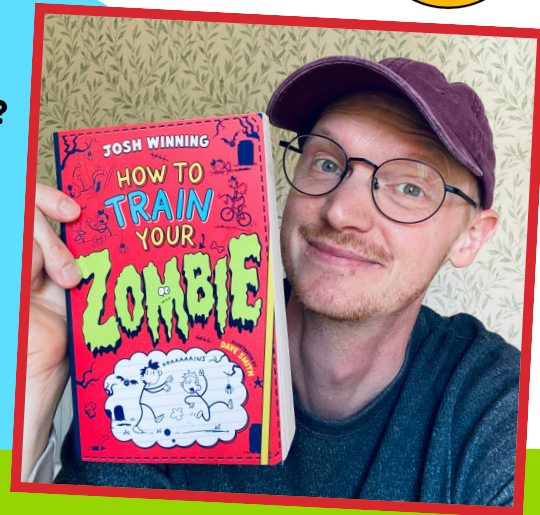




Josh Winning

When did you decide that you wanted to become an author?

I originally wanted to be an Olympic gymnast! That was my hobby as a child, and I got quite good at it (I even won a trophy!). Pretty soon, though, I realised that writing was a much safer option. I had always loved reading and telling stories, and I spent hours in my room writing my own short stories. I dreamed of one day getting to share them with the world.



Did you read lots as a child - if you did, where did you mainly read? If you didn't, what was the reason?

I loved reading as a child, particularly fantasy and horror books, and I enjoyed going to my local library to hunt for new treasures. I read everywhere – including in the car, which made my sister very jealous because she would always get car sick and so couldn't read anything!



What was your favourite book as a child and why?

The Whitby Witches by Robin Jarvis. It is so marvellously spooky and atmospheric, with great characters and some scary monsters. I loved the illustrations by Robin Jarvis, too, which really brought the story to life.

How does it feel to see your books in shops and being sold?

Very strange, but very exciting! It was a dream of mine for so long to be able to walk into my local bookshop and see my book there, so it is very cool when it happens.

What is the best part about being an author?

Getting to tell stories and use my imagination. It is also very exciting when you see the cover for your book for the first time. I like the fact that the author is just a small part of the publishing machine – it takes a lot of people to make one book, including illustrators, editors and marketing people, and it is always so fun and fulfilling to work together as a team.

What are the 'not so fun bits' in being an author?

I spend a lot of time sitting at my desk, which isn't great for my back! Sometimes I am not in the mood to write, but my cat Penny is often nearby to give me a swipe, which is very helpful.

Why do you think it is important for children to read?

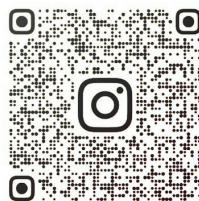
Stories can make you feel all sorts of things – excited, scared, amused – all from the comfort of your own home. You can read a scary book, a funny book or a mind-bending book, and for a few hours it's like you've lived somebody else's life. Books are full of brilliant characters, vibrant worlds and exciting action. They offer you a window into another person's experience, where all kinds of cool things can happen. There really isn't anything better than that!

What is the inspiration for your books and writing?

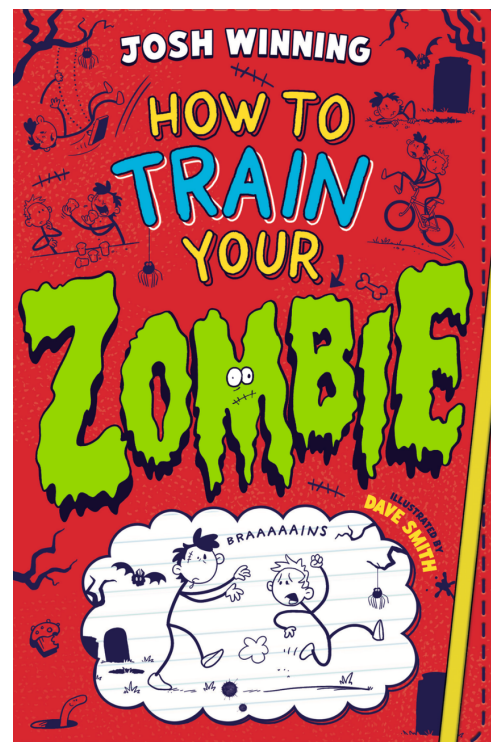
I draw inspiration from all sorts of places – sometimes a book or a film will prompt an idea, and sometimes I draw from my everyday life. The brothers in my book *How to Train Your Zombie* are loosely inspired by my nephews, which was a lot of fun for me. Hopefully they don't mind too much.



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Who gives you feedback on your drafts and how do you act on the feedback?

In addition to my editor at my publishing house, a couple of writer friends often read my early drafts, and their feedback is always so valuable. Sometimes it means a lot more work for me as I will have to change, develop or cut certain elements, but it is always worth it. I often take a few days to digest the feedback, then I make a list of everything I need to do – it is very satisfying to cross off items on the list and see how much I'm getting done.

Finally, if you could read for an hour, on your own, anywhere in the world – where would it be?

In my comfy yellow chair in my living room. Is that boring? It's a really great chair! It's so cosy and has a foot stool, so I can properly slob out and get lost in a book – preferably with a nice cup of tea. I usually have to fight the cat for that spot first, though...