

Author interview

Martin Handford – *Where's Wally?* *The Great Picture Hunt!*

Ever wondered where an illustrator gets their ideas from? *Where's Wally? The Great Picture Hunt!* by Martin Handford is packed full of puzzles, clues and jokes for readers to solve. Find out below what inspired Martin to create *The Great Picture Hunt!*

For Wally Watchers, is *The Great Picture Hunt!* the greatest challenge ever?

Oh, yes! The addition of the 30 characters to Wally and his band of chums makes this book a very demanding puzzle indeed. I really enjoyed putting the 30 characters in places where the reader might not expect to find them. Then, of course, there are other challenges to test the Wally fan. I included a couple of spot-the-difference puzzles. I have always loved this type of puzzle, so this was a wonderful opportunity to do some of my own.

Do you like puzzles yourself?

I love visual puzzles. I find that I tend to look for puzzles in the everyday events I see around me. As a crowd passes by I will look at the detail, colours and shapes, and see patterns and the possibility of humour and fun. I am constantly thinking of puns and wordplay that I can use in my pictures.

When you start working on one of these challenging puzzles, do you start with Wally and his location, or do you create a scene then find where Wally will go later?

I always draw the picture as I have mapped it out in my mind, without even thinking about Wally. As I progress across the picture there will come a point when I instinctively feel where Wally should be. This could happen very early on in the drawing or even in the last section of the image. It is purely a matter of the picture dictating Wally's location. This is true, by the way, of the placement of Whitebeard, Wenda, Odlaw and Woof, too.

***The Great Picture Hunt!* covers a wide range of subjects: art, sport, dance, knights and dragons and pirates. Are these the subjects you like best yourself?**

I love subjects such as pirates because of all the different things I am allowed to include in their picture: plenty of jokes; wonderful costumes; silly puns; beautiful galleons – overall it offers a perfect tableau for mayhem and slapstick humour of all sorts. (See the A2 poster, 'Pirate Panorama'.)

As an artist, *Pirate Panorama* was a joy to draw! I grew up waiting impatiently for pirate films to be shown on TV or to appear at the cinema. So in this picture, I took the chance to really express my love for the action, costumes and paraphernalia in those films, while adding humour and puzzles.

Are you Wally?

No, definitely not. However, I would have loved to have had a friend like Wally. He seems to me to be the ideal childhood companion: someone to travel through childhood adventures with; pointing out things of interest; ever enthusiastic and loyal. He is naturally interested in everything and so would never turn his nose up at something that a friend would like to do or see. He would encourage someone to be even more interested in whatever their interests are and to discover more about them. I see him as a happy, even-tempered adventurer and facilitator.

Where will Wally go next?

I have ideas for another happy adventure. I find that even as I am drawing a book I have ideas for the next one. While drawing *The Great Picture Hunt!*, ideas kept bursting into my mind for new scenes, which I cannot wait to begin mapping out.

