

A question-and-answer discussion guide to help educators use
Now You See Them, Now You Don't
as a classroom read aloud or as a selection for independent reading.
Great for book clubs, too!

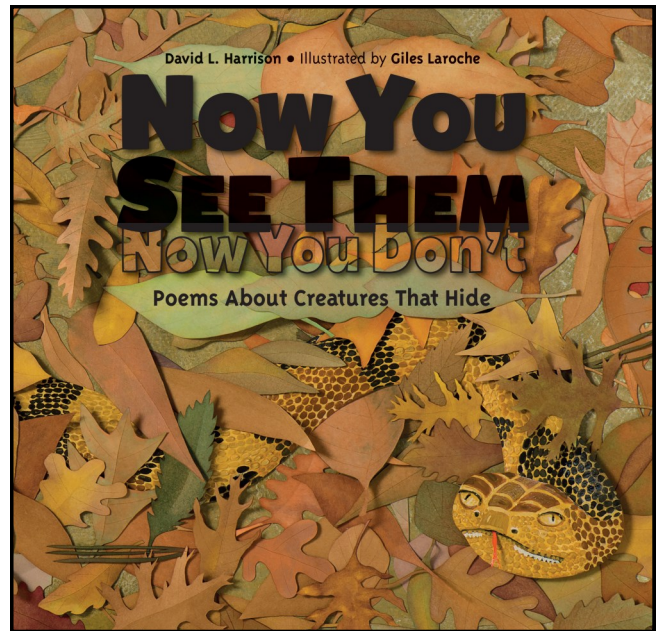
Developed by David L. Harrison with Ms. Hutchens at Timnath Elementary

About the Book

Animals and insects use camouflage to hide from hunters or to ambush prey. In this fun and informative collection of poems, meet the polar bear and the octopus, the ghost crab and the copperhead snake, and many more that hunt or hide with stealth.

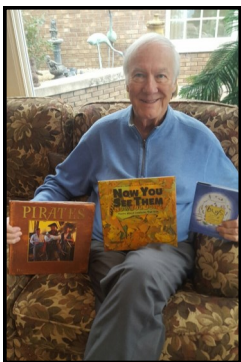
Giles Laroche's intricate cut-paper illustrations are so life-like readers will have to look carefully or run the risk of a hunter sneaking up on them.

Back matter offers additional information about each of the nineteen animals.



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E-book editions available

About the Author



David L. Harrison is an award winning children's author and poet. His poetry, fiction, and nonfiction for young readers have been anthologized in more than 185 books, translated into twelve languages, sandblasted into a library sidewalk, painted on a bookmobile, and presented on television, radio, podcast, and video stream.

Ten of his ninety books are professional works for teachers. He is poet laureate of Drury University. David Harrison Elementary School in Springfield, Missouri is named after him. He has given keynote talks, college commencement addresses, and been featured at hundreds of conferences, workshops, literature festivals, and schools across America.

David holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Drury University, a Master of Science degree from Emory University, and two Honorary Doctor of Letters degrees. His poetry collection, *Pirates (WordSong)*, represented Missouri at the 2013 National Book Fair in Washington, D.C.

David lives in Springfield, Missouri.

Introduction

After Ms. Hutchens' fourth and fifth grade students in Colorado read *Now You See Them, Now You Don't* by David L. Harrison, the students brainstormed questions for the author.

Here are David's answers! What questions would you ask him? If you've got questions, you can find David online at www.davidlharrison.com and you can send your questions to david@davidlharrison.com.

Questions from the 4th Graders

WHEN DID YOU START WRITING POETRY?

I made up my first poems when I was six years old. I decided to become a writer the same year I got married fifty-seven years ago. Well yes, I agree, fifty-seven years *is* a long time!

ARE YOU GOING TO WRITE ANOTHER BOOK?

Yes! I work every weekday on one book or another. I'm working on several new ones now. Six of them are already accepted to be published sometime during the next few years.

HOW DID YOU MAKE SUCH AN AMAZING TITLE?

Choosing the right title is an important job. My editor, the artist, and I all made suggestions. The final decision is the editor's so she chose *Now You See Them, Now You Don't*, but I don't remember who thought of it. Maybe I did!

WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS?

