

Dear Friend,

It's been a while since my last newsletter. I have been busy making books but your letters are much appreciated, and I want to stay in touch with you. So here are some of your comments and answers to your questions.

Do you ever use a computer? Computers are used in the production, but not in the creation of my books. Creating pictures is essentially the same as it has been for hundreds of years, the same as it was for the cave painters.

Until recently, I assembled my collage pictures on art board. On an overlay sheet, I would specify the type face and size and how it would be placed on the page. I would send this to my publisher. Then the typographers would set the type and printers print the book.

But now I have a big computer in my studio and when I am ready to do the final design for the book, I sit at the computer with Motoko, my assistant. First we lay out the pages to combine the pictures and the text. Then I choose the type face for the text. When we are through, the whole book – the jacket, end sheet, title page, pictures and story – is transferred onto a disc, and it goes to the publisher and then to the printer.

Working with the computer has made me aware of other possibilities for its use. For instance, we're considering scanning and storing all my painted tissue papers into the computer. It would then be possible for me to cut and assemble a collage on the computer screen. The mouse would become the scissors and the glue. If I were to illustrate a bird, for example, I could pick out the No. 33 green for the bird's wings and use the mouse to "cut" it out and "paste" it down. And then I might choose the No. 30 red for the beak and do the same thing until the bird is finished.

I'm still old fashioned and computers may be foreign for me, but I am intrigued. It's my next "terra incognita," my unexplored territory. Ask me again in a couple of years.

Are you working on anything special right now? The last two years have been very busy for me, perhaps the busiest of my career. Four books have been released in 1997: *Little Cloud*, *The Art of Eric Carle*, *From Head to Toe*, and *Flora and Tiger*. And three more are scheduled to be released in 1998: *Hello Red Fox*, *The Very Clumsy Click Beetle* and *You Too Can Make a Collage*.

For now, I'm less interested in making a new book. Instead, I'm creating works of fine art, but still using my painted tissue papers.

One day I was working on pictures for a book. When I had finished for the day I looked at the pieces of tissue paper that were discarded on the floor. "Hmm," I thought to myself, "How beautiful." I studied them for awhile. I assembled the pieces into a composition, which I then put into a frame and hung on the wall.

For 30 years I've been painting tissue papers for my books and over those years the papers have become more beautiful. And now they are so beautiful that I hate to tear or cut them to create illustrations for books. I'm painting papers for the joy of painting papers and using them as art in ways that I can't in a book.



Are you an artist? Yes. But there are many kinds of artists. At one end of the spectrum are commercial artists, people such as advertising artists or graphic designers, who have a client to work for, a product to illustrate and a deadline. I worked as an advertising artist after I graduated from art school.

At the other end of the spectrum are painters or sculptors who are purists, who do what they want when they want. They are usually called "studio artists" or "fine artists" to distinguish them from commercial artists. They may work very hard with their art, but they don't have a client or deadline.

As a picture-book artist I fall somewhere between the two. I do have a product – my books, and clients – my readers. But like the purists I am able to do my books the way I want, when I want.

But, just because a person is a pure artist, that is no guarantee that his or her work is good. I would prefer the work of a good commercial artist to that of a bad fine artist.

We are learning about the writing process in school and my teacher told us that editing is important and that even famous writers have editors. I find this hard to believe. Is it true that you work with an editor? Yes! I have worked with several editors. In fact, editors are important. Every book has an editor. The book is like a bridge, over which a story travels from the writer to the readers. The editor is like the inspector who makes sure there are no rough places or holes in the bridge. So sometimes an editor will suggest a small change that is needed; other times there may be no changes. Sometimes you just may need an editor to encourage you when you are discouraged and at a loss about a book.

Let me tell you how I worked with an editor on a new book called *You Can Make a Collage* that is being published by Klutz Press. My editor for that book was John Cassidy, who is also the publisher.

This is a "how-to" book and it is something I had not done before. I started it the way I start all my books – by thinking and drawing and doing dummy books until it began to feel right. But when John looked at my dummy book he made a lot of suggestions. He would say, "You don't need this," or, "What if you tried this?" I knew how to make picture books, but didn't know much about "how-to" books. John is an experienced creator and editor of "how-to" books. It was very exciting to work with John who knew something that was new to me.

Now I would like to tell you about an exciting event. In the Fall of 1997, Mr. Fred Rogers and his film crew came to visit me in my studio. They taped a 10-minute segment for the Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Program No. 1721. I showed him how I paint my tissue papers and how I use them to create an illustration. Then together we read from my book *From Head To Toe*.

Parents and teachers often ask what I think about children watching too much television. Yes, I believe that children do watch too much television, but I think the most important thing that we must be concerned about is the quality of the programs. Maybe it's not that children watch too much television, but that they watch bad television. Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is an example of good television.



