

WALKER BOOKS AUSTRALIA

Q&A with Patrick Ness for *Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody*



Tell us in a nutshell about this new book (and series!).

***Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* is about Zeke, a peach-throated monitor lizard, and his friends Daniel and Alicia, both clouded monitor lizards, who become hall monitors in elementary school. Their nemesis is a pelican called Pelicarnassus who builds a giant robot pelican suit to fight them. It's funny, it's bonkers, and it's a little bit heart-breaking.**

This is the first time you've turned your storytelling hand to middle-grade – what inspired you to tell this story for this age group?

**It's always the idea. There was never any plan to write "a middle grade", but I had this very silly idea about monitor lizards being hall monitors. To my delight, it grew flesh and bone that was just loveable and bittersweet and very funny and deeply serious sometimes. Just everything I like about any story.**

How has writing this novel compared to your others?

**Other than that it was nice to write jokes for something other than social media for once? Nothing else was different. The same care, the same investment in the story and characters, the same emotions. They're all stories to, and they're all precious.**

The characters are so wonderfully anthropomorphic, how was that creation process for you? And did the characters come first in the process, or the animal?

**It was funny to make characters that subverted (or not) the characteristics we associate with certain animals. But the main thing was to make them individuals. Are monitor lizards like my three main characters? Well, these three are. And I would need a character and try to feel my way as to what would feel the most right. Some days that was a seal, some days a wildebeest.**

Do you have a favourite character in the book?

**I love them all, but I've got a special place for Daniel, who's just one of nature's enthusiastic souls without being a nightmare about you. I love him and want to protect him.**

There is so much to love in the story – what do you hope for your middle-grade readers to take away with them when reading this book?

**I never like to write lessons. All I ever hope is that they can see themselves in a story or get a better understanding of why people act the way they do. Ending loneliness is the most powerful thing a book can do.**

If you could go back in time to your middle-grade self, what advice would you give him?

**Hang in there. I have pictures of myself as an 8- or 10- year old, and I have so much compassion for him. He was so worried and never got the reassurance he needed. But he not only survived, he thrived, so I'd love to tell him that.**

We are so excited for more in the series! Can you give us a bit of a teaser of what's coming next?

**Only that in book two, Daniel decides to wear a hat, which is something only birds really do. This is not without repercussions....**