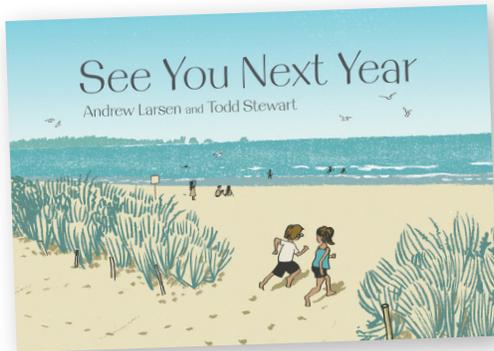


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See You Next Year: A Conversation Between Author Andrew Larsen and Illustrator Todd Stewart



See You Next Year

By Andrew Larsen
Illustrated by Todd Stewart

ISBN 978-1-926973-99-9
HC \$17.95 CDN / \$16.95 US

Grades

K to 2

Reading levels

Fountas & Pinnell: L
Reading Recovery: I9
Lexile® Measure: AD 410L

Curriculum links

Language Arts:

Reading Comprehension, Communication

“Both childlike and sophisticated... affectionately captures the nostalgic air of vacations past.”

★ — Kirkus (Starred Review)

About the book

See You Next Year is a nostalgic story that captures the timelessness of a child’s summer holiday. Every year, a girl’s family drives the same roads, through the same towns, to the same beachside motel. Year after year, everything is comfortingly predictable. This year, however, she meets a friend who shows her there are ways to experience new things in a familiar place.



Andrew Larsen



Todd Stewart

Beyond the book

When a picture book is written and illustrated by two different people, sometimes they don’t meet in person before their book is published. Editorial and design staff at Owlkids Books work together to find an artist whose style complements the text of a picture book. Often, the author and illustrator live in different cities.

In the winter of 2015, author Andrew Larsen, who lives in Toronto, and illustrator Todd Stewart, who lives in Montreal, wrote back and forth in anticipation of their book’s release. They reflected on the process of creating the book, how they work, where they find ideas, and their own childhood summer memories.

Here is their conversation.



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Rough sketches in Todd's notebook show the town and environment of *See You Next Year* taking shape.



The beach where Andrew's family vacations. Do you recognize the tractor patterns in the sand? The same ones appear in *See You Next Year*.

ANDREW: Do you remember when we first came to know about each other? I had just found out that you were going to be illustrating *See You Next Year*. I'd looked at your online portfolio and dreamed about how the story might look in your hands. I was at the Nathan Phillips Square Art Show in Toronto with my daughter, where she was captivated by a print of New York City. The print seemed oddly familiar to me, but I couldn't place it. Then it hit me like a wave! Of all the artists at that show, my daughter had discovered a print by the artist who was about to illustrate my story. Now, the print of New York City hangs in my daughter's room and you and I have created a book together. Talk about serendipity!

I have to say, the book looks even better than I imagined. You've created a setting for the story that looks familiar in a dreamy sort of way. I've heard the same thing from so many different people. They say, "I know that place! It's near the place I go every summer." Looking at the book, it feels like we've all been there before. It's like we've all traveled the same roads that lead to the same spot. We're able to draw from our own memories of our own special places and make our own personal connections with your illustrations.

TODD: I felt there was a real timeless quality to your story, Andrew. It reminded me of some of the adventures I had as a child, returning to the same places I had been on summer vacation; I felt the story could have taken place at any time in the last 50 to 60 years. I had originally thought about drawing the story as if it were in the 1950s or 1960s, with more of a vintage feel: the cars, the clothes... but the more I thought about it, the more I became attracted to the idea of setting the story in a simple lakeside beach town in the present day — a town that had flourished as a summer destination in previous generations and was still going, perhaps not as strongly as in the past. Ultimately, though, I feel the look of the book is as timeless as the story. The reader can choose to see the story as contemporary or as something that took place a long time ago. It's open to interpretation.

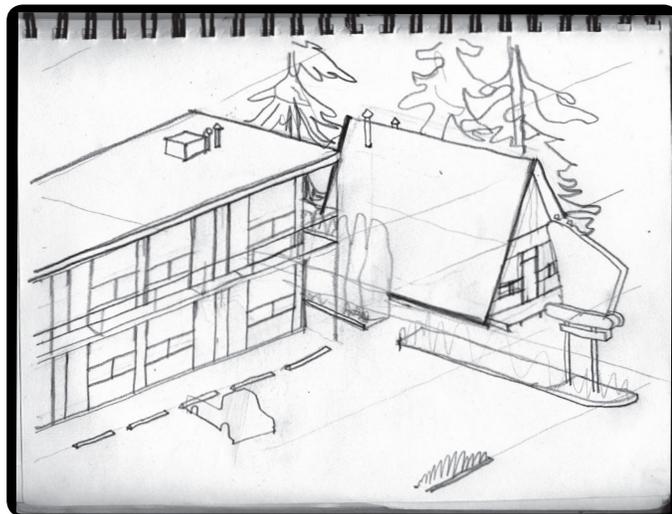
Were you inspired by a particular time or place when you were writing the story, Andrew?

