

## **Finding ideas**

Nathan Bryon

My biggest fear used to be that I would just stop coming up with ideas, the well would just dry up, and my writing brain turn into a dry dusty raisin. The reason I was drawn to the problem of 'finding ideas' is because for me that's what writing is all about. You have to go about FINDING ideas and stories and characters. Of course ideas can come directly from life, they can just fall straight into your lap; but after you have told those initial stories, you will need to go on searching for newness and that is the fun bit.

You can hunt for ideas in a million different ways. Sometimes ideas come to me listening to pieces of music I wouldn't usually listen to. When I listen, for example, to familiar Drake bangers I just subconsciously rap along; but when I'm taken out of my comfort zone with unfamiliar music, this is a fertile environment for new ideas to grow. Sometimes I will base a story on a newspaper article, or take it from talking to my grandad who tells me a brilliant anecdote. Generally, I find it's about going out into the world and trying to be as open as possible, while working out questions for myself like: what do you care about? What do you want to say? What do you want to fight for? It's about having a willingness to ask questions and interrogate everything, even if you may never get an answer.

I know I've got a crumb of something when it's something that I'm worked up about, or a message I'm trying to tell myself. I will talk to my mates about the idea, just seeing if it's something that interests other people. But don't get me wrong – I have told my mates ideas and stories and they have looked at me confused, and I have still run with the ideas anyway.

Once I have the crumb, I just think about the idea loads. Sometimes I will brainstorm, almost play word association with the idea, and think of everything I can around it. I then Google everything I come up with around the idea, partly to make sure someone else hasn't had the exact same idea before. If my idea is about black people in Medieval England, for example, I will read books and watch movies and TV shows set in the same time period. I try to absorb myself in that world, ask questions about it and about myself, like why was I not taught about this at school? This could fuel the idea or the passion for the idea.

Another thing that I do with most of my ideas – as I'm a visual person and hella [sic]\* dyslexic – is commission an illustrator to do some character designs. Anything that helps me physically see my character helps me find a voice for them. The blank page can often be a super scary place to start, so go and SEEK some inspiration to help you FIND your stories.

## **Nathan Bryon**

Nathan Bryon is a BAFTA-nominated writer and a *Sunday Times* best-selling author and actor, who grew up eating as much Uxbridge Road Caribbean food as his bank balance would allow. He is best known to viewers for his role as regular character Jamie in *Some Girls* and Benidorm's sunniest

holiday maker, Joey Ellis. Nathan has written for critically acclaimed CBeebies' animation *Rastamouse*, BAFTA award-winning *Swashbuckle* and on all three series of BAFTA-nominated *Apple Tree House* CBeebies alongside BAFTA-winning *Gigglebiz*.

Nathan's first book *Look Up!* (June 2019) was the number 1 picture book from a debut author and illustrator in 2019, on the Sunday Times Bestseller list, and won the overall Waterstones Children's book prize in 2020. *Clean UP!*, the follow up, was published in July 2020.

Nathan co-created BAFTA-nominated comedy series *Bloods*, a series about a group of south London-based paramedics. Nathan's debut feature film, co-written with Tom Melia, *Rye Lane* will be out in cinemas in 2023.

A recording of this talk can be found at [writersmosaic.org.uk](https://writersmosaic.org.uk)

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