I wish I could illustrate my own books but I'm not that good an artist. I write the words and my editor finds an artist to paint the pictures. For this book the wonderful art was done by Giles Laroche who lives and works in his house in Salem, Massachusetts, and in a 230-year-old barn in southwestern New Hampshire. Wasn't I lucky?

HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS STUFF?

I don't! Some of it I know. When I went to college I studied science. But almost always before I start writing I must first get ready to write. Call it research. I read books and articles about my subject. I make notes to look at later. And many, many times I get fresh new ideas for my own work when I read what experts are saying. You need to do the same thing. We all do!

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO PUBLISH YOUR BOOK?

From the day I sent my idea to editor Karen Boss to the day I held my first copy of the new book took two years, nine months, and seven days. Does that seem like a long time to you? It was really pretty fast in the world of book publishing. Sometimes it takes twice that long!

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A WRITER?

I write because it's my favorite kind of work. I love my work! But to be a writer also means that I must have good self discipline. No one makes me get up each morning at 6:00 a.m. to get started. I'm my own boss so I alone must decide what is important to me and then see to it that I do it! Being a writer means that I get to go places in my mind that I'll never really see. It means that I can work all day in my pajamas! It means that I am using my own imagination, my own words, my own effort to make up a poem or a new story or create a new nonfiction book. It means that I get to talk to important people, like I'm doing this morning as I read your letters!

HOW MANY BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?

I've had ninety-two books published and six more are on their way. Think I'll make it to one hundred? Some of my books, or parts of them, have been included in more than 185 anthologies published by other people, here and in many other countries around the world.

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

I work in my office, which is eighteen steps from my bed, down the hall, first door on my right. Hard to beat that!

DO YOU ONLY WRITE POETRY?

I love poetry but I also write fiction, nonfiction, and books for teachers.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL?

I liked school, especially math and science. When I was your age, I collected all sorts of things from nature, everything from insects and bird wings to sea shells and snake skins. Today I often write about nature so you can see that writers tend to write about what they know and like.

ARE YOU COMING OUT WITH ANY NEW BOOKS SOON?

I've had two new books in 2016. In 2017 I don't think anything is scheduled but there should be a cluster of them in 2018 and 2019. I don't get to decide on when my books will come out. That's for the publisher to choose.

HAVE YOU EVER WRITTEN A CHAPTER BOOK?

No, but I've thought about writing one for ages. I did recently finish a story for middle grades that isn't published yet, and I have three more stories in mind that I hope to write over the next few years.

WHY DOES THE FLOUNDER HAVE TWO EYES ON ONE SIDE?

So it can see its food swimming nearby. Nature has given the flounder this advantage. It's hatched with two eyes where they should be but as it matures one of the eyes slowly moves to the other side. That way the fish can lie hidden on the sea floor and keep an eye out (well, keep two eyes out) for something yummy to swim by.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEEN REJECTED?

Hundreds! I was turned down 67 times in a row before I sold my first story in 1962. I still get rejected all the time but not as much as I once did when I was learning how to write. A writer never knows what an editor might need so sometimes I get lucky and sometimes I don't. You just have to know that being rejected is part of the business of being a writer. No use crying about it or having a pity party. You try again with a different editor. This week I sold a book to an editor who turned down the idea a year ago because her situation has changed and now she can use it.

DID YOU TRAVEL TO AFRICA?

No, sadly. I always wanted to go there but so far it hasn't happened. But I'm young. There's still plenty of time!

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

I started writing stories for adults in 1959. I was twenty-two years old then. Ten years later, when I was thirty-two, I wrote my first book for kids. It's called *The Boy With a Drum*. You can still find used ones on Amazon.com. It sold more than two million copies. Because of it I decided that I should try more books for boys and girls. Other than marrying my wife, it was the smartest thing I ever did.

HOW MANY BOOKS CAN YOU WRITE IN A YEAR?

I try to work twelve hours each day five days a week, so I write a lot! A new book takes me anywhere from a month to two years, depending on what it is, how long it is, and how much research I need to do before I begin to write.

HOW DID YOU COME TO LIKE POETRY SO MUCH?

Poetry is fun to write. It's a game you play with words, trying to find just the word you need and putting into the line where it belongs. I like to write all kinds of poems from silly to serious and from short to long. It's fun to read poems aloud too.

