



Author Spotlight — Rory H. Mather



Author: **Rory H. Mather**

When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

I have always enjoyed writing but it wasn't until 2015 that I thought I could potentially make a career out of it. At the time I was working in a public library as a Library Assistant running kidlit programs, so I was reading a lot of picture books. It was like a revelation discovering the format of picture books, I knew it was what I wanted to do.

Have you worked in any other jobs?

I have had loads of jobs. I've worked in retail, hospitality, the Army Reserves, I spent 10 years in public libraries doing a variety of jobs before moving to HR and IT based roles where I delivered training mostly.

Where do you write? Do you like to be by yourself in the quiet, or do you like to write in a noisy space?

I either write on the couch or sitting up in bed. I am very easily distracted so I like for there to be no noise and whilst I have done it, I prefer not having a TV on.

What do you use to write – pencil and paper or computer?

Anything, I often will write down a single line on a piece of paper, or I'll message it to myself. Sometimes I'll write a stanza or two the same way, but when it comes to doing a whole story, it is generally on my laptop because I can type faster than I can write, and I am generally rushing to get the idea out.

When do you write?

Generally, at night or on the weekends or sometimes in my lunch break, but the urge to write comes and goes in waves. I might go a few months without writing anything and then have half a dozen ideas in one week. When the idea is there, the urge to write is too strong to ignore.

When do you get your ideas?

Literally anytime, anywhere. I once had an idea right as I boarded an airplane in the pouring rain at 5am. Once the plane took off, I had my laptop out and was writing. The first draft was completed before we landed an hour later.

Do you think of the story in your head before you write it?

It really does vary. Sometimes I mull over a broad idea for weeks or even months. But once an opening line comes into my head, I need to write the whole thing, and that can be straight or away or take some time.

What gave you the idea for Monster School Rules?

I had been asked whether I had a story on starting school - I didn't but I wasn't willing to admit that. I came up with about 5 stories in about 6 weeks on starting school (most of which were absolutely terrible and lacking humour). I'd show my agent and she would reaffirm what I knew which was that they weren't up to scratch. Then we finally had one we were happy with, and we submitted it, but it was rejected because it was too similar to something else already out which had animals in it. We had a discussion and decided I should try something with Monsters instead. Whilst I thought about what to do, I remembered seeing a sign at a school I had visited recently which said Laws Of The Loo and that was when the title Monster School Rules came to me. Within half an hour, I had written the first draft, and by the end of that day it was submitted to Scholastic. I think it was about three days later that it was accepted.

What do you like best about Monster School Rules?

I love how cute it is. The text is super simple and I just love the juxtaposition of monsters and rules because in my head they don't really go together, but I feel like Carla bridged the gap with her illustrations which are incredible and bring those two concepts together as though it is the most natural pairing in the world.

Do you like the way Carla Martell has illustrated your story?

Absolutely, I am not good at visualising what I have written - which is good because it means I am ALWAYS blown away when I see illustrations. I first saw a black and white sketch of the story and when Carla added the bright colours my mind was blown for a second time.

How did you feel when you wrote Monster School Rules?

Unashamedly chuffed. We all doubt our abilities and as I said I wrote 4 other stories before this one which weren't great. Most stories take longer than half an hour to write and I generally would advise against submitting something so new, but this story felt very natural and the fact it was accepted made me feel like perhaps I wasn't a bad writer after all.

How do you hope readers will feel or react to your story?

Probably the one thing I want a reader to do is smile as they read it.

Do you think school rules are important?

Absolutely. I was a very well-behaved kid. I think I got detention once in 12 years haha. School rules are a good way to prepare kids for being members of society plus they set boundaries. I think it is good for kids to find their boundaries, school rules let them do it in a safe place where the consequences aren't huge.

Which school rule do you (or did you at school) like the most?

I liked wearing my hat because my Dad has had pretty bad skin cancer all my life so it just seemed like a good rule.

Which school rule do you (or did you at school) like the least?

I was a bit of a nerd so there wasn't really a rule I disliked but I must admit wearing a tie all the time could get quite warm.

Which Monster School Rule did you think of first? Why?

Literally the first one - No Biting - because it seemed so obvious, but I thought it was perfect for monsters. I love how Carla illustrated it too.

Which Monster School Rule would you absolutely, never, leave out of the book?

The four L's I had a chuckle when I wrote that.

How would you like teachers to present Monster School Rules to children?

As a fun introduction to rules and schools. Rules seem so serious, but they don't need to be.

What messages would you like them to discuss?

The obvious discussion topic is why rules exist, but I would also LOVE them to come up with some other rules for Monster School...and then email them to me.

Do you have any advice for teachers in their role as writing guides?

I think teachers probably know best in this regard but probably just not to put too many rules around creativity.

Do you have any advice for children as writers?

You can do it! I was a kid with learning difficulties, I couldn't read until I was in grade 2 and needed loads of one on one time...but now I write books so don't ever give up if it is something you want to do.

What was the one thing that had most influence on your decision to be a writer?

The desire to challenge myself. I have always loved writing so challenging myself to write something that a publisher would want to publish and people would want to read. I never doubted it would happen because I was so determined to keep going until it did and now I'm addicted.

Find out more about Rory from his website

<https://roryhmather.com/>