



Windows into Illustration: Jez Alborough

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[Jez Alborough](#) [1]

[132](#) [2]

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Windows into Illustration

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Jez Alborough on his recent picture book, **Fix-It Duck**.

Jez Alborough's **Fix-It Duck** is his second picture book about the antics of Duck and his friends, Goat and Sheep. Alborough's focus on the dramatic tension within his Duck stories means that he plays creatively with tones, line, frames, perspectives and action sequences ? drawing the reader into the pictures. Here he explains the techniques and thinking behind the climactic caravan crash spread. <!--break-->

This illustration marks the climax in the story of **Fix-It Duck** and I really wanted to bring out the drama of the moment. I've done this by having the caravan break out of the border slightly in the first image. In the second frame when the caravan is really close it breaks out of the border and off the page. This gives the impression of it being almost on top of the reader (which effectively is the camera's viewpoint).

Sheep was originally going to be inside the caravan but I felt it would be more dramatic and funnier if I caught him leaping out at the last moment. I've used everything at my disposal to convey movement ? speed lines behind the caravan, Sheep's hat coming off as he jumps, his ears and tail pinned back with wind and I must say I had a lot of fun drawing all Sheep's interior décor flying through the air.

I really wanted Sheep to stand out to give the impression he was coming towards the reader. I did this partly by making sure the only pure white in the picture was on Sheep's body (apart from the foam in the splash which is also close up). The tones on the upper side of the caravan were lightly shaded whereas elsewhere in the book they would be left white. I say 'left white' because it is the white of the paper left uncovered by the marker pens I use.

Because there are so many to choose from, you have to be very specific in your choice of colour. Do I want a number 303 green for that bush or a 304? I decide by holding a sample over my rough, checking it for compatibility with the other colours.

Finally a word about the line which forms the structure on which the picture is built. If you took away the colours you would see that there are many different types of line ? thick, thin, scratchy, jerky, flowing, heavy, light, black, brown etc. The line has a language all of its own and though you probably won't notice, it is changing all the time, working hard to describe all the different shapes and textures.

In a song you have the lyrics coming together with the melody to produce the desired emotional response. In picture books you have the text and the illustrations to work with. Within the illustration you are playing off line against colour and just as with the text and illustration ? the balance is vital.

Fix-It Duck is published by Collins, 0 00 710623 8, £9.99 hbk. Jez Alborough was a runner-up for the Mother Goose Award with his first book and this year's winner of the Norfolk Book Award.

Page Number:

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