



Sunday » August
30 » 2009

Author spins piglet story online, invites collaboration

Craig Spence invites kids to follow the adventures of Rosie and Roscoe online, even contribute ideas.

Roxanne Hooper

Langley Advance

Friday, August 14, 2009

In between scribing the final manuscript of his next novel, children's author Craig Spence has created a book online - with a little help from his followers.

Taking a bold leap to entice and involve young readers and writers, Spence has created an online story. Rosie and Roscoe Run Away is what he dubs a you-tell-it-story, where he invites readers of all ages - but especially children - to add their thoughts and ideas

[www.craigspence.ca/kids.html].



CREDIT:

A Diana Durrand pig painting.

"I'll write a bit, then turn it over for you for some ideas about what happens next," said Spence, an author, as well as communications manager for the local school district.

While he's never seen such a collaborative writing endeavour on the web before, Spence said he won't be surprised to learn similar ideas already exist.

"I want to open up the window for people, encouraging them to open up and

participate," Spence told the Langley Advance.

He's launched the new project earlier this week, and is expecting to keyboard a new episode weekly.

"I expect it will take time to get people interested," he said, but remains optimistic it will take off.

So far, the story is unfolding with the introduction of Rosie and Roscoe, two pretty lucky piglets who don't know how good their life is.

They were born in a place called the Hearts on Noses Mini Pig Sanctuary [www.heartsonnoses.com], not far from the town of Maple Ridge.

"Pigs at Hearts on Noses are treated really well. That's because Janice Gillett, who runs the sanctuary, loves pigs," Spence wrote.

"But no matter how lucky we are, the grass always looks a little bit greener on the other side," he added.

"So Rosie and Roscoe would often sit with their noses pressed up to the sanctuary fence wondering, 'What's it like out there?' and thinking 'It must be more interesting than it is in here.'

"Their mom, who knew a thing or two about life on the outside, told her piglets never, ever to set hoof outside the sanctuary. But you know what piglets think when they're told not to do something..."

What will they discover? What kinds of adventures and dangers await?

Visitors to Spence's website can preview the Rosie and Roscoe Run Away album, which contains photographs and YouTube clips of things the piglets experienced during their adventure.

Although the web-based story is brand new, he's already impressed with reaction.

June Tucanu, for instance, wrote in with a suggestion for the storyline:

"How about having the two kids sneak away at night, and overhear a

conversation between three persons near the sanctuary fence discussing a barbecue to be held the next evening, and how easy it would be to get over the fence, to bring back a special 'guest' for the party?"

Spence responded: "I like your idea! I think I'll have them overhear this conversation on their way back to the sanctuary, after they have discovered how confusing and downright mean the world can be to pigs. Their goal then becomes to warn Janice and the others about the pending raid. What do you think?"

He's not sure where the story is going to go, and admitted Tucanu's suggestion has already changed the direction of the story.

"I want to play with it and have some fun with it," Spence said. "I really like the notion of a collaborative work" and encourages people to participate in the imaginative process.

"For children who want to see how a story develops, or anyone who wants to join in, the You-Write-It format offers a fun, educational experience," he said.

To help stimulate those creative juices, he's augmented the storyline with YouTube footage from the pig sanctuary on the north side of the Fraser River.

Hearts on Noses is a registered non-profit society in Maple Ridge, that rescues, rehabilitates and cares for unwanted, injured, orphaned, abused, neglected and abandoned mini-pigs.

As well, Spence has incorporated a series of paintings by his artist wife Diana Durrand, from her recent exhibit Where are the pigs? Where are they?

And, of course, Spence is no stranger to the local literary world.

Three years ago, he published his first children's novel, Josh and the Magic Vial, which was shortlisted for the BC Book Prize in children's literature.

His next book, Einstein Dog, also a juvenile fiction piece, will be released this fall.

In fact, Spence will be reading excerpts from Einstein Dog in the children's tent during The Word on the Street 15th literary event in Vancouver Sept. 27 at Library Square in downtown Vancouver.

© Langley Advance 2009

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2009 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.. All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.. All rights reserved.