darkness. Curious, Mika tiptoed over pitter patter, stretching out her hand she pulled it into the light of the lamp.
A big brown leather suitcase opened suddenly. Crash! Onto the floor a pile of silk and sparkles fell.
Mikes eyes were wide with delight! She looked through the treasure she had found and pulled out a pair of wings all shiny and glittery.
She slipped her arms through the straps and took a few paces ...
...Stepping onto the soft grass Mika giggled in delight. The sun shone brightly and a patch of golden buttercups swayed in the breeze. The sound of running water drew her to a little river where a boat sat tied up to a branch.
Carefully Mika climbed in. Creak... the boards sounded underneath her. Splash! An oar hit the water. She was off!
The river wound its way through trees and under the fingers of outstretched branches. Splish splash the oars went up and down, up and down.
Suddenly, she heard a fluttering above her head... A fairy! And another! And Another!! They danced and pranced over her head whilst the boat kept on going. Splish splash, splish splash
Soon the trees were beginning to thin and the river got wider and wider. A sail was now upon her boat and a grand steering wheel had replaced her oars. The boat was massive!
Swishhhhh... the wind pushed the boat further out to sea. A seagull perched on the mast. Squawk! The bird flew off suddenly. Thud! The sound of footsteps on deck...

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3. Blank title page
It was a cold and dreary day. The rain poured down and splashed onto the muddy ground.
Mika sat on the cold wooden floor. Time went by: Tick, tick, tick. The rain came down. Drip, drip, drip. Stuck inside with nothing to do.
A silver buckle shone through the darkness. Curious, Mika tiptoed over, pitter patter, the floorboards creaking under her step, stretching out her hand, she dragged the object into the light.
The old leather suitcase suddenly popped open. Ploof! A cloud of dust filled the room.
Clatter! An array of objects fell onto the floor. Wings and a wand. A compass and a shell! She picked out the wand, shirring and sparkling, she took a few paces...
Mika giggled in delight as she stepped onto the soft grass. The sun shone brightly, as bluebells swayed in the breeze. The wind playfully whirled around her.
She skipped, she danced, she twirled.
Leaping across the mossy forest floor. The sound of running water drew her to a little boat. It sat by the river bank, weather-beaten but eager.
Splash! her oar hit the water. She was off!
The river wound its way through whispering trees swish and under the fingers of outstretched branches. As Mika rowed on, she heard a fluttering nearby.
It was a fairy! And another! And Another!! Above her they leaped and danced and pranced!
The trees were soon behind her and the river became wider and wider.
A sail was now upon her boat and a great steering wheel had replaced her oars. the distant shouts of pirates were heard from below deck.
The shouts got louder and louder... and the wind, stronger and stronger. The sound of footsteps approached on deck... Crash! 'she's sinking!' a voice rang out, 'everyone jump!' cried another.
SPLASH! The chaos of pirates frantically swimming faded into nothing.
Mika took a leap and dived into the sea. Whoosh! She slipped below the waves.
Out of deep a whale approached, the shade of a starry night sky.
He smiled kindly and together they plunged into the depths of the ocean. Leaving behind the sparkle of sinking treasure.
They swam past old shipwrecks and seashell kingdoms, over the sandy floor and through sea-weed forests. Deeper and deeper...
'so beautiful' she sighed. 'my favourite place' replied the whale, drifting into the shadows.
The floor was now white and dusty. She glanced up into a starry sky where a moment ago the fish had swum. It was cold on the moon.
She floated through the emptiness, before resting quietly on the dusty ground.
she gazed at the sunset over the earth. Suddenly she felt small and alone, she stood up and looked around her... and she was standing on the cold wooden floor. A rainbow peeped through her curtains and it filled her room with colour.
She jumped in delight and ran outside (rocket in hand)
The sun shone brightly

