



Author Helen and Illustrator Tom Docherty: Learning Welsh together as a family

Published on 18/10/2017 — in Intermediate/Interviews

Mae Helen a Tom Docherty, gwraig a gwr, creu llyfrau am blant gyda'i gilydd. Yma maen nhw'n siarad am eu gwaith, dysgu Cymraeg a delio gyda dyslecsia...

Helen and Tom Docherty, wife and husband, create books for children with each other. Here they talk about their work, learning Welsh and dealing with dyslexia...

Helen a Tom, chi'n gwraig a gwr, a dych chi'n gweithio gyda'i gilydd fel awdur a dylunydd. Ydy e'n rhamantus i greu straeon am y byd fel hyn?

Helen: Sa i'n siŵr os fyddai 'rhamantus' y gair cywir! Ond ie, mae creu stori gyda'n gilydd yn hyfryd, wrth gwrs. Dyn ni'n gweithio ar lawer o bethau gwahanol hefyd, ac rhaid i ni dau weithio'n galed. Does dim llawer o amser yn y dydd, oherwydd mae dwy ferch 'da ni sy'n mynd i ysgol gynradd.

Pa fath o oedran ydych chi'n ysgrifennu i, a pham yr oedran hwnna?

Helen: Erbyn hyn, pob un o fy straeon (sy wedi cael ei gyhoeddi) yw llyfr lluniau, fel y Snatchabook; ac mae'r rhan fwyaf ohonyн nhw'n odli. Ond ar hyn o bryd dw i'n trio

Helen and Tom, you are wife and husband, and you work with each other as author and artist. Is it romantic to create stories for the world like this?

Helen: I'm not sure if 'romantic' would be the right word! But yes, creating stories together is lovely, of course. We work on a lot of different things as well, and we both have to work hard. There's not a lot of time in the day, since we have two daughters in primary school.

What sort of ages do you write for, and why that age?

Helen: Up till now, all of my stories (which have been published) have been picture books, like The Snatchabook; and most of them are in rhyme. But at the moment I'm trying to write two different stories for older children. Who knows if they'll be accepted by a publisher...fingers crossed!

ysgrifennu dwy stori wahanol ar gyfer plant henach. Pwy a
ŵyr os fyddan nhw gael ei dderbyn gan unrhyw
gyhoeddwyr...croesi bysedd!

**Mae'n anodd ennill arian llawn amser fel awdur neu
ddylunydd y ddyddiau 'ma. Beth arall ydych chi'n
gwneud sydd yn debyg i ysgrifennu a dylunio?**

Helen: Dyn ni'n ymweld â llawer o ysgolion cynradd, lle dyn ni'n gwneud gweithdai creadigol gyda'r plant. Weithiau, dyn ni'n helpu grwpiau o blant neu bobl ifanc i ysgrifennu straeon ac i'u darlunio nhw; ac wedyn, dyn ni'n cynhyrchu llyfrau ohonynt nhw, fel Antur Gyda Tad-cu (sy'n cael dau fersiwn: Saesneg a Chymraeg).

**Mae'r ddua ohonoch chi yn dysgu Cymraeg am safon
Uwch nawr. Sut ydy'r iaith wedi newid eich bywyd
teulu?**

Helen: Dw i'n falch iawn bod ni'n gallu siarad Cymraeg fel teulu, pan dyn ni'n moyn. Mae ein merched ni'n ei weld e fel rhywbeth arferol; so nhw'n gallu cofio pan ddoedden nhw ddim yn gallu siarad Cymraeg; er cafodd y ddwy ohonynt nhw ei geni yn Lloegr (symudon ni i Abertawe pan oedden nhw'n bedair a dwy oed).

Mae Tom a fi'n dwlu ar wyllo cyfresi drama ar S4C fel 'Bang' gyda'n gilydd a gwrandio ar gerddoriaeth Gymraeg. Mae Cymraeg yn fel iaith gyfrinachol: mae'n agor y drws i ddiwylliant gwahanol. A phan dyn ni'n mynd i Loegr neu rhywle arall, dyn ni'n gallu defnyddio Gymraeg fel cod!

**Tom, rydw i'n deall mod ti'n dyslecsig. Dydw i ddim
wedi clywed o rywun sydd yn dyslecsia ac sydd yn
dysgu Cymraeg. Rydw i'n gallu dychmygu mae'n anodd
iawn- oes unrhyw gyngor gyda ti am bobl eraill?**

Tom: Ydw, dw i'n dyslecsig. Mae pob math o broblemau yn gystilltiedig â'r dyslecsia, ond dw i wastad wedi cael problemau gyda'r sillafu, darllen, trefnu a deall pethau fel dyddiadau o amserlenni. Dw i'n arfer gwneud camgymeriadau pan dw i'n ysgrifennu yn Saesneg ac mae'n gwaeth gyda'r Gymraeg, ond 'sdim ots. Y peth mwyaf pwysig i fi yw siarad â phobl, a does dim problem gyda fi o gwbl gyda hynny.

**Diolch Tom a Helen am siarad am ei gwaith a'r lles o
ddysgu Cymraeg; a diolch Tom am rannu dy brofiad
gyda phobl eraill.**

**It's difficult to earn money full time as an author or designer these days.
What else do you do that is similar to writing and drawing?**

Helen: We visit lots of primary schools, where we do creative workshops with the children. Sometimes, we help groups of children or young people to write stories and illustrate them; and then, we produce books from them, like *An Adventure With Gramps* (which has two versions: English and Welsh).

The two of you are studying Welsh at the Higher level now. How has the language changed your life?

Helen: I'm really proud that we can speak Welsh as a family, when we want to. Our daughters see it as something normal; they can't remember when they didn't speak Welsh, although they were both born in England (we moved to Swansea when they were four and two). Tom and I love watching drama series on S4C together, like *Bang*, and listening to Welsh music. Welsh is like a secret language; it opens the door to a different culture. And when we go to England or somewhere else, we can use Welsh as a code!

Tom, I understand that you are dyslexic. I've not heard from someone who is dyslexic and is studying Welsh. I can imagine that is very difficult- do you have any advice to give to other people?

Tom: Yes, I'm dyslexic. They are all sorts of problems associated with dyslexia, but I have always had problems with spelling, reading, organising and understanding things like dates and timetables. I usually make mistakes when I write in English and it's worse with Welsh, but never mind. The most important thing to me is talking to people, and I don't have a problem with that at all.

Thanks Tom and Helen for speaking about your work the benefits of learning Welsh, and thanks Tom for sharing your experience with other people.