



# A Q&A INTERVIEW WITH PIP JONES AND SARA OGILVIE

Article Author:

[Pip Jones](#) [1]

Article Author:

[Sara Ogilvie](#) [2]

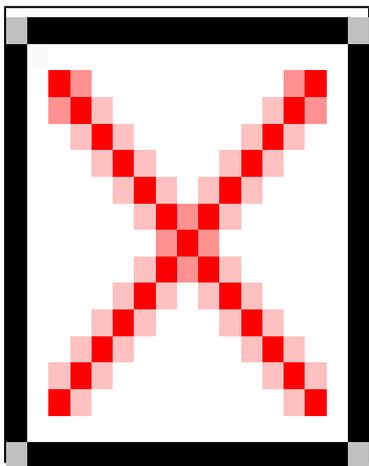
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Byline:

**Pip Jones** and **Sara Ogilvie** introduce **Izzy Gizmo**

Izzy Gizmo is a young girl with a passion for invention. After making her debut in the eponymous **Izzy Gizmo**, she's now back in a new story, [Izzy Gizmo and the Invention Convention](#) [4], written by Pip Jones and again illustrated by Sara Ogilvie. **Books for Keeps** put questions to Pip and Sara.

Questions for Pip



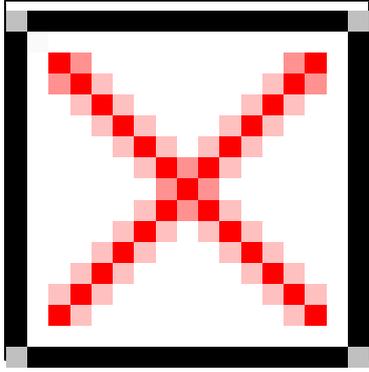
*Can you tell us a bit about the starting point for Izzy Gizmo? When and how did the idea come to you?*

I quite often come up with silly ideas for (brilliant!) inventions and I'd written a quite lengthy Facebook post about my idea for an Egg Tap ? a tap in your kitchen which would dispense eggs (whole or beaten, seasoned or unseasoned etc) so that you could have any type of egg you liked for breakfast, crucially without getting sticky fingers from cracking the shells. When a friend suggested in the comments that I ?DO SOME WORK!!? I sat down and wrote the first draft of **Izzy Gizmo**, a little inventor with big (and quite bonkers) ideas!

*Did you have an idea of what the characters should look like? Did you discuss it with Sara or supply a brief, or leave it to her?*

I would never give an illustrator specific instructions on how a character should look ? my job is to give the artist a real essence of the character through my words, and then of course they are far more qualified than me to bring that character to life visually! That said, I do remember, early on, telling the publisher that what I didn't want for Izzy was to be some sort of tomboy, or that geeky, freckly cliché we've seen so often, just because she's a girl who likes doing physical / scientific things. In the end it was really extraordinary ? Sara's interpretation of Izzy was very, very close to

what I had in my head, without a word ever being exchanged between us up to that point.



*Did you always plan that there would be more adventures for Izzy and Fixer, or did that come about because of the great reception for the first story?*

In the very first draft of *Izzy Gizmo*, at the end, Izzy requested to go to an invention school to improve her skills ? so it was always my plan to write a second story about her going to some sort of school or invention event. The first book changed a bit and the ending was replaced, but the seed was always there for what her next adventure would be. I think it became an Invention Convention because I really liked that rhyme! Plus, it gave me the idea of a prize being up for grabs, and some serious competition for Izzy and Fixer.

*We love the way Izzy is so into reuse and recycling, and in this book she harnesses wind and sun power too. How important is that message to you? Do you think children?s authors have a responsibility to encourage their readers to think about their responsibility to the world?*

I reckon the responsibility of children?s authors is, first and foremost, to make books that children truly enjoy and give them a love of reading ? whether they contain important messages, or simply make children laugh so much they turn purple! Reduce, reuse, recycle is of course a HUGELY important message though ? and it?s the responsibility of every adult to help the little people in their life understand why, however they can (with books or otherwise). Specifically in terms of kids? books though, children ? even very young ones ? are more than capable of absorbing an important message even when it?s done in a suitably silly/funny/entertaining child-friendly way.

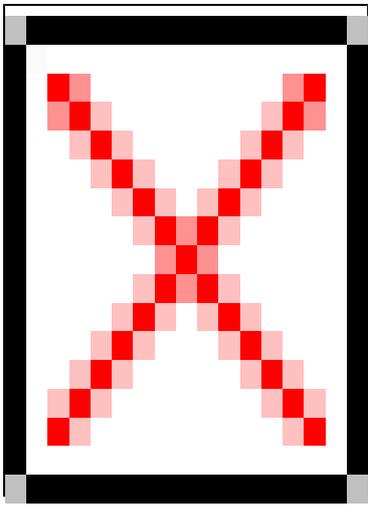
*We see Izzy making mistakes and sometimes getting things wrong, for example losing her temper with Fixer. How important is that?*

It?s part of what makes her a real and believable character I think. Frustration and anger are a normal part of life, and it can be pretty tricky to navigate those sorts of overwhelming emotions when you?re little. What I hope children really notice, though, is that Izzy does take time out to think, she does calm down, and she knows that she needs to say sorry, or fix things, so she can move on.