Story Boarding



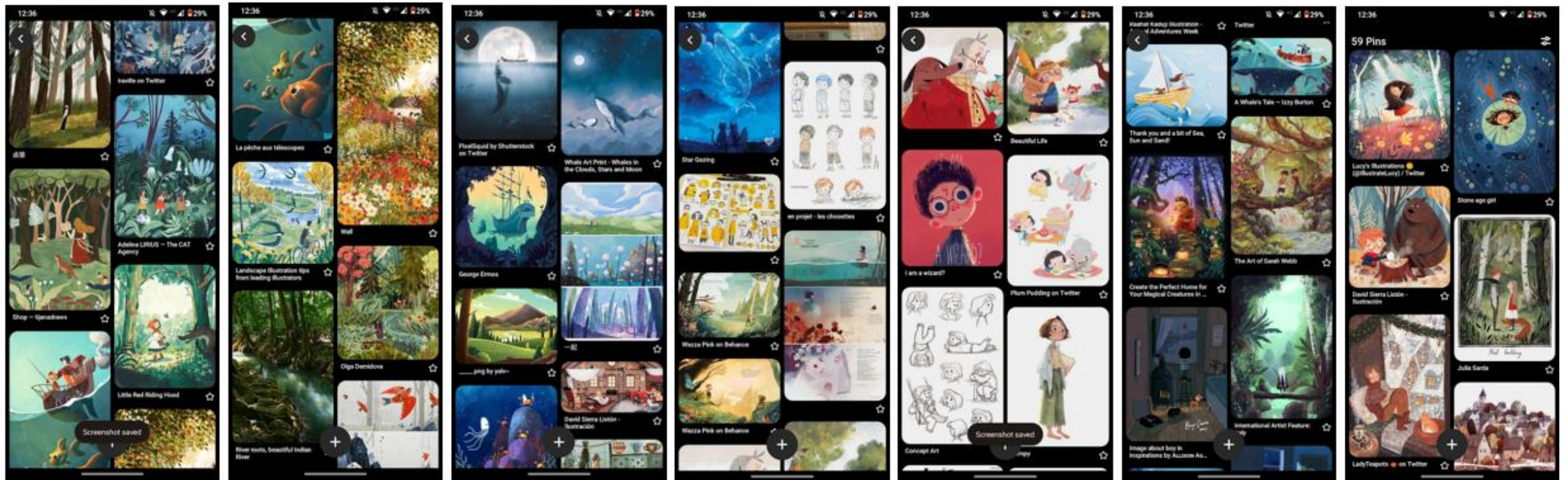
After we had drafted the final version of the story it was time to storyboard the potential compositions for each page. Using a very popular digital illustration app - Procreate - Beth sketched out a complete storyboard that Greta then went in and adjusted, again to ensure each of us were represented in the final outcome. These sketches were very rough as they simply suggested where things would go and how the story would flow once text and images were combined.

Throughout creating the story board, flipping back and forth between the google doc and all the other pages of the story board kept the ideas consistent and in line with each other.

When creating compositions it was very important that we kept the pages varied and individual yet working all together to compliment each other. By making some illustrations fill the whole page and some in boxes, some jumping out of boxes and some completely free on the page it hopefully helps keep the reader engaged and makes the story come alive just that little bit more.

Inspiration

Its hard for an idea of style to form without some kind of inspiration to set your imagination going. There were many different places we gathered this, whether it be from children's books we had growing up or collected more recently or whether it be in the endless digital library of art available online. One way we shared this inspiration with one another was creating a Pinterest board we could both add to. This helped us better understand what each others vision was for the illustrations and enabled us to agree on aspects we liked of different styles and things we may want to in our reflect in our own. At the same time we needed to be realistic about what our beginner skills would let us do as Greta has been doing digital illustration for 4 years and Beth was brand new to it.



Character Design

The character design process took up a large amount of time as we wanted to explore many options to ensure we liked the character. Both of us put forward ideas and made rough drafts of the character though ultimately Beth drew and completed the final designs of the character. You will spot elements from most the characters in the character we eventually settled for.



This is the final character



You may notice the characters do not reflect the diversity we talked about earlier however for the main character we wanted first and foremost to reflect both of us as we felt this was the story of the adventures we went on as very young children in our imaginations. However, we made sure the other characters in the book reflected a wider range of ethnic backgrounds to allow all children to see themselves in the story.

