

A conversation with author and illustrator

Richard Torrey



Like all dogs, Bob enjoys breakfast, riding in the family car, and digging for bones. But unlike other dogs, Bob cooks breakfast for himself and his family, drives the family car and digs for dinosaur bones with a paleontologist. Author and illustrator Richard Torrey discusses the inspiration behind his hilarious picture book MY DOG, BOB.

Richard, please tell us about your new book, MY DOG, BOB.

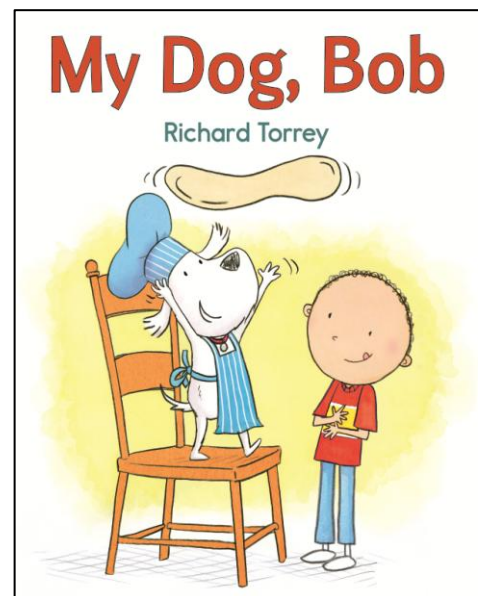
At its core, MY DOG, BOB is really a story about the wonderful bond between a boy and his dog.

Where did you get your inspiration for this story?

My father-in-law, Jack, had a black lab named Bob. Whenever we would visit, Jack would sit in his favorite chair, and Bob would hop up and sit in his lap, completely unaware of the fact that he weighed close to 100 pounds. That inspired me to want to write a story about a dog named Bob with unusual talents. I was also inspired to have the Bob in the story share the same humble nature as Jack. Like Jack, Bob does what he does—not to seek attention, but simply because he can.

I also wanted to show that Jeff, the boy who owns Bob, loves him not because Bob can do all sorts of remarkable things—but simply because he's *his* dog.

Jeff's actions in the story show that nothing else matters.



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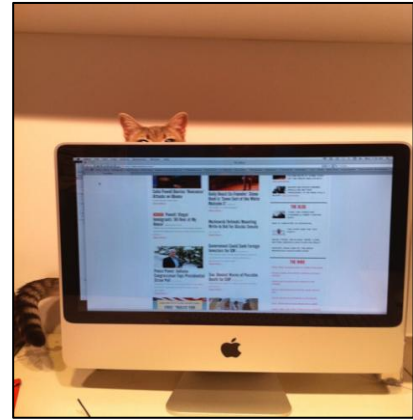
Jeff could have avoided embarrassment by demanding that Bob demonstrate his superior talents to Mimi's dog, Truffles, but he doesn't. Mirroring Bob's character, he quietly walks home. That's class and integrity.

Finally, I decided to make Bob small and white to pay homage to Charles Schulz's Snoopy. I've loved Snoopy and the comic strip Peanuts from the time I was a little boy.

Bob is able to do some pretty special things. Have you had any pets with extraordinary tricks or talents?

I had a dog in college named Nick. He was so well trained that I never needed to use a leash.

I now have a cat named Martha. (She's actually my daughter's cat.) She has the extraordinary talent of picking the exact moment I'm about to write to get behind my computer and stare at me. Look at this picture! See her?



What do you hope young readers will learn from MY DOG, BOB?

If anything, I hope readers recognize that while Bob has many extraordinary talents, what makes him *really* special is that he never feels the need to show off.

When did you know you wanted to become an author and illustrator?

As far back as I can remember, I have loved to draw and make up stories with those drawings. Although I started my career as a syndicated cartoonist, the idea of writing and drawing children's books was always in the back of my mind. It was a natural next step. When I was doing a comic strip, I had to write, draw, and send out publishable work almost on a daily basis. You're like a little cartoon factory. With a book, you have weeks and months to craft the writing and the drawings and experiment with styles and techniques. It's the most satisfaction I have had with any of the fields I have worked in.

If you could give any advice to young authors and illustrators, what would it be?

If they are seriously interested in becoming an author and or an illustrator, then I would point them to two quotes by Winston Churchill. The first is "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." And the other is simple: "Never, never, never give up."

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