WHEN DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO STOP?

You sound just like my wife! My standard answer is that I'll write as long as I can lift a pencil and remember what it's for.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK YOU'VE WRITTEN SO FAR?

That's a tough one. It's usually the most recent book so I'll pick *Now You See Them, Now You Don't*.

HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW?

I'm seventy-nine. Oh my gosh! Did I say that? Please don't tell my wife. She thinks I'm twenty-six!

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE FAMOUS?

It feels wonderful to be famous! At least that's what I hear. I wouldn't know. Some of my books are fairly famous though, and that's close enough for me.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE WORLD?

Most of the states, Canada, Mexico, Virgin Islands, Europe, Malaysia, South America . . . One time I went to talk to kids in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I got there by flying east across the Atlantic Ocean and returned home later by coming across the Pacific Ocean and back across America. I went all the way around the world to visit with kids in school. So now you can see who is important. You are!

Questions from the 5th Graders



WERE YOU ALIVE IN 1963?

Yes, I was alive in 1963. That year I blew out twenty-six candles on my cake. My daughter Robin would have been a messy three-year-old helping me, and her bratty brother Jeff hadn't been thought of yet. My first job was in a biology lab in Evansville, Indiana where I spent days working with mice, rats, and such. Yes, I got bitten a few times. Yes, it hurt. No, I didn't care for that.

WHY DID YOU SWITCH CAREERS?

The reason I left science was to find a job that would give me more opportunities to work on my writing. I wasn't a very good writer yet but I wanted to be. I guess it worked out. *Now You See Them, Now You Don't* is my ninety-second published book and I have six more that I'm working on.

HOW DO YOU WRITE YOUR BOOKS?

I've talked to a lot of grownups in my life who didn't ask questions as thoughtful as yours. The secret to my writing? Here it comes. I get ready to write before I write my first word.

I'll use the book you read as an example.

One day in April, 2013, I sent a note to an editor at Charlesbridge Publishing that said, "I want to write a collection of poems about animals that use natural camouflage and have written the first three to show what I mean. I've listed a couple of dozen animals representing eight classes. I've attached the poems." The three poems I sent were octopus, polar bear, and walking stick. And notice that I also included a list of other possible animals to include and they came from different groups: mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and so on.

The editor liked the idea and about three years later it became a book. But long before I mailed that letter, I had been reading about animals that use camouflage. I read a lot of books, looked at pictures, made lists, and thought about how I wanted to do the writing. I decided that these poems would have a lot of science in them and that I would also add a short note about each one in the back of the book. I began making lists of what I wanted to know and keeping folders of notes about each animal that I added.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT?

One thing I love about the time before writing begins is that I always discover such fascinating information. I'll be looking for one thing and find something else entirely that I never dreamed existed. That really gets me excited! And it helps me make my writing more interesting for you. I also learn the right words to describe my subjects. What sounds they make. What their babies are called. The better you prepare, the more you learn. The more you learn, the better you write. It just makes sense, doesn't it? Not only that, I get to learn about animals I've never seen, places I've never been, and thoughts I've never thought before.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN TO WRITE A STORY (OR A POEM)?

That usually isn't a problem because I start out to do one or the other. But there have been times when I thought I wanted to write one and changed my mind about it after I did my homework. Another time I set out to write a nonfiction book about mountains. While getting ready for it I kept reading about the important role that glaciers play in shaping and tearing down mountains. When I finished the first book, I decided to write one about glaciers. While getting ready for that one, I kept reading about how some of those big glaciers had been a problem when the first people to arrive here 15,000 years ago couldn't get around them to move farther south where it was warmer. So when I finished the glacier book I wrote one about the first people.

HAVE YOU EVER STRUGGLED WITH WRITING A BOOK?

Sure. Writing rarely goes as smoothly, quickly, or easily as you might expect. It's hard work getting writing right. *Now You See Them, Now You Don't* took three years. *Mammoth Bones and Broken Stones* took five years. *The Mouse Was Out at Recess* took nine years. But this is an important part of the reason why I love writing. If it were too easy, there would be less pride in getting it to work! I get up every morning at 6:00 a.m. and try to write for twelve hours that day. No one makes me do this. I do it because I love it that much.