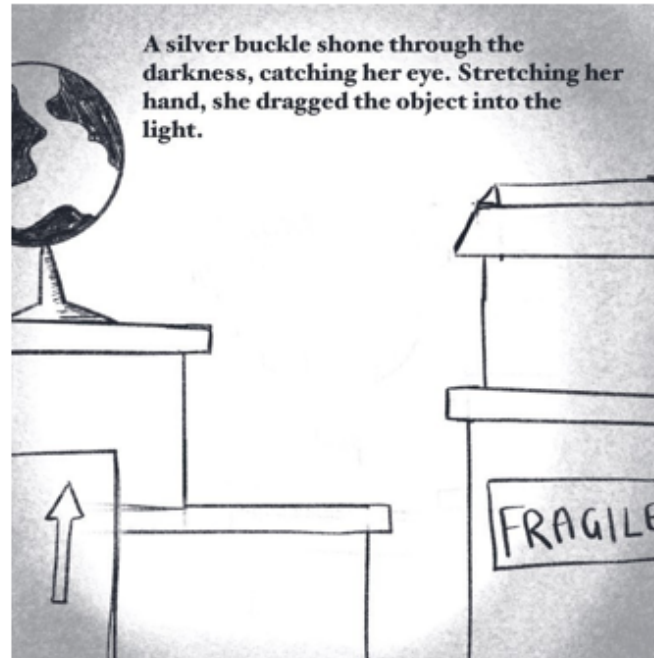


These three were some of Beth's favourites

Backgrounds

With the backgrounds, we spent less time developing these as we had a better understanding to begin with of what we wanted them to consist of and the style it would have. Greta did lots of testing of different digital brushes and invested in some new digital brush sets from other online art creators. These allowed new textures and finishes to be achieved in the end result.

As the background would dictate the overall composition of the piece it was important these were well thought through so more detailed sketches were a bigger part of the development process. Though these did not always end up as the final composition they allowed us to get a better sense of what the final page would look like so Beth could plan the characters that would go on them.



She skipped, she danced, she twirled.
Leaping across the mossy floor...



It was a cold dreary day. The rain poured down the window and splashed into the muddy ground, soaking the leaves.



Sometimes the plans were much more simple when we could give each other verbal feedback in person rather than send images back and forth!

Gameplan

With now starting to get going on the final illustrations we needed to make sure we had a clear idea in mind of how we would execute the drawing process. From the beginning we had agreed that Greta would do backgrounds (environments and colourwashes) and Beth would do foreground (characters and objects) as we thought this would play best to our strengths and let us easily overlay our work. We decided that Greta would produce a background based around the storyboard and Beth would import her image onto her device to draw her characters on top of. We went for this approach to make sure they worked together well and could be adjusted as we went along.

The best way to make both our drawings work together was, instead of trying to replicate one style, which would most likely be unsuccessful and take the life out of them, to really run with the fact it was two people illustrating a picture and go for completely different styles which would allow both our styles to shine through and add a fun unique twist to the book.

Getting Organised

With all the different things we had to be juggling at once in order to make a whole children's book in 6 months (a relatively short amount of time for a project like this) we had to be very organised. One way we did this was using a free app called notion. It let us create task lists and different categories of plans etc. which we could both see and edit at all times so we knew exactly what the other person needed to do, was in the process of doing and had finished whilst also keeping track of our own tasks.

