

Petr Horacek trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague before becoming a graphic designer, illustrator and painter. He won the Books for Children Newcomer Award with *Strawberries Are Red* and *What Is Black and White?* He is also the creator of the loveable Suzy Goose character who has featured in *Silly Suzy Goose*, *Look Out, Suzy Goose* and *Suzy Goose and the Christmas Star*. Born in Czechoslovakia, Petr now lives in Worcestershire with his wife and two daughters.

As a child

"I grew up in Prague in the Czech Republic. Just outside our flat there was a wood where I spent lots of time playing with friends. We would climb on piles of soil or build bunkers from forgotten builder's materials. I always wanted to be an illustrator, but I preferred to look at the pictures inside the books rather than to read them. I would listen to the story or watch a film and then fill up my sketchbook with pictures and images from the story. I started to read books quite late, but I haven't stopped since."

As an adult

"I studied at the Academy of Fine Art in Prague where I painted and drew for six years. Some of my pictures were as big as a double bed! Every autumn the teachers drove us to the countryside where they left us for a few weeks (once even a few months!) to paint and draw the landscape. Since then I have adored the autumn. One day an English girl called Claire came into my studio and before I knew it, I was living in England. We are married now and I love England, but it took me some time to learn English – in fact, I'm still learning."

As an artist

"My two daughters Tereza and Cecilia are the biggest inspiration for my work. I started to work on children's books when Tereza was born. For my first books, *Strawberries are Red* and *What is Black and White?*, I received the Books for Children Newcomer Award 2001. It was presented to me in a restaurant and we had a nice lunch. I still remember the lunch and I still have the trophy. I like doing novelty books best. I think it's very exciting looking through the holes in the pages and seeing what will happen if I turn one more page!

Things you didn't know about Petr Horacek

- * I love children's drawings.
- * I love looking at the sky.
- * I love walking in woods and picking mushrooms.
- * I love snow and I know how to ski.
- * I love cakes (any cakes!) and vanilla ice cream (or any other ice cream!).
- * I love playing tennis and I play as much as I can.
- * I love watching people walking their dogs.
- * I love music – from the very old to the very loud and rattley.
- * I love listening to the radio. I record programmes I can't listen to, then pile the recorded tapes on top of my hi-fi.
- * I can't spell. (It's rather embarrassing.)