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I Wish I'd Written: Rob Biddulph chooses a picture book classic.

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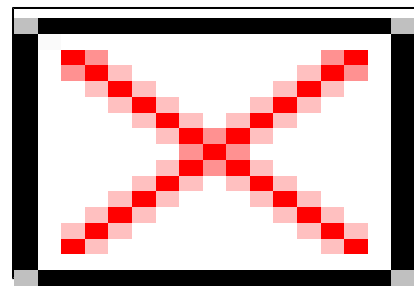
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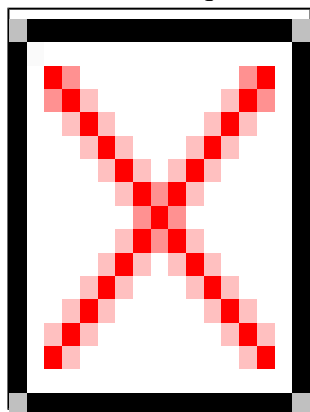
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Rob Biddulph chooses



The book I wish I'd written is **Dogger** by Shirley Hughes. It tells the story of Dave who loses his favourite soft toy, a little dog called Dogger, whilst out on a walk with his family. They look everywhere for him but to no avail. The next day, at the school summer fair, Dave's misery is compounded when his sister Bella wins first prize in the raffle ? a huge teddy with a big blue bow. Then, miracle of miracles, Dave spots his Dogger for sale on the toy stall. Before he can buy him back, a little girl beats him to it. Bella, in an act of extraordinary kindness, persuades the girl to swap Dogger for her brand new teddy and then returns him to Dave, his rightful owner.

I know from experience how difficult it is to squeeze a complete story arc into just twenty-eight pages, but Shirley



Hughes somehow manages to take us on a journey through a huge range of emotions: happiness, excitement, worry, sadness and, ultimately, exhilaration. Rarely has the end of a story felt so satisfying. She also manages to throw in an element of mis-direction (we're really not overly thrilled when Bella wins the bear) and hide a few visual clues as to what is going to happen within her wonderfully evocative illustrations. This makes the second read a very different experience to the first ? something that is essential in a picture book that will, in all probability, be read night after night.

Dogger is the first book that I can ever remember reading, and in many ways, it has defined the art of storytelling for me ever since. I have bought many copies for friends over the years, and it still has pride of place on my bookshelf today.

Rob Biddulph's latest book **Show and Tell** (978-0008317911) is published by HarperCollins Children's Books, £12.99hbk.

Dogger (978-1862308053) is published by Red Fox, £6.99.

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