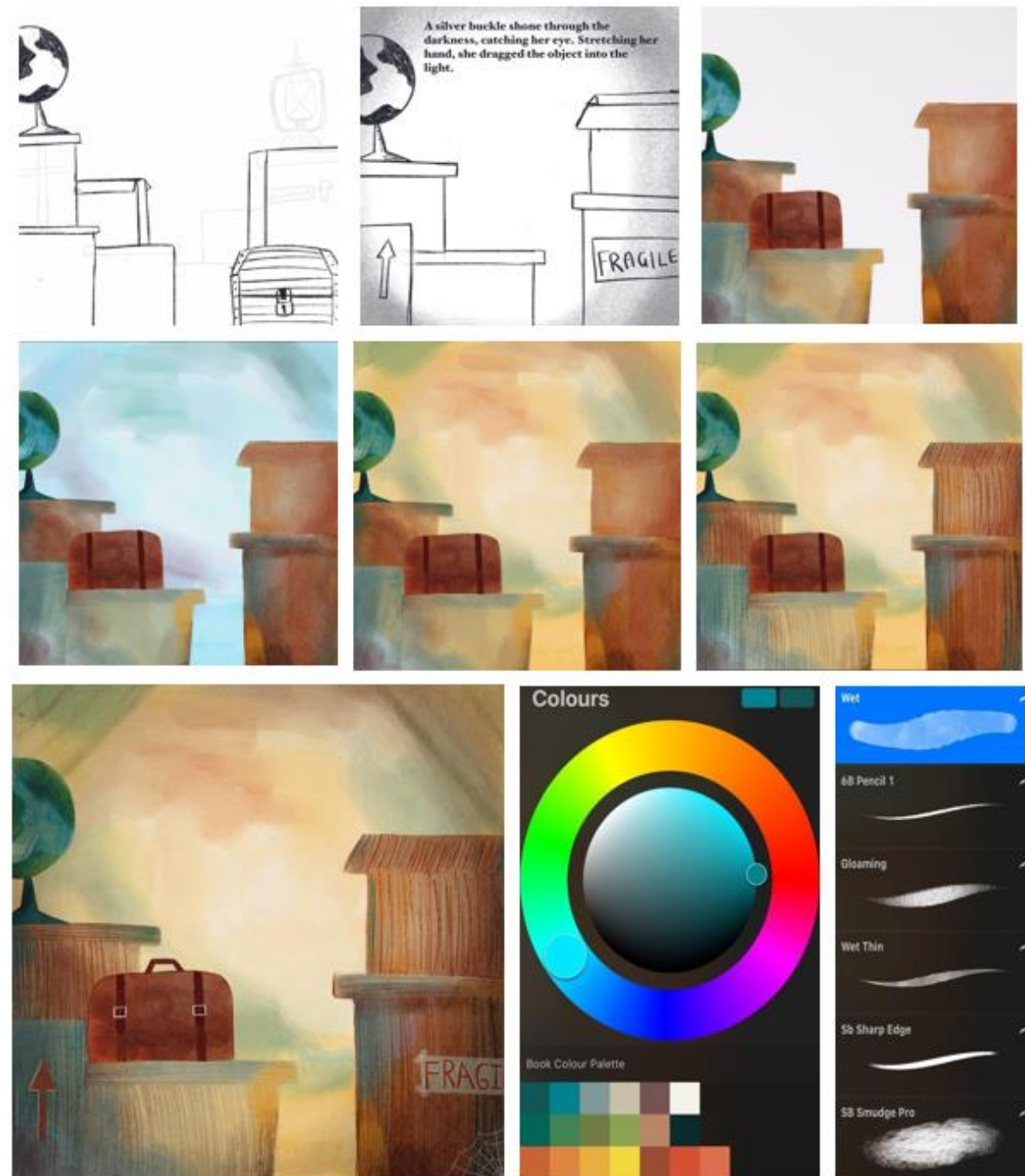
As most of the work was done in the summer holidays when there was no school, exams or homework to distract us it meant there was less in person communication, so having online resources like these was crucial.

Background Illustrations

Greta:

My focus when drawing the backgrounds is to create a fun and visually interesting illustration without it distracting from the main action. I usually start with a basic sketch blocking out the main shapes. This helps me not to get caught up on the details too early on and focus on the composition.

- For the colours I have a colour pallet which I've stuck to throughout the book. I use a watercolour brush to block in large areas, making sure to vary my colours and brushstrokes which gives the illustration texture.
- I then erase the rough shapes to create cleaner lines. I add more texture and shading until I'm happy with the general picture.
- Next I add details. When doing this I have a list at hand which includes plants and animals which live in the environment.
- Then I make any necessary adjustments to the colours and shadows.
- Finally I'll add a vignette (dark area around the image) to frame the drawing and draw the eye in.
- The process generally takes around 2 hours but depends on the complexity of the image.

