



AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID SOLOMONS

Article Author:

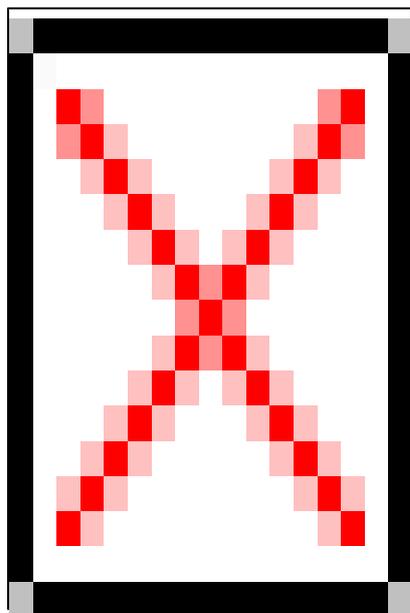
[John Newman](#) [1]

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Byline:

The award-winning author of **My Brother is a Superhero** talks to John Newman.

David Solomons has written one novel for adults but was best known as a scriptwriter until publication of his first book for children, [My Brother is a Superhero](#) [3] which has picked up critical plaudits and very healthy sales. The story of a comic-mad boy whose misses out on the gift of superpowers, bestowed instead on his never-read-a-comic-in-his-life brother, it was shortlisted for the [Branford Boase Award](#) [4] and won the **Waterstones Children's Book Prize**. The follow up [My Gym Teacher is an Alien Overlord](#) [5] is out now, another well written, laugh out loud novel aimed at both boys and girls. **John Newman** spoke to David, busy completing a third book set for publication in 2017, for **Books for Keeps**.



Are you a younger or older brother?

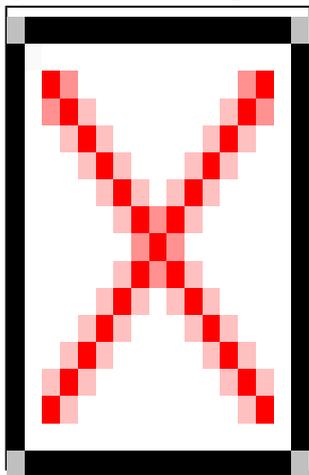
I am neither although I do have a sister. The inspiration for what it's like to be Luke coping with his older brother Zak being the superhero comes my experiences as a scriptwriter ? I always seeming to be seated at meetings next to the person who had just signed a six figure deal. That experience of being the nearly man was my inspiration for finding Luke's voice!

Were you a keen reader as a child and if so what did you enjoy?

I used the local Glasgow libraries where I grew up and read widely. I particularly remember enjoying the **Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators** series as well as the **Enid Blyton Adventure** series. I discovered science fiction and in particular Robert A. Heinlein's work for younger readers including **Have Space Suit, Will Travel**. I also read the **Star Wars** comics and **Star Wars** itself was a big influence.

The books are both genuinely funny; how does the humour emerge in the writing process?

Becoming a father was important and wanting to write books I would one day enjoy reading with my children. I am also



married to a seriously good writer and as we share a writing space she is a helpful critic. I did wonder whether I could meet the challenge to 'fill in the gaps' between scriptwriting and the novel form. Much of it is about application to the work and a combination of planning and flying by the seat of my pants! It is also important to have that sense of leaving the room and returning to be surprised by my own writing. I had written the first line of the first book long before I wrote the novel itself. I don't know where it came from but I'm glad it did as it was a gift that also gave me Luke's voice. (If you haven't got the book to hand, the line is 'My brother is a superhero, and I could have been one too, except that I needed to go for a wee.')

How about the series of running gags?

I complete a first draft and then go back and fill in things like the running gags. My editor Kirsty Stansfield was hugely helpful in advising me what to include or leave out. We also share a sense of humour and I have been very lucky to be in such safe hands. I wasn't sure about including Lara's malapropisms for example but Kirsty said keep them in. I also love puns and I guess I am helped by the fact that my sense of humour has remained pretty much unchanged since my own youth!

I was surprised to discover you were not particularly a comic geek yourself and that you relied on research?

I don't particularly enjoy research but there are lots of references to the golden age of comic books including the obvious Batman and Superman references which I hope will continue to give the books a timeless feel. I am also conscious of stuff I made up in the process of helping Luke to appear an expert on comic book history and some of the humour is built around the obscurity of the comic references.

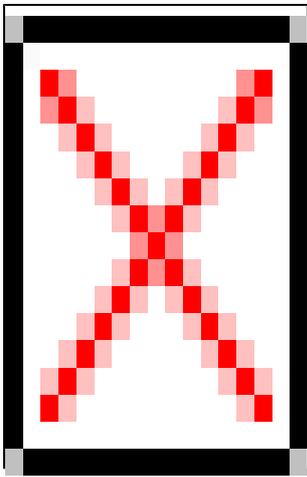
One of the things I loved about both books is the fact that both parents have a sense of humour and there was a strong element of adults and children who actually like each other and humour being generated by the adults approach to parenthood.

I had very funny parents and the benefit of growing up in a Jewish family so my cultural background has been important. I was also conscious that in most children's fiction parents are often absent or unavailable or main characters are orphaned so I am aware there was a bit of rule breaking. But I also wanted to create a very ordinary world as a backdrop to all the superhero stuff.

Has the first books success surprised you?

Nosy Crow immediately got the book and they were excited about finding an audience for it. In terms of awards funny books don't tend to win prizes so we were all stunned when it won the **Waterstones Prize** and I had no speech prepared. The trophy now sits proudly in my study.

What's next for you?



The new book is just published so I will be promoting it plus I am finishing the third book. I am beginning to think that I will be staying with the novel form although there is the prospect of some more scriptwriting. I am also exploring the possibility of a new series for children with the prospect of moving beyond first person narration.

John Newman is children's book buyer at the Newham Bookshop.

[My Brother is a Superhero](#) [3] and [My Gym Teacher is an Alien Overlord](#) [5] are published by Nosy Crow, £6.99 each.

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