



I Wish I'd Written by Chris Riddell

Article Author:

[Chris Riddell](#) [1]

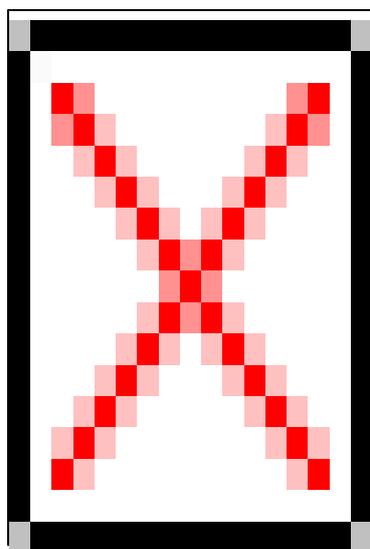
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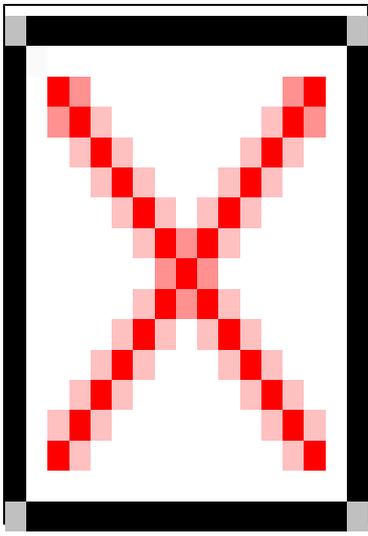
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Chris Riddell on a fortunate discovery.



Costa Children's Book Award winner Chris Riddell on his fortunate discovery of **The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm**.

I find it an almost impossible task to choose a children's book I wish I'd written. The library of my mind palace has shelves stacked with them ? **The Eagle of the Ninth**, **The Hobbit**, Ray Bradbury's **The Illustrated Man**, Betsy Byar's **The Eighteen Emergency** and of course the comprehensively illustrated **Harry Potter** books. Instead I'm closing the door quietly, and going down to the basement where there is a cardboard box containing books I will never forget. Aged six and a half, **Peter and Jane Book 2B** had a profound effect on me. As I struggled to decipher the simple sentences, aided by strange illustrations of what appeared to be the uneventful life of Don Draper's children, I realised that I was engaged in the difficult, tedious task of learning to read. And then I saw it, on my teacher's desk, **Peter and Jane Book 22c**. It was a revelation. Peter and Jane were older, their prosaic adventures described in thrillingly intricate sentences that filled the page. This was it, the summit of Everest, if only I could climb up there?!



That summer I stumbled across **The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm**, illustrated by William Heath Robinson, in an old vicarage in Scotland and gently, almost effortlessly, I became a reader. I never did get to **Peter and Jane Book 22c**.

Chris Riddell's latest book **Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse** (978-0230759800) is published by Macmillan Children's Books at £9.99 and won the **Costa Children's Book Award**.

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