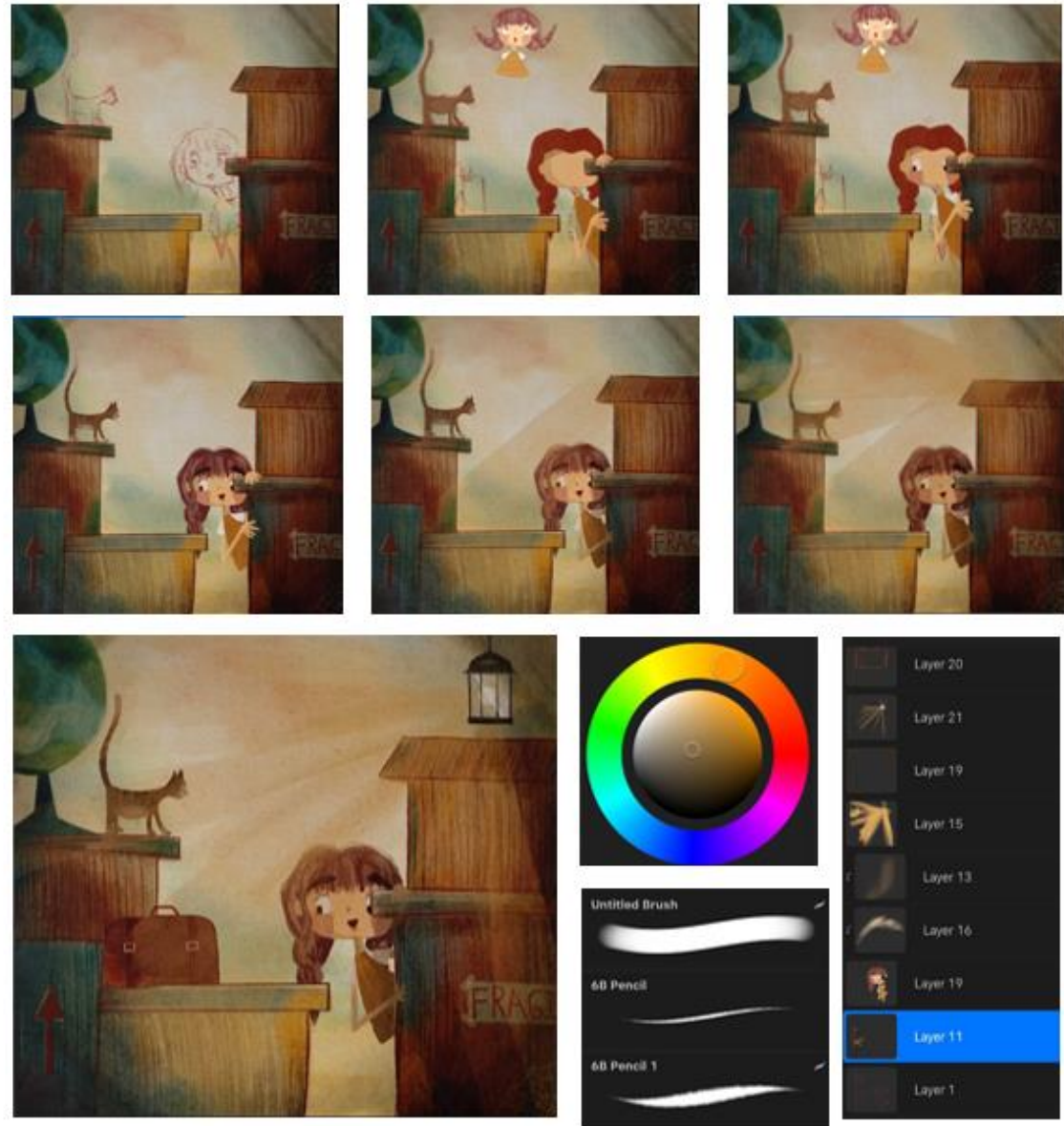


Foreground Illustrations

Beth:

When creating my contribution to the illustration, making sure the foreground and character sat well with Greta's background was something I thought very important to consider throughout the process.

