

Statement regarding Raymond Briggs (18.1.1934-9.8.2022)

It is with great sadness that his family confirmed today that Raymond Briggs passed away yesterday morning (Tuesday 9 August, 2022).

Raymond Briggs was one of our most respected and beloved author-illustrators, best-known for his 1978 classic, *The Snowman*.

Born in Wimbledon in 1934, Raymond showed interest in cartooning from an early age and studied at the Wimbledon School of Art and later at the Slade School of Fine Art. He briefly pursued painting before becoming a professional illustrator, working in advertising and going on to win acclaim as a book creator as well as teaching illustration at Brighton College of Art.

Raymond illustrated a book of nursery rhymes, *The Mother Goose Treasury*, in 1966 for which he won the Kate Greenaway medal. Since then, he has produced a treasure trove of work, becoming one of the most innovative and popular author-illustrators of our time. His books include *Father Christmas* (1973), *Father Christmas Goes on Holiday* (1975), *Fungus the Bogeyman* (1977), *The Snowman* (1978), *When the Wind Blows* (1982) and *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* (1984). These books, amongst countless others, have been translated into many languages and adapted into films, plays and animations for television.

Raymond's beloved parents Ethel and Ernest adored him, and were a huge inspiration for Raymond throughout his life – informing the stories of *Father Christmas* (with his father's anti-social hours as a milkman are reflected in Father Christmas's work) and *When the Wind Blows* – as well the story of their lives: *Ethel & Ernest* (1998). This graphic novel tells the story of how his father, a milkman, met his mother, a lady's maid, and how they lived together in the same house for forty-one years. An animated feature film based on the novel was released in 2016.

The Snowman was published by Hamish Hamilton in 1978 as a wordless picture book and it has gone on to sell over 5.5m copies in various formats around the world. Producer John Coates created an animated version of *The Snowman* for Channel 4, it was first broadcast on Boxing Day 1982 in Channel 4's inaugural year and has been shown every Christmas since.

Raymond has won many awards and accolades throughout his career, including the Kurt Maschler Award, The Children's Book of the Year, the Dutch Silver Pen Award, and the prestigious Kate Greenaway Award twice for *The Mother Goose Nursery Rhyme Treasury* and *Father Christmas*.

More recently, in February 2017, Raymond was honoured with the BookTrust Lifetime Achievement Award, which celebrates the body of work of an author or illustrator who has made an outstanding contribution to children's literature. He was awarded a CBE for services to literature in the same year. His final book, *Time for Lights Out*, in which Raymond contemplates old age and death, was published by Jonathan Cape in 2019 to critical acclaim.

Raymond is survived by his step-daughter Clare and her husband Fynn; his step-son Tom and his wife Sarah, and his step-grandchildren: Connie, Tilly and Miles.

Statement from Raymond Briggs' family:

We know that Raymond's books were loved by and touched millions of people around the world, who will be sad to hear this news. Drawings from fans - especially children's drawings - inspired by his books were treasured by Raymond, and pinned up on the wall of his studio.

He lived a rich and full life and said he felt lucky to have had both his wife Jean, and his partner of over 40 years Liz in his life.

He shared his love of nature with Liz on South Downs Walks and on family holidays to Scotland and Wales. He also shared his sense of fun and craziness with his family, and with his family of artist friends - at get-togethers, fancy dress parties, and summer picnics in the garden.

He played practical jokes and enjoyed them being played on him. All of us close to him knew his irreverent humour - this could be biting in his work when it came to those in power. He liked the Guardian editorial describing himself as an 'iconoclastic national treasure'.

Raymond was much loved and will be deeply missed by his step-children, and step- grandchildren, by his dearest friends, by his devoted carers and team, and by his wonderful neighbours.

His family would like to thank all of the team on Overton Ward at Royal Sussex County Hospital for their kind and thoughtful care of Raymond in his final weeks.

Francesca Dow, Managing Director of Penguin Random House Children's, said:

I am very proud that Puffin has been the home of Raymond's children's books for so many years. Raymond's books are picture masterpieces that address some of the fundamental questions of what it is to be human, speaking to both adults and children with a remarkable economy of words and illustrations. Raymond is probably best known for *The Snowman*. He needed greater freedom perhaps than the standard 32-page picture book format allowed and created a radical and beautiful innovation: a wordless picture book for children, a storyboard of stills that became an instant classic in its own right, as well as the much loved animation. Raymond's books are about life's big subjects - the loneliness and loss of *The Snowman*; the fallout of nuclear war in *Where the Wind Blows*; the celebration of drudge and slime of *Fungus the Bogeyman*; and the magical mundanity of *Father Christmas*, for whom "another blooming Christmas" with its narrow "blooming chimneys" is a hazard for a wide girth.

Raymond was a brilliantly observant, funny storyteller, honest about how life is rather than how adults might wish to tell it to children. A kindness, integrity, and generosity run through all his books. And so in life: Raymond was a generous, unjealous spirit who was a pleasure to work with, as well as to visit in his Sussex cottage and experience his teasing genius in its home. He was funny! He made us laugh a lot. I will miss him. All of us who had the privilege of working with him will miss him.

Raymond was unique. He has inspired generations of creators of picture books, graphic novels, and animations. He leaves an extraordinary legacy, and a big hole.

Hilary Delamere, Raymond Briggs' literary agent at The Agency (London) Ltd, said:

Raymond liked to act the professional curmudgeon, but we will remember him for his stories of love and of loss. I know from the many letters he received how his books and animations touched people's hearts. He kept his curiosity and sense of wonder right up to the last. He was fascinated by and interested in us all and how we live our lives. His final book 'Time For Lights Out', was a cornucopia of thoughts, poems, sketches and observations; described as 'grimly amusing but never dispiriting', it captures his essence. He will be greatly missed.

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All media enquiries to Jasmine Joynson, Penguin Random House Children's:
jjohnson@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk / 07796 536 764