



An Interview with Author Mary Pope Osborne and Illustrators Kelly and Nichole Matthews

Mary Pope Osborne is the author of the *New York Times* #1 best-selling *Magic Tree House* series and co-author of the *Magic Tree House Fact Tracker* series, along with her husband, Will, and her sister, Natalie Pope Boyce.

Kelly and Nichole Matthews are twin sisters and a comic art team living just north of the Emerald City (Seattle). They've worked for BOOM! Studios, Archaia, the Jim Henson Company, Hiveworks, and now Random House. *The Magic Tree House* series has been adapted for the first time in graphic novel format by Jenny Laird.

MARY POPE OSBORNE

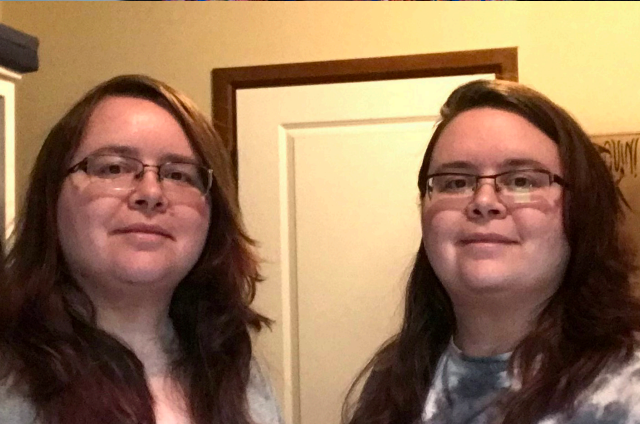
What do you think of the graphic novel format?

I like the graphic novels that Kelly and Nichole Matthews have illustrated. They perfectly capture the spirit of Jack and Annie without taking anything away from the original stories. I feel fortunate to have these particular artists do the work – and very lucky to have my best friend and wonderful writer Jenny Laird adapt my stories into the graphic novel format.

Your *Magic Tree House* stories have been favorites of young readers for years. How/what did you feel when you found out graphic novel adaptations would be created for your stories?

I was hesitant in the beginning to allow my books to be done as graphic novels as I feared it would take away from the experience of a child reading a book. But two things eventually changed my mind: I learned that studies showed that graphic novels could help many children learn to read, and I believed the art of Kelly and Nichole was a great fit for my stories.

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What do you hope young readers will gain from reading graphic novel adaptations of *Magic Tree House* stories?

I hope that through the graphic novels, young readers will discover a love for reading – and also discover the excitement and wonder of following a story with vivid illustrations.

What was the biggest surprise in seeing the graphic novel adaptations?

I gasped several times when I turned a page and saw a full spread of art – such as the overview of Jack and Annie’s neighborhood in *Dinosaurs Before Dark* and entering the banquet hall in *Knight at Dawn*. I love the rich, vibrant colors of their palette.

Have you learned anything about Jack and Annie by creating these adaptations?

By creating these graphic novels, I learned that stories about Jack and Annie could be told faithfully and beautifully in different forms.

Graphic novel adaptations, like *Magic Tree House*, offer pictures and supplemental text to help students connect with classic literature and popular fiction.

Find more here. >>

KELLY AND NICHOLE MATTHEWS

How did you start creating graphic novels/art?

Drawing – especially drawing comics – was something we knew we wanted to do for a living since we were very young (well, that and be a pair of famous veterinarian-zookeeper-librarians, but primarily comic artists). We started drawing when we were young and just never stopped. We were already creating our short comics for ourselves, but getting into the industry was a little bit of luck and skill. Our first big break resulted from a Christmas gift a friend of ours commissioned for their sister (who happened to work for a comic publisher). We believe that we would still have been publishing comics, whether for a publishing house or on our own, but that commission got our feet in the door, and for that, we’ll always be grateful.

What was it like when you found out you would be creating graphic novel adaptations of Mary Pope Osborne’s classic *Magic Tree House* series?

At first, we didn’t think it was real. The *Magic Tree House* was such a staple of our childhoods; to help kids see it in a new format feels like a dream come true. It’s a feeling of “We can’t believe we get to bring this to life just how we pictured it when we read them as children!”

Did you read the *Magic Tree House* series as kids? Did you ever envision a graphic novel adaptation of the stories?

We did! Our favorites were the *Merlin Missions*, especially *Blizzard of the Blue Moon* (because of the unicorn). Never in our wildest dreams did we ever think we’d be drawing books like this. It was a “bucket list” type situation.

What was your biggest challenge in creating the adaptations?

Every project has its ups and downs, and the *Magic Tree House* books were no exception! What ended up being the hardest thing to nail down was Jack and Annie themselves. Younger kids can be challenging to design in a way that looks the right age – it’s very easy to make them look too young or too old. The final designs for them were after several revisions to get just the right look of the kids. Another hurdle is seeing how the book or script will translate into art. Ninety-nine percent of the time, it’s perfect. Jenny does such a fantastic job adapting it to comic form, but sometimes after it’s been drawn, we’ll realize that a panel could be more precise, or some dialogue isn’t quite right. Those challenges don’t come until you see how the finished product looks together (but thankfully are always easy to fix!).

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What do you hope young readers will gain from reading the graphic novel adaptations?

We hope that it will give them a new way to appreciate the wonderful stories Mary has written that they've come to know and love. If the graphic novels are their first experience with the series, we hope it will interest them enough to check out the original books.

What other graphic novel adaptations from novels would you like to see/create?

We would love to draw an adaption of *Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones or *Dealing with Dragons* by Patricia Wrede.

This interview courtesy of



MARY POPE OSBORNE'S

MAGIC TREE HOUSE

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL



Dinosaurs Before Dark (Magic Tree House Graphic Novel, Book 1)

Jenny Laird

Random House • 2021 • IL K-3

The tale of eight-year-old Jack and his younger sister Annie, who find a magic treehouse that whisks them back to an ancient time zone where they see live dinosaurs.

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The Knight at Dawn (Magic Tree House Graphic Novel, Book 2)

Jenny Laird

Random House • 2021 • IL K-3

A castle. A knight. A quest! When the magic tree house whisks Jack and Annie back to the Middle Ages, they're looking for a knight. Instead, they find the Great Hall of a castle, where a feast is under way. But Jack and Annie aren't exactly welcome guests!

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