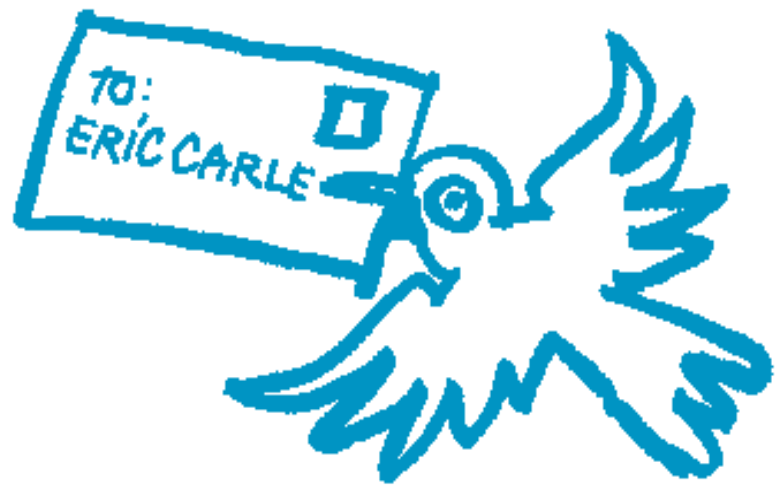
I was born in Syracuse, New York and I spoke English until I was 6. But then I moved to Germany with my parents who had been born there. I quickly learned German and forgot most of my English. I learned English again in high school and came back to the United States when I was 22, so I know two languages. Interesting things happen when you know two languages. Occasionally a German word for something will pop into my head and I won't be able to think of the English word for it. And sometimes it works the other way around.

Probably because I've been speaking English exclusively for more than 45 years, I think and dream in English and now it is perhaps better than my German. When I visit Germany, I need to refresh my German, I do that by watching and listening to German television for a few hours and then I'm okay again.

Mr. Rogers and I are the same age and we have each been doing our work for children for 30 years. I've been aware of him for a long time and I am impressed with the depth of his work. I think he and I try to do the same thing, which is to take a subject we consider important and explore it with our audiences and readers. We don't tell children, we let them discover for themselves. Mr. Rogers works quietly and respectfully. He understands children and he is able to make himself understood.

Watching him work reminds me of a quotation by Leonardo da Vinci from his "Notebooks." It is about simplifying: "The more minutely you describe, the more you will confuse the mind of the reader and the more you will prevent him from a knowledge of the thing described."

And here's something I have in common with some of you. I have become aware that many of you speak two languages, one at home and another at school. I also speak two languages, English and German.



I get snail mail and e-mail and photographs and drawings. I get questions and comments and suggestions. A mother in National City, California wrote to say her son had packed his copy of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* when he went off to college so if he felt lonely he could sit and read and remember the good old days.

An elementary school class in Greenwell Springs, Louisiana asked: "Does a caterpillar have a nose?" (Real caterpillars don't have noses. In fact, they don't even have lungs. They breathe by taking in air through holes, called spiracles, on the sides of their bodies. The air passes through small tubes called tracheoles, where the oxygen is extracted by fluid in the body.)

A first-grade teacher at Walnut Street School in Toms River, New Jersey described this project for National Children's Book Week: "In addition to listing and

displaying your books, video, finger puppets, calendar, tissue collages made by the children and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* puzzle, I had the children make fireflies that actually twinkled! The fireflies were displayed on black paper on a glass partition. Twinkling Christmas lights were taped to the back of the glass. The lights shone through tiny holes in the black paper and tails of the fireflies. Everyone was delighted!"

A mother in New Orleans wrote to say her 3-year-old was having an Eric Carle birthday party.

An adult reference librarian in Brick, New Jersey, wrote to say she had used *The Very Quiet Cricket* to answer a reference question. "A patron came in with a specimen of an 'unidentified flying insect' that she needed help to identify. Much to my colleagues' amazement, since they know I'm not a 'bug person,' I took one look at it and said, 'I know. It's a luna moth.' They had already wasted 20 minutes looking in the 'butterfly books' and asked 'How did you know that?' I explained that I'd read your book to my own children a 'gazillion' times' and recognized it immediately. And what a beautiful thing it was!"

Then there is the student at Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma who described an author study

on *Pancakes, Pancakes!* in a Language Arts Methods class. She dressed up like Jack's mother and made pancakes. "So while I cooked pancakes (and I really cooked pancakes during my presentation) I told all about you. Only one problem, though, during my presentation I tried to flip the pancake in the air and catch it in the pan. Guess what? I missed and the pancake landed on the floor in front of the professor. I didn't let that stop me. I walked over and picked up the pancake and brushed it off on the back of my apron and went on talking about you. My professor was impressed and I received an A-plus for my presentation."

And finally, a wonderful comment from a first grader who wrote, "You and I are alike. I like colors and you like colors." (How can I disagree with that!)

Hope you enjoyed this newsletter. Until next time,
Sincerely,



P.S. You can send me e-mail at eric@eric-carle.com and please come visit my web site, www.eric-carle.com.

Some free promotional materials about Eric Carle's books are available from the publishers. Write to:

Children's Marketing: Eric Carle Poster
Philomel Books
345 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014
(send 10" x 13" SASE with \$.55 postage)

Children's Marketing: Eric Carle Sticker Sheet
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
1230 Avenue of the Americas-4th Floor
New York, NY 10020
(send #10 SASE with \$.32 postage)

Book Club Marketing: Eric Carle Sticker Sheet
Scholastic Inc.
555 Broadway
New York, NY 10012
(send 9" x 12" SASE with \$.55 postage)

Eric Carle • Post Office Box 485 • Northampton • MA • 01061