



A Club for Kids Who Love Books

CHASING VERMEER

Meet Brett Helquist

The illustrator shares his favorite comic strip, how he figured out what he wanted to be, and what it means to be an artist.

I'm originally from a small town in Arizona that's surrounded by red dirt where there's not a whole lot to do. At a young age, I became a big fan of newspaper comic strips — “Alley Oop” was my favorite. I had to learn to use my imagination to keep myself occupied and I dreamed that I would one day create my own comic strips.

I was also interested in science. My family moved to Utah when I was 11 years old and that's where I discovered camping, fishing, and hiking. I wanted to become a scientist and figure out the world around me. I began college as an engineering major, but before long I realized that wasn't the right choice for me.

In order to figure things out, I took some time off and headed to Taiwan. While there, I stumbled into a job as a textbook illustrator and suddenly it was clear. I knew what I wanted to do. I returned to school a year later as an illustration major. As an artist I am always observing, trying to find the beautiful and amazing things around me.

Now I live in New York City with my wife. My illustrations have appeared in novels including Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, picture books, magazines, and newspapers. I've also written books including *Roger, the Jolly Pirate*, which is about a lousy pirate who manages to save his ship from attack while baking a cake.



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