

• Meet the Author •

Leo Landry

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

Grades
K-2, 3-5



Photo courtesy of wickedlocal.com

Leo Landry grew up in Waltham, Massachusetts, and studied architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design, where he discovered the world of children's books. He worked at The Children's Book Shop in Brookline, Massachusetts, for 20 years, and while there, began writing and illustrating. The first book that he illustrated, *What Good Is A Tree?* by Larry Dane Brimmer, was published in 1998. Since then, Leo has illustrated five more books by other authors and has written and illustrated seven books of his own, including *Eat Your Peas*, *Ivy Louise!*, *The Snow Ghosts*,

and most recently, *Grin and Bear It*. He now lives in Easton, Massachusetts, with his wife, Mary and his daughter, Sophie.

Is *Space Boy* based on a personal experience? That is, have YOU ever taken your rocket to the moon?

LL: I was about six years old when the United States first landed a man on the moon. I was amazed. My parents had a vinyl record of the audio portion of the moon landing and Neil Armstrong taking his "one small step," and I would put the record on our record player, go out on the front porch, and jump down on to the surface of the moon myself, in my front yard.

Your style of art is quite simple, with lots of child-appeal. Can you talk about how your style developed and who your artistic influences have been?

LL: Although I went to art school, I wasn't trained as an illustrator. My style seemed to develop on its own after lots of drawing and sketching. My biggest influences are Helen Oxenbury, Melissa Sweet, and Charlotte Voake.

When you are creating a story, how do you go about developing a character? Does it begin at the drawing board with sketches or with words on the page? How about Nicholas? How did he begin?

LL: Most of the time, my sketches and doodles are what lead to a character or a story. With *Space Boy*, it was different. One night I looked up at a big, full moon and realized that I've always wanted to go there, ever since I was a boy. This story was a way for me to travel to the moon and come back, too. Nicholas is named after the main character in my favorite book from childhood, *I Am A Bunny* by Richard Scarry.

You have illustrated your own stories and those of other authors too. How is the illustration process different when you are working with someone else's stories?

LL: Very different. When illustrating other people's stories, there's a lot more back and forth between me and the editor and art director. When illustrating my own work, I have a much better idea of what I want the book to look like from the start.

Meet the Author

What ideas are you working on right now? Any others that are bubbling on the back burner and not quite ready to make it to the page yet?

LL: I just finished a Halloween story that will be out next year, called *Trick or Treat*. I'm also working on a companion to my newest book, *Grin and Bear It*, which just came out this fall.

How can readers learn more about you?

LL: I have a website, www.leolandry.com, and I also love to get regular old mail. My mailing address is on the "contact" page of the website.

◆ ◆ ◆

*Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is an author as well as a career library media specialist. She is the author of seventeen picture books, most recently *Inside the Books* (Upstart, 2012) and *Stay Close to Mama* (Hyperion, 2012) and many professional books and articles. Visit www.tonibuzzeo.com or e-mail Toni at tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com.*

