

MEET AKI

the illustrator of the Billie B. Brown books!

We asked Aki how she became an illustrator - because we know a lot of you are VERY good at drawing and perhaps when you grow up, you might become an illustrator too!



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I have loved drawing since I was little - drawing has always been my favorite hobby and it still is! I would draw comics to tell stories. I was too shy to show them to my parents or friends, and shared them only with my sister. I didn't know that you could be an illustrator for a job - it was just fun for me. I always thought that when I was old, I would live deep in the woods with lots of cats and draw all day!

Other than art, my favorite subjects in school were math and science. I loved solving problems with numbers and formulas. I thought that when I grew up I would be a physicist - a type of scientist who gets to use lots of exciting math. Once I finished high school, I went to college to study physics - but after some encouragement from my mom, I also decided to study fine arts at the same time! Studying the fine arts is all about painting, sculpture and the history of art! I LOVED it, and after two years, I decided to study only art.



My teachers taught us about being original, inventive and to learn from history. My classmates and I studied masterpieces created by other artists, and then tried to come up with something original ourselves. Once, we got to choose our own homework so I chose to draw a comic, just like I used to make when I was a kid! This project was so fun, and I even won awards for it!

After I graduated, I kept drawing more comics. Once I decided that I definitely wanted my job to be an illustrator, I put together a portfolio - like a big photo album of my illustrations - and sent it out to over fifty book publishers in New Zealand and Australia. After a long time, two publishers came back to me and offered me some illustrating jobs. One of those publishers was Hardie Grant Egmont, asking me to illustrate a chapter book series about a bold, brilliant and bubbly girl - called Billie B. Brown!

That was over ten years ago, and since then I have illustrated over eighty books - and drawing is my job! Now I just need to get lots and lots of cats, and all my dreams will have come true!

Here are some of the things I did to become an illustrator that might help you!

- Even though I love other subjects like science and math, I always kept drawing.
- I eventually grew the courage to share my work not just with my sister, but also with my parents! Their encouragement helped me decide to study art in college.
- I listened carefully to my teachers, and researched lots of other artists from history to figure out my own style.
- I practiced lots and lots to improve my skills.
- I always kept trying, and having fun!

