

Interview with Sophie Williams

Would you like to introduce yourself?

Hello! My name is Sophie and I am a freelance illustrator living and working in the UK. I studied illustration at Winchester School of Art and after graduating in 2018, I met Ziggy from Cicada Books over email when she reached out to me about illustrating a book about volcanoes – and that was the beginning of *Earth Shattering Events*! Since then, me and Ziggy have published three books together and are now working on our fourth! It's a dream come true for me to get to illustrate children's books, and I even became an author in 2021 with my activity book, *Map of You*.

How would you describe your style in three words?

Bright, informative, fun.

What subject areas do you specialise in with your illustrations?

My work lends itself to children's non-fiction books, as my illustrations have an almost cartoon-like quality, which I think helps to simplify science-heavy facts and complex information. My illustrations in *Earth Shattering Events* honed my specialty in drawing geographical features and geological formations. *Stones and Bones*, my recent illustrated book on the fossil record, has also given me a wealth of experience in drawing dinosaurs, fossils, and all things prehistoric! I particularly enjoy crafting expansive, full-page illustrations teeming with intricate details that invite viewers on a journey of discovery.

What are the most important information you need before you can start drawing?

With non-fiction illustration, it's important to make sure the drawings I'm doing are accurate representations of the information I'm trying to convey. For this reason, I make sure to do my research to ensure the visual references I'm using are factually correct before I start sketching.

What did you enjoy most about working on *Earth Shattering Events*?

I really enjoyed learning all about the different extreme weather in *Earth Shattering Events*, and challenging myself to draw things I had never drawn before! The volcanoes were my favourite to draw – maybe because they were the first illustrations I did, and where I really found my feet with how to create the drawings and feel confident that my style was going to work.

What can you take away from the book for yourself?

Through creating this book I've learnt so much, in every chapter there is a section that shows you what to do if you ever find yourself amidst a natural disaster – which you never know when could come in handy!

What was the biggest challenge in your work on the book?

I think it was the sheer volume of illustrations that I had to create. This was also my first freelance job after graduating and my first ever children's book. *Earth Shattering Events* isn't like your standard illustrated book – it's like an atlas! I didn't count how many drawings I did in total, but it's definitely in the hundreds! We had a tight deadline and it definitely pushed me, but it also showed me how much I can achieve.

Why did you decide to illustrate children's books?

I fell in love with illustration when I took it as an A-level in college, and it reminded me of how much I was obsessed with books and drawings when I was a child. We are so influenced by the books we love as children, and I think it's the most incredible thing in the world to have the opportunity to illustrate children's books myself.