*What do you like best about Sara?s illustrations?*

Oh, where do I start!?! Before I was writing for kids, I bought the first children?s book Sara had illustrated (**Dogs Don?t Do Ballet**, written by Anna Kemp) for my own girls? bedtime reading, and I totally fell in love with Sara?s style. So I was thrilled to bits when a few years later I learned that Sara would illustrate *Izzy Gizmo*. Sara told me I?d given her some serious challenges in the first book, working in various machine parts that I?d mentioned in the text and putting them into fantastic creations that looked like they could really work! She did such an amazing job with that. But what I love most about Sara?s work is the personality she gives to characters, how seemingly effortlessly she captures their emotions and moods. Izzy?s facial expressions are just so perfect, and then there?s Fixer: I mean, a beaked creature! Look closely at him and see how she manages to convey everything the bird is feeling or communicating, with the slight tilt of his head, or very subtle changes in his body language. It?s GENIUS, and I never tire of looking at it.

Questions for Sara



*What do you like best about illustrating the **Izzy Gizmo** books?*

I think it would be Izzy herself. After reading Pip's text the look of her character came pretty quickly to me. She wears her heart on her sleeve and it's fun visualising her navigating her emotional ups and downs. Also Grandpa is always lovely to draw as her unflappable voice of reason.

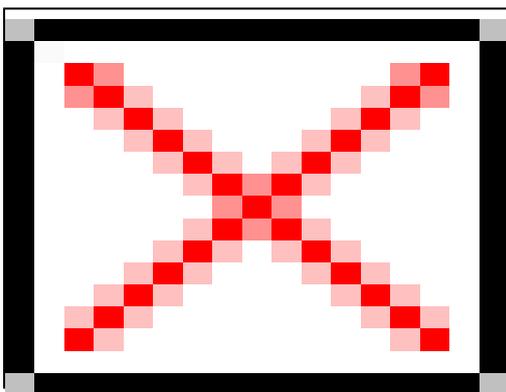
*Do you and Pip talk at all about the illustrations?*

Not really. We tend to work separately which is the norm with most picture books with different authors and illustrators working together. I'll get sent the text and then spend time reading and roughing things out, interpreting the story across the pages of the book, pacing out the characters and the action. It is only after this stage through our art director and editor that there is feedback between us. Sometimes there is discussion at that stage but usually nothing major.

I think overall Pip and I are on the same wavelength. The art director and editor have a good sense of pairing people up who they think will work well together.

*How do you come up with the visuals for Izzy's amazing inventions (We love the green two-legged vehicle that takes them to Technoff Isle)?*

A lot of research goes on behind the scenes for the engineering bits and gizmos. Much of this isn't used in the end but hopefully the right bits of drawing make it into the book.

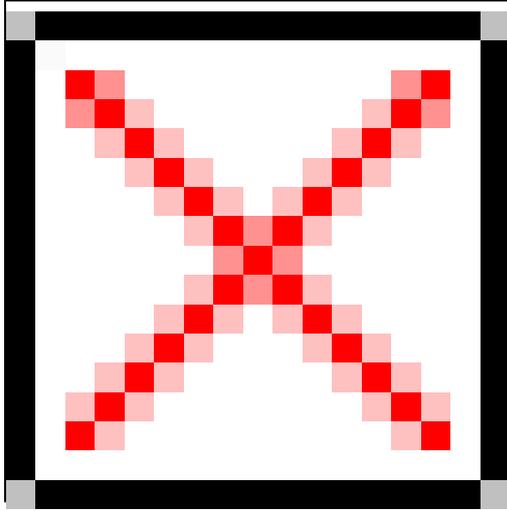


I had a drawing on a yellow post-it note of some characters travelling inside a pair of trotting legs which had been drifting around my desk for ages. I thought it would be funny to have the transporting legs feature in the story, especially as the legs end up being carried by Grandpa when they malfunction and Izzy is huffing. But in true form Izzy mends and makes them into something with a new function. Those poor legs go through a lot in that sequence!

*What is your favourite spread or image in the book and why?*

The page showing all the children in their role call. I like the rhythm of Pip's writing here and wanted to divide up the

characters to give them their own introduction. The aim was that their body language gives you some clues to their personalities. There used to be a programme on telly when I was little called **Celebrity Squares** with Bob Monkhouse. I think there was definitely a bit of inspiration from there!



And the spread of Technoff Isle. I'd like to go there!

**Izzy Gizmo** and [Izzy Gizmo and the Invention Convention](#) [4] are published by Simon and Schuster, £6.99 pbk.

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