

1. What is the book about? The true meaning of Christmas told through the eyes of a Little Teddy Bear and Santa. They travel around the world discovering traditions and customs of other countries. It is a wonderful adventure about a Little Teddy Bear's search to be a special Christmas gift. Full of Christmas Carols with lyric reprints for all the family to sing and enjoy year after year. There are 16 chapters, every chapter a bedtime story.

2. What inspired you to paint such lovely illustrations? Children inspire me to paint vibrantly using a magical kingdom of colors. I have always been moved by their use of primary colors. For me the illustrations must capture the magic of place, reinforce the words that are written and create a Wow experience for the reader!

3. What was the inspiration for the story? The book was inspired by the birth of my son Michael and the wonderful book *The Polar Express*. In 2008, two wonderful things happened at our family reunion in England. The first we were singing carols and the young children asked could you tell us the story of the birth of Christ. I told the tale by singing carols. The second was my Mum had put the original draft of SANTA & THE LITTLE TEDDY BEAR on the bedside table. As I read the book, I realized I could interweave carols throughout my original story and create a magical night full of adventure, dancing and song.

4. How difficult was it to include lyric reprints? Many months went into the process of researching and working with lawyers and owners of the lyrics. This was an extremely difficult process. We were amazed when the Vatican gave us permission to reprint parts of Pope Benedict XVI, (16TH) Christmas Homily in the chapter, "Bells Chime in Italy." Music brings color to the words and enlivens the story magically. A great thing for families to sing together and enjoy the story of Christmas told through these wonderful lyrics included in the book.

5. How is this book intended to be best enjoyed, I see there is a difference in the color of the text between lyric reprint words and the main story. Why is that? When you see copy in blue that is the cue to

sing the carol. (Here is an example... I will sing the intro.) It immediately sets the book on a different tone, adding life to the words and story. One can sing the carols as a family together. The book is an adventure for the reader to share. The tale of the Nativity can be told completely through the integration of carols..... (example, Peter will sing)

6. What is unique about this book? It is the first new Christmas story to be told in a long time in an old-fashioned way. Most illustrated children's books are not written in chapters anymore. This follows the great stories of our youth from Charles Dickens and Hans Christan Anderson. Books I still have in my library and have shared with my children.

Why would families want to add it to their collection? It is an heriloom classic family gift book that can be brought out year after year and passed down through generations, hence the quality of the printing and binding in the USA.

7. What is the biggest compliment you have had so far? The brilliant smile of a toothless young girl holding a big lollipop all covered in sticky goo. I had talked to her early in the morning at a Holiday Gift Festival. Imagine my amazement when she returned much later that day to have her mom buy the book; it was the only thing she wanted from the entire show of thousands of items. It was a privilege for me to sign her book.

8. What advice would you give to other authors and illustrators about this process? We need to create a Wow experience that touches the heart. The process of writing and illustrating a book is just the beginning. There is a big difference between a book and something you read on a reading device. The book is an experience, touch, feel, hold in your hands to place in your library. It is so much more than an inanimate object. Strive for the best you can do and never give up.

9. Why did you print in the USA? We live in the USA and want to support the USA in every way we possible. It was very important to us to maintain an exceptional high level of quality throughout the book from the illustrations to the thickness of the paper. We printed in 6-colors, not 4. We worked directly here in Colorado with the printer and the color specialist to create the Wow, the magic, the

brehtaking experience of this book. You want to hold this book in your hands, feel the paper, smell the paper, feel the weight of the book. It weighs 2 pounds!

10. Why did you decide to donate 20% of every book sold to children's charities? There are so many children in need, from the basics of food, clothing and shelter. We have stopped funding music and the arts in schools. Our goal is one child at a time. And who are you presently working with? We are working with the KYGO Christmas Crusade for Children, The Denver Performing Arts for Children's programs, the Volunteers of America/Brandon Center for homeless women and children and many other charities. If there are charities that would like to contact us, please do so at our website www.BilbosAdventures.com

11. Was it a tough decision to make such a dramatic shift from a very successful career designing and building theaters to writing and illustrating this gorgeous book? Worn out by corporate America the decision was easy. It was an impulsive decision to do something I had a passion for and has been a pleasant and exhilarating experience every step of the way, even though the journey has sometimes been tough.

12. Who is your target market? We have discovered our market is broad. Young children to parents, grandparents. From the 8 year old girl with the lollipop to the grandma that bought the book for her children in Ethiopia. To the 17-year-old boy that bought the book to read to his cousins and brothers and sisters, totally enthralled by the illustrations and story. A book for all.

13. It appears you have written this as a musical/movie what are your long-term goals? Our audacious goal is to see this as an animated movie to air year after year in the tradition of the "It's A Wonderful Life." Our long-term goal is to develop this as a musical production. We are beginning to explore the opportunities now, beginning here in Colorado.

14. We understand you have visited or lived in the places depicted in the book, which is your most favorite place? The Cameroons in West Africa holds a very special place in my heart. It was here I became a

man. The joy and warmth of the people in all the countries I visited makes me the person I am today. My passion for the mountains began in Austria on vacations with my Mum and Dad and probably of all the places in the book is my favorite place.

15. The vocabulary is quite extensive, what was your inspiration for using such challenging words in a children's book? My inspiration, is I believe children are not stupid. We do not need to write down or talk down to a child, but challenge them to learn new and descriptive words. The English language has a word to describe everything and it is not... *"it's like, you know, um, you know what I mean, etc."*

16. There are many carols in the book, some of which we/I have never heard of, where did you learn them? I learnt all of these carols singing in the Seaford College Chapel Choir as a young boy in England where I found my singing voice.

17. What were your family traditions at Christmas? Our family Christmas is very Austrian. Christmas crackers and paper hats, singing carols around the table, goose a duck and Christmas pudding and other wonderful delights. Midnight mass, followed by lantern lit caroling to welcome St. Nicolas to our house. A chiming bell, and presents all lay out underneath the tree. It was enchanting, full of Christmas spirit.

18. Did you and your family tell stories and sing carols? We are a family with many tales and enjoy telling them repeatedly year after year. The three brothers *all kings* wearing our Christmas hats love to sing "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Christmas is never complete until my parents sing Silent Night.

19. Who is your publisher and why did you choose them? We self-published through our company Real Magic Design. My wife and I are We're control freaks!! LOL. We had a very particular idea of how we wanted this book to look. We spent months narrowing down and sorting through agents so we could get published only to be turned down by the agent because we hadn't been previously published. I think many of your authors and illustrators understand this story.

20. What do you hope readers will gain from reading your book? I hope they will have an amazing experience at each reading. I wish for all readers to experience an energized expectation, a surprise feel of the resonance of the words. The nativity scene I hope creates a moment of transcendence that reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas. Finally, my dream is the book will stand the test of time and be the Christmas book they look forward to reading and singing year after year becoming a family tradition.