

• Meet the Author •

Andrea Beaty



Children's author, Andrea Beaty, lives in the Chicago area where she spends her days imagining a little of this and a little of that and a whole bunch of the other thing. From time to time, her imaginings find their way into books. Her first book, *When Giants Come to Play*, was illustrated by Kevin Hawkes. Her second book, *Iggy Peck, Architect*, was illustrated by David Roberts. Others include *Doctor Ted* and *Firefighter Ted*, both illustrated by Pascal LeMaitre, and a mid-grade novel titled *Cicada Summer*.

Readers can't help but love Ignacious Peck! He is so single-minded and undaunted that it must give young readers hope. Is Iggy modeled on anyone you know? How much of YOU is there in Iggy Peck?

Interview conducted by Toni Buzzeo, career media specialist and author (visit www.tonibuzzeo.com).

AB: It is very rare for me to model a character after anyone I know, but Iggy is an exception. He's based on my son, who has always been nuts for creating and building things. While he never built a tower from diapers and glue, he vexed more than a few waitresses with his jelly pack-salt shaker skyscrapers.

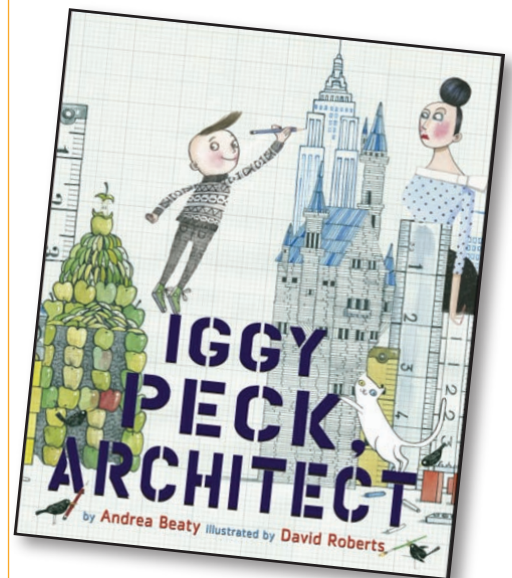
I think Iggy is also a bit like me because I like to do my own thing and tend to not care too much what others think. It's liberating!

Architecture is a less common passion for the main character of a picture book. How did you come to it? Do you have a special personal interest in architecture?

AB: I get my love of architecture from my mom who loved old buildings and spent many years rehabbing one. As an adult, I lived for many years in a wonderful Victorian era neighborhood in St. Louis. It was a thrill every day to walk around and see the glorious Second Empire and Queen Anne homes. Now, I live in Chicago, a city which takes architecture VERY seriously and is VERY proud of its architecture—rightfully so.

For me, as a longtime educator, Iggy Peck, Architect has a lot to say about schools and the way we differentiate to meet the learning needs and abilities of individual learners. Please talk a little about that from your perspective.

AB: I think teachers have the toughest job on the planet. They are presented with students with the gamut of skill levels and personalities and must find a way to present information to all of them in a way that connects. And they must do all of this within an increasingly rigid framework of rules and mandates. How is this even possible? When you toss into that mix a



kid like Iggy, who is on his own tangent that doesn't run parallel with the rest of the class, it's doubly hard. Yet teachers can make all the difference to those smart, offbeat, creative kids by simply taking an interest. Even if they don't "get" what it is that floats the kid's boat. A simple, "Wow, you are really good at that!" or "What else do you like to do?" or "So, what next?" can energize a kid and send them on to even greater feats of creativity. I think it's the Iggys of the world who can change the future if they are nurtured. They certainly make it a more interesting place!

One astonishing thing about this book in rhyme is that you haven't chosen to take the easy path of simple vocabulary. In fact, your rhyming vocabulary here is often surprising. Talk about the challenges (and joys) of writing this book in rhyme.

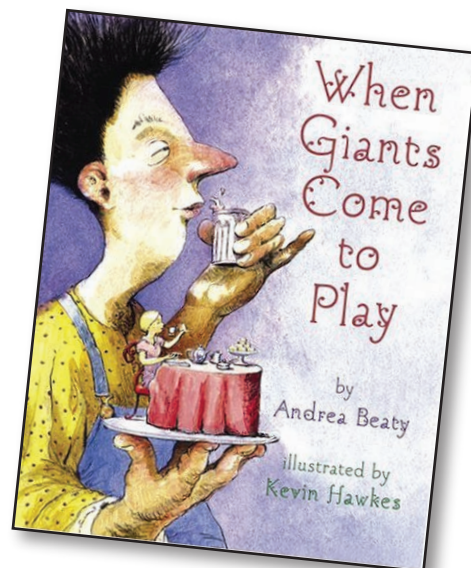
AB: I never set out to write a book in rhyme. The book pops into my head with a set rhyming pattern and I just have to keep it going from there. *Iggy Peck, Architect* was a bit difficult in rhyming because of the internal rhyme. ("Good Gracious, Ignacious ..."). It was also a lot of fun to write. As for vocabulary, I never shy away from complicated words if they are the correct words to use. Kids will ask if they don't know what a word means. And after all, isn't that how they build a great vocabulary?

While most children's authors don't write books with a lesson firmly in mind, they do often hope to say something of importance to young readers. What is your message here and what led you to want to deliver it?

AB: I truly never set out to convey a message to readers. In my experience, an astute reader (which all kids are) will sniff that out a mile away and run screaming in the other direction. I know I do. My goal was simply to tell the tale of a boy with passion for what he does. I guess if there is a message within that, it would simply be to follow your own passion and see where it leads! The most interesting people I have ever met share that common trait. They follow their hearts.

I can't imagine a better match between your humorous text and David Roberts' art. Can you tell us anything about the choice of him as an illustrator or about your response to the art?

AB: I had seen David's art on the cover of the Eddie Dickens books and loved it, but didn't know much about him beyond that. David's art is simple yet full of detail and a retro kind of elegance. It also has an architectural quality to it that is perfect. I'm thrilled beyond measure with the results!



How can readers learn more about you and your books?

AB: Readers can visit my Web site at www.AndreaBeaty.com and also check out my blog at AndreaBeaty.blogspot.com. I also review funny books for kids with the delightful children's authors Julia Durango and Carolyn Crimi at www.ThreeSillyChicks.com.

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Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is an author as well as a career library media specialist and member of the Maine Association of School Libraries Executive Board. She is the author of seven picture books, most recently *R is for Research* (UpstartBooks, 2008) and many professional books and articles. Visit www.tonibuzzeo.com or e-mail Toni at tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com.