

A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID LAROCHELLE

What inspired you to write *It's a Tiger!*?

My desire was to write a story where the book itself was the main character and talked directly to the reader. In earlier drafts, the book asks to be taken off the shelf and says how good it feels to have its pages turned. My editor loved the action/adventure element of the story, but thought the book-as-narrator theme would be confusing to very young kids. It was difficult to give up this aspect (that was my initial inspiration for the whole book!), but in the end, my editor's suggestion made it a stronger, more engaging story.

"I interviewed many tigers. Fortunately, just like the title character, none of these tigers were interested in making me their dinner."

What do you hope your readers take away from this book?

My hope is that young readers and listeners will have fun, laughing and shouting out loud with the narrator, "It's a Tiger!" I hope that the adults who share this book with young people will also have fun, reading it with plenty of dramatic expression!

How long did it take you to write *It's a Tiger!*?

I began working on this project in 2003. I sent it to my agent at the time who told me "it's not what editors are looking for," so I filed it away. Three years passed, and when I no longer had an agent, I dug the story out again and sent it to an editor at Chronicle who was very interested. The manuscript went through many changes (including revising its original unmemorable title "Book" to the more exciting "It's a Tiger!"), and I had to give up my initial desire to also be the book's illustrator, but in 2012, ten years after I started, the book was published.

What do you like most about the book?

I love Jeremy Tankard's vibrant illustrations. He captured the energy of the story and created a beleaguered tiger who is dynamic without being too scary. I also love hearing how well this book works as a read-aloud for story time.

How and when did you first decide you wanted to be a writer?

As far back as elementary school I loved writing and illustrating my own books. I majored in art and English at St. Olaf College, concen-

trating on children's literature. When I was turned down for a job as an illustrator by Hallmark Cards, I became a fourth grade teacher in Coon Rapids instead. Four years later I received my contract for my first children's book, and decided to see if I could make a living as an author and illustrator...which is what I've been doing ever since.

How does being a Minnesotan inform your writing?

Minnesota has an especially strong, nationally recognized children's literature community. We have amazing independent children's bookstores, The Loft, Children's Literature Network, the Anderson Center's Celebration of Children's Books in Red Wing, The Alphabet Forest at the State Fair, and so many other opportunities to learn and to celebrate children's literature. Being surrounded by so many talented, generous authors and illustrators provides me with encouragement and inspiration in a career that is often solitary and filled with rejections.

How do you most enjoy spending your time when you're not writing?

I love playing board games, working and creating puzzles, going to live theater, and hiking in Minnesota's State Parks.

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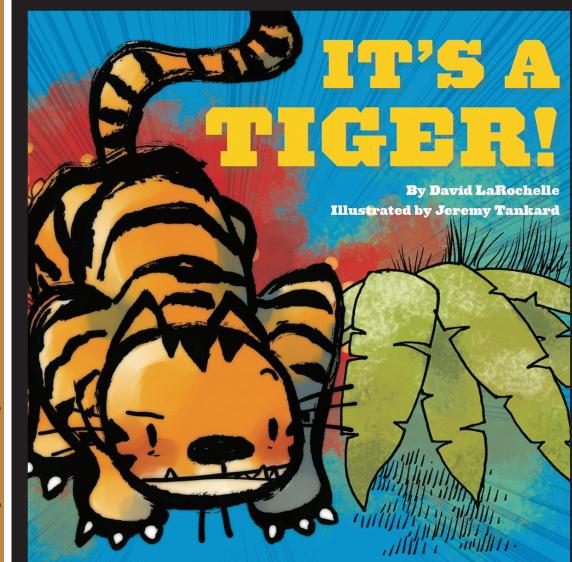
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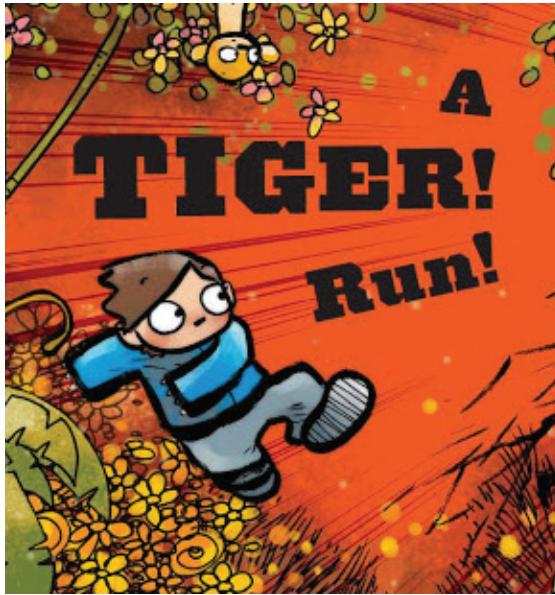


It's a Tiger!

by David LaRochelle
Illustrated by Jeremy Tankard

CHRONICLE BOOKS

It's a Tiger!

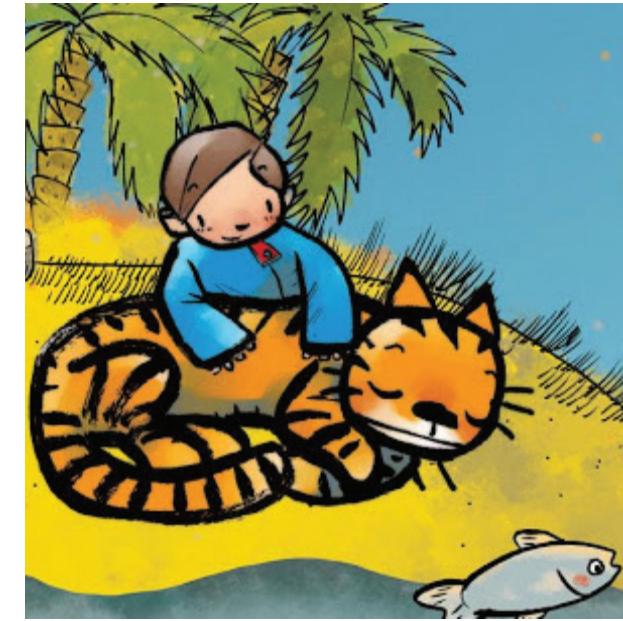


SUMMARY

Have you seen a tiger around here? No? Phew, then that's okay. I guess we are safe reading a book, right? A nice, safe book, with a cozy dust jacket and pretty pictures and a title that—Wait a minute... Kids and parents alike will rejoice in this lively read-aloud picture book, as the main character runs into (and away from) a tiger over and over again while the plot gets sillier and sillier.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Would YOU like to meet a tiger in person?
2. Do you think this was a scary book, or a funny book, or both?
3. Notice how the words in this book are many different sizes. Why do you think that is the case?
4. If you were going to make up your own story about being chased by an animal, which animal would you choose?
5. What do you think is going to happen next at the end of the book?
6. How do you think the illustrator created his pictures? (Jeremy drew the images with ink, then scanned them into the computer and colored them digitally.)
7. Try drawing your own tiger (it doesn't have to look like Jeremy's at all!).
8. If you wrote a book, what would it be about?



ABOUT DAVID LAROCHELLE



A former elementary school teacher, David LaRochelle has written or illustrated over twenty-five books, including picture books, puzzle books, craft books, and a book for young adults. He is the author of the previous Minnesota Book Award winning title *The Best Pet of All*. David visits many schools around Minnesota and the Upper Midwest each year to talk about his books. He lives in White Bear Lake.

Learn more about the author at www.davidlarochelle.com