



## Author-Illustrator Spotlight — Anne Donnelly



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**Anne Donnelly:** Author and illustrator

***Anne, you tell your stories with words and pictures. When did you know you wanted to be a storyteller and share your stories with others?***

I was born in Malta and it was common for the older people in the community to tell stories. During my early years, I recall sitting and listening to my parents, grandparents, godmother and other relatives telling stories. I've always liked telling stories, something I've always done. And I like listening to stories, especially when it's being told by someone I admire, such as one uncle of mine who spoke five languages and travelled the world with the British forces in his day.

***What comes first—the stories or the pictures? Do you consider yourself a writer or illustrator first?***

Sometimes the story comes first and sometimes the pictures. It depends where the inspiration comes from. Author or illustrator? It's close, but I think a writer.

***What media do you mainly use for illustrating?***

I paint some aspects using acrylic and I use Adobe Illustrator for the majority. I almost always sketch first, then scan and go over it and complete it in Illustrator.

***Do you plan the story in your head before you begin to write or illustrate it?***

Yes, although sometimes it doesn't work out. I usually start off with an idea. Then over time it fleshes out in my head and when I think I might have something, I sit and write. However, there have been times when I have not been able to create a story with an idea, even though it seemed so clear in my head!

***What gave you the idea for Ori's Clean-Up?***

I have always been a greenie, and not often influenced by consumerism. I had always intended to write a book for young children to empower them to take responsibility for their actions over the environment. I do think our attitude needs an overhaul and the place to begin is with our younger generations.

***What do you like best about Ori's Clean-Up story?***

The story is not just about recycling, or composting. It depicts many environmentally responsible actions; recycling, reusing, composting, donating instead of discarding and using fabric bags instead of single-use plastic ones. But it also says to reuse the plastic bags.

Research has shown that a single-use plastic bag's carbon footprint is greatly reduced if they are reused. So, the approach is practical.

I also like that it covers items that the children will be familiar with; plastic bags and containers, glass bottles, paper, kitchen leftovers etc. There are no car parts, cigarette lighters or factory effluents. Even though these are a pollution issue, the children cannot relate to, nor can they affect any change over these.

***Do you have a favourite illustration?***

It would have to be page 20, Reginald Stingray washing the plastic containers.



***How did you feel when you wrote Ori's Clean-Up?***

Like "Finally, this is the book I've been wanting to get out there!"  
Inspired, energised.

***How do you hope readers will feel?***

Inspired and energised too. But mostly I want my young readers to feel empowered that their actions do matter. And that even at their age, they can make environmentally responsible choices.

***How would you like teachers to present your book to children?***

I see my book as a platform to start the conversation about all these choices children can make to take care of their environment.

Some children may know about putting paper and cardboard into the recycling bin, but what happens next? When I present to children, I talk to them about products made out of recycled paper and take some examples to show them.

I ask them why taking care of our home is important. I show them a diagram of the five ocean rubbish gyres and what effect this has on the wildlife.

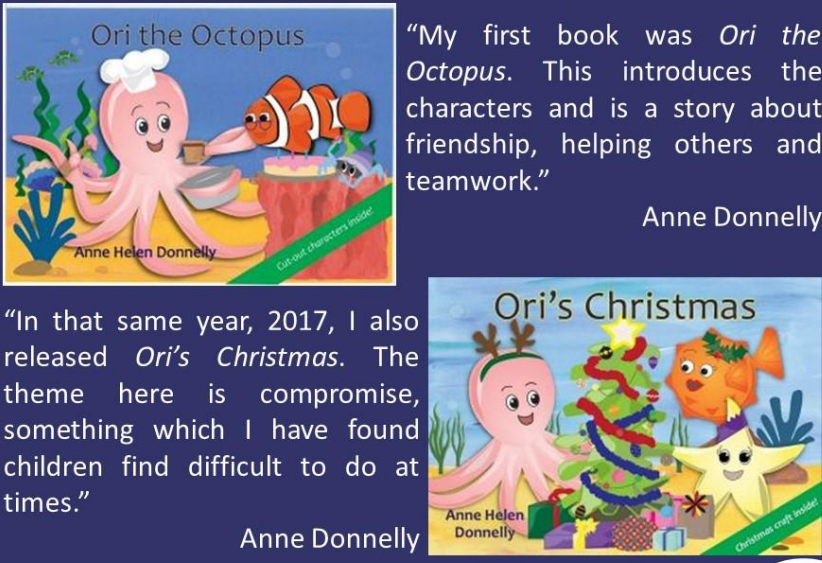
**What messages would you like them to discuss?**

The **why** take care of our environment. This knowledge empowers the children. They are not only doing it for themselves, but the entire ecosystem and for future generations too.

The **how**, what they can do. This gives them tools they can use, a methodology. Having a reusable drink bottle and recycling paper are things they can all do.

**You have written other books about Ori. Can you tell us a little about them?**

My first book was *Ori the Octopus*. This introduces the characters and is a story about friendship, helping others and teamwork. In that same year, 2017, I also released *Ori's Christmas*. The theme here is compromise, something which I have found children find difficult to do at times.



The image displays two book covers. The top cover is for 'Ori the Octopus', featuring a pink octopus with a white chef's hat and a clownfish. The bottom cover is for 'Ori's Christmas', featuring the pink octopus, a clownfish, and a yellow star character around a Christmas tree. Both covers include the author's name, 'Anne Helen Donnelly', and a 'read & learn' logo.

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**What is your favourite picture book?**

I have lots of them. To name a few: *Duck*, *Those Pesky Rabbits*, *Room on the Broom* and *Max and the won't go to bed show*.

**Who is your favourite author? What do you like about his or her work?**

My favourite is Terry Pratchett, definitely. He is so funny and so clever in the way that he pokes fun at our world through the Disc World series.