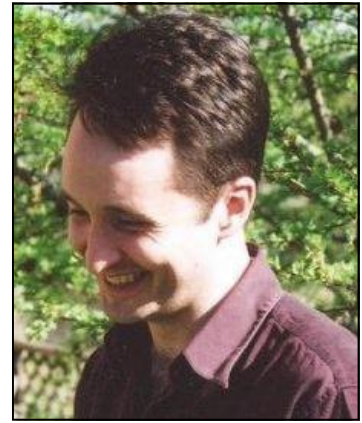


# Author Spotlight with David Hyde Costello



**Many authors say that to be a good writer, one must be a good reader, too. What was your favorite book growing up? How have the books you read as a kid influenced your writing (and reading!) today?**



I loved the Frog and Toad books by Arnold Lobel, especially *Frog and Toad All Year*, and especially the last story in that book, “Christmas Eve.” In fact, I still think of it as a perfect model for a story. I am particularly taken with the way it goes from being funny to being moving, the way its impact is built on what we know about the characters from the preceding stories, and that it is ultimately about the loyalty and devotion between two friends.

Now that I think about it, I suppose you can see that aesthetic in *Little Pig Joins the Band*, in that it uses a lot of humor to tell a story about something emotionally important.

**Children’s books are made up of many parts: plot, characters, and illustrations, to name a few. Why did you decide to become a children’s author, and what is your favorite thing about writing books for kids? What part of creating a story is the most fun for you?**

I’m not sure that I did decide. I always drew pictures of characters and made up stories about them, and it never occurred to me to stop doing that. When I graduated from college I thought, “Well, I guess it’s time to start submitting my story ideas to publishing companies.”

My favorite part of the process is the very first stage—when an idea is new and full of potential.

**What made you choose to write about a marching band in *Little Pig Joins the Band*?**

Gosh, it was so long ago that I came up with the idea I don’t remember why I thought of a marching band. That gives you some sense of how long it takes to make a book. But I think the whole story started with the drawing of Little Pig trying to lift the trumpet. Often that’s how it is: I spontaneously sketch some character in a situation, and around that the story develops.





**In *Little Pig Joins the Band*, Jacob makes a big difference even though he's smaller than his brothers and sisters. What inspired you to write this story?**

At the time I had three nephews (I have four now). The youngest one, Sagan, was having a lot of the feelings that often come with being the youngest—feeling left behind, frustrated that you can't keep up.

I was the youngest in my family, too, so I could easily relate. The message of *Little Pig*—meant for Sagan and anyone else in that position—is basically: it is hard being the littlest, but we see you, we are listening, and we appreciate who you are.



**Did you have a favorite *Little Pig* illustration, or one that was especially fun to draw?**

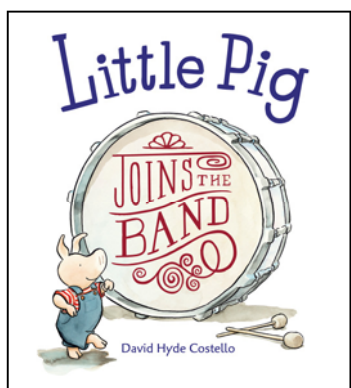
I did enjoy coming up with the jokes that you see in the illustrations, but I think my favorite illustration in the book is Little Pig sitting all alone on the page that says “Little Pig was just too little to join the band.” I guess that’s an example of something going from funny to poignant in one page, like in Arnold Lobel’s “Christmas Eve.”



**What has been your most memorable experience as an author so far?**

I don't know that there is one single, most memorable moment, but here is one good one. I visited a first grade classroom where the students and I made up a story together about a monster. Later the teacher sent me a copy of another story about the same monster that one of her students had made after I left. I sent that boy an encouraging letter. Some months later he came to another reading of mine to show me the frame he and his parents had chosen to display the letter I sent him. A lot of the time as an author and illustrator, one is working alone in the studio, so it's very gratifying to receive those signs of appreciation.

## By David Hyde Costello



Little Pig has trouble keeping up with his older—and bigger—brothers and sisters. When they get out Grandpa's old marching-band instruments, Little Pig is too little to play any of them. But when the disorganized band has a pig-pile mishap, Little Pig has a BIG idea: They could use a leader.

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