- To begin with I would create a sketch on top of the background. Sometimes this would take a couple attempts to find a composition was happy with but often, using the thumbnails created in the storyboard, it came very naturally.
- Blocking in the large areas of colour and adjusting settings till I was happy with the base was the next step with each character. I followed my basic sketch underneath but more refining for the shapes were done at this stage.
- Then it was time for the details. Using layering and clipping masks to make it look as clean and professional as possible made the process much more time consuming. However this is when the picture starts to really come together.
- Last step is perfecting each layer and blending the two separate artworks into one with lighting and shadows!
- This whole process on average took 1h 30mins though it varies page to page, some taking longer and some being quicker.



Using a variety of brushes helps create depth and interest within what might be one plain colour bringing to life the drawings.

Putting it all together

Once all 30 pages had been completed it was time to put it all together. This meant adding and formatting all the text on each page, putting together the front and back cover with the blurb and book title and all our information pages. This was all done on Procreate which made the process much easier.

Charities

It was important to us to highlight the generosity of the Henry Morris Memorial Trust in giving us a generous grant of £300 and we wanted to recognise them in the book in some way so those reading would recognise the multitude of people that went into creating this book.

We wanted to return the favour to another charity that held special meaning to us as well and through much research we settled on CAMFED. (website: <https://camfed.org>)



CAMFED is the campaign for female education and their goal is to get as many girls into education as possible. CAMFED works in partnership with communities, government schools, and education authorities in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. CAMFED not only pays school fees, but provides other essentials, such as uniforms, books, and sanitary protection, safe boarding facilities, or bicycles for girls to get to school more quickly and safely. They also train teachers in child protection, and young women as peer mentors and role models to vulnerable girls. So far they have sent 1 million children to primary school and many of those up into further education. They are an amazing charity and with our goal to raise £500 we could make a real difference, sending 5 girls to school for a full year or supplying 50 girls with all the equipment they need or 10 girls with a school uniform!

Budgeting

To calculate the amount we would require from the grant we settled on printing 100 copies. Using the website <https://print2demand.co.uk> we could use a special feature to mock up the type of cover and paper and number of pages allowing us to know the general costs of how much each book would be to print. With the limit of the grant being £300 we knew we would have to self fund the remaining cost of £100-150 with a loan from family members. This money can be paid back out of the sale costs, with the balance going to our chosen charity.

Our latest quote for printing is £450. This is £4.50 per book, so if we sell for £7.50 each, and pay back the £1.50 owed, it will mean we can give £6.00 to charity for each copy sold.

Selling

Our plan for selling the book is to email our friends and family with some sample pages and details of how they can purchase a copy. We are going to set up an Etsy shop to handle orders and payments. If we successfully sell all 100 we will reinvest some of what we make into printing more to advertise to our school for purchase and once we have sold as many as we can all earnings will once again be given to CAMFED.

Printing

Product	Softback Books
Trim Size	Bespoke: 210 x 210 mm
Mono/Colour	Colour
Orientation	Square
Pages	32
Inner Paper Required	White Offset 120gsm
Cover Printing	4 colour to outer only
Cover flaps (optional extra)	None
Cover Paper	260gsm Single sided board
Cover Lamination	Soft Touch matt lamination
Special Cover Finishes	None
Binding	Perfect Binding
Files supplied as	Print ready PDF files
Proof Options	Loose Printed Proof (recommended)
ISBN Services	I would NOT like ISBN services included
Delivery	UK delivery (including Northern Ireland)
Quantity	100
Total	£ 449.51

Conclusion

We are very grateful to the Henry Morris Memorial Trust for enabling us to realise our dream of creating a children's book and bringing it to a wider audience.

As well as providing over £500 for a deserving charity it will also give us valuable experience to build on in future and may even play a role in shaping our future career choices.

We hope you enjoy the book!