

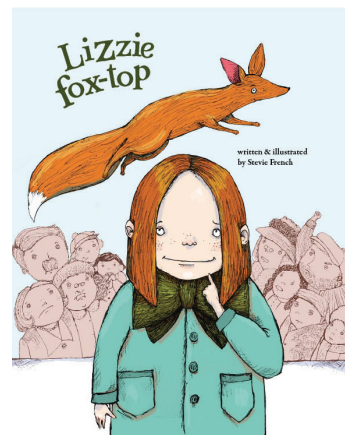
For Immediate Release

November 2009

Real-Life Pet Fox Inspires Picture Book

Oxford, Pennsylvania - "*Lizzie with your hair so red, what's that fox doing on your head?*" So demand the townsfolk of Lizzie's world the morning after an abandoned baby fox wanders in through her moonlit window. This charming debut picture book, written and illustrated by **Stevie French**, is the story of Lizzie, a shy but quirky redhead, and Rennie, a mischievous baby fox. When Rennie finds comfort on top of Lizzie's red hair, the pair become fast friends--despite the townspeople's protests. But after a few mishaps including one angry grocer, several stolen eggs, and a surprising trip to the forest, will Lizzie and the fox be able to stay friends?

Inspiration for *Lizzie Fox-Top* came directly from real life: Rennie was a pet fox the author's great-great-grandmother used to keep on her farm in the 1920s (during which the story is set). Whenever the author's grandmother Betty visited her own grandmother's farm as a girl, the tame pup nestled comfortably on Betty's head, his fur blending in perfectly with her red hair. Although the real Rennie never left his spacious barnyard, Ms. French's Rennie is bold enough to parade throughout town on top of Lizzie's head, which causes quite a ruckus in the story but is sure to bring laughs to children and parents.



Lizzie and Rennie's unusual day is recorded with large, playfully laid-out type and an exciting narration. The story's narration is regularly punctuated by variations of its singsong catchphrase, "*Lizzie with your hair so red, what's that fox doing on your head?*" This way it keeps young readers guessing what will happen next while still providing a refrain they can anticipate and eventually discover the answer to.

With the author's background in art, *Lizzie Fox-Top* is told as much through its illustrations as through its writing. Painstakingly hand-drawn ink lines combine with bright digital color to give the book a modern, graphic quality with lots of little details to enhance the story and its small-town characters. When designing the book, Ms. French took great care to research the clothing and history of the era so the book would be as historically accurate as possible--a feature that made for several interesting clothing combinations as Lizzie journeys through town!

Author Quotation

"I believe there's nothing better than to be able to laugh and discover with a child, especially through a book. When I wrote *Lizzie Fox-Top*, I used my own memories of favorite childhood books as models for how I wanted my readers to feel while reading this. Through playfulness, creativity, and imagination, I hope to introduce young people to the captivation of reading."

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Introducing: Stevie French, author/illustrator



Stevie French graduated with honors from Virginia Commonwealth University's prestigious School of the Arts, where she majored in Communication Arts & Design, and also minored in Art History. As a student she was honored to be included in several juried art exhibitions in Delaware and Virginia. Awards her artwork has won include "Best in Category" for 1708 Gallery's Wearable Art competition and Third Place for an illustration design commissioned by the **Richmond Times-Dispatch**. You also may have seen Ms. French's work on the cover of Richmond's *Brick Weekly* or in the 2007 volume of *Poictesme* literary journal, where she served as Art Editor and contributed her graphic design skills.

Stevie is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and has been a guest lecturer on children's book illustration at Temple University. This book is published under her budding publishing agency, Ogopogo Books (www.steviefrench.com/fox). At present Stevie lives in the exurbs of southeastern Pennsylvania and passes the time as a freelance illustrator and stained glass artisan. She has an awesome family, a loud little dog named Boo and an orange cat named Dexter.

Sample Questions

How much of this story is true?

The inspiration came from my grandmother, Betty, who loves to tell us grandkids about when she was a girl, and the fox that sat on her head. She has a theory that it mistook her for another fox because her red hair matched its fur so exactly. Betty's grandmother found the fox (who was named Rennie, like in my book) on her property. Rennie was sick, so she nursed him back to health. But because Rennie was a baby when she found him, he could not safely return to the wild.

Betty's grandmother also kept other animals on the farm, including a pair of crows which she trained to mimic her speech (who also appear in the story). Another character, Sarah, is based on Betty's older cousin Sarah, who I later found out was a bit bossy towards my grandmother, just as I wrote her! The rest of the characters and situations in the story are purely imaginative.

What in this story appeals to kids?

Children will appreciate the colorful illustrations and playful fox. While the whole book does not rhyme, there is a repeated refrain (variations of "Lizzie with your hair so red, what's that fox doing on your head?") that children can catch on to and anticipate, thereby participating in the story. Through this refrain there is some promise that in the end, Lizzie will find an answer, adding to the suspense. To add even more fun, some action takes place only in the illustrations, which further engages the child's attention span and amusement.

What in this story appeals to adults?

I wrote *Lizzie Fox-Top* with the idea that an adult (or at least an intermediate reader/older child) would be reading the book aloud to a young child, between the ages of 4 and 7. While a few different themes can be carried from this story (sticking by your friends; accepting who you are; having self-confidence; not being afraid to be different), its goal is mostly to entertain. From Lizzie and Rennie to the students and colorful small-city shoppers, I wanted to create charming, funny characters who would appeal to all ages, because I believe there's nothing better than to be able to laugh and discover with a child.

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At A Glance

Lizzie Fox-Top, written and illustrated by Stevie French

48 pgs. / 8" x 10" / Color / paperback

For children ages 4-7 yrs.

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Ogopogo Books

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Order a copy online at <https://wwwcreatespace.com/3405959>

Also available at Delaware and Pennsylvania bookstores (please use contact below for specific locations).

For more information, images, quotes, or to arrange an interview with **Stevie French**, please write her at stevie@steviefrench.com or call **610.880.4171**. Or you can visit our website, www.steviefrench.com/fox

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