ANDREW: My words were inspired by the place I was staying at when I wrote them, in the summer of 2011. My wife, daughter, son, and I have been going to the same holiday spot for over ten years now. It's along the shore of Lake Ontario, just east

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The sign outside of Todd's parents' cottage



One of Todd's early sketches of the motel

of Toronto. The place shall remain nameless, but it has a very special spot in my heart. I look forward to going back again this year and sharing the book with our summertime friends!

While the story was inspired by my immediate surroundings, I drew upon my own memories of childhood vacations to flesh out its emotional core. My family used to go to a seaside town in New Hampshire every summer, and every year we expected everything to be the same as it had been the previous summer. It was comforting. Even as children, we had a sense of nostalgia for our own memories.

Early in the book there's an illustration of the two-story motel where the story takes place. There's a lovely old sign that reads "Tall Pines Motel." Is there such a place in your life, Todd?

TODD: Tall Pines is the name my parents gave to their cottage in Western Quebec. I figured they would like the inside reference. It works well as a name for an old motel! And to me, the white pine is a symbol of vacation getaways, camping in Canada, getting away from the city... White pines feature prominently in the illustrations throughout the book.

ANDREW: When Owlkids Books approached you to illustrate the story, how did you start? How did you know what you wanted to do with the story?

TODD: Before jumping into the individual illustrations, I mapped out the town in a rough way. I wanted to make sure it became



Todd's early sketches of white pine trees



Small lakeside towns inspired Todd's art in the book.

a character of its own: the small two-lane road separating the beach from the town on the other side, the sand from the dunes merging with the road, no fences between the properties, one power line running the length of the road...



Andrew's kids hard at work digging a hole

My in-laws live in Southampton, Ontario, and I took a drive up and down Lake Huron last summer for inspiration. Port Elgin, Sauble Beach — these are places that have influenced the look and feel of the book. I think that everywhere around the Great Lakes, away from the big cities, you'll find these little beach towns that have existed since the 1940s, which people go back to every summer. I definitely wanted to create a nostalgic feel to the illustrations, but I thought that situating it in the present added another level to the narrative.

ANDREW: In the story, the narrator and her friend dig a hole. My kids have spent vast amounts of time, over the years, digging holes on beaches. They still dig holes whenever possible. They're a little like dogs in that way. They dig holes for no discernable reason but, once dug, the holes assume a great deal of importance. Lasting friendships have grown out of these holes.

So, I have to ask: Did the passage about digging holes on the beach bring back any childhood memories? Did you dig holes as a kid?

TODD: I actually don't think digging was very big on my list of childhood activities. There was always a lot of clay where I lived, which made deep digging rather frustrating. I think I was more into building and inventing elaborate worlds. I remember often staring into the coals of the fire pit in our backyard and imagining myself, much smaller, wearing a fireproof suit and wandering around the tunnels and chambers of this hot world. It's funny: I now live on the third floor of my building and have no yard to dig in... Maybe that makes sense. I do remember digging holes at the beach with the sole purpose of being buried in the sand. The warm and cold comfort of the weight of the sand stays with me to this day.

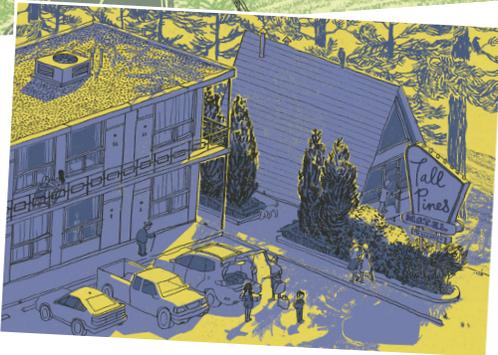
ANDREW: Sometimes I dig holes out in my little garden. I like to plant things in the holes I dig. I love to work in the garden. When I write, I work at a computer in our living room. Our living room is bright. It's not a hole at all. It has lots of windows and there is always something going on outside, which is perfect for a writer who loves to procrastinate.

See You Next Year is the only story I've written while away from home. I wrote the first draft when I was on vacation with my



Children rule the beach at Andrew's family's vacation spot.

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Illustrations in the book were inspired by the silkscreening process.



Andrew on the beach at his family's vacation spot.

family. I wasn't planning on writing, but the story presented itself and I felt compelled to write it. Where do you work, Todd? Do you have a studio? Do you carry a notebook for your ideas?

TODD: I run a small silkscreen print studio and spend half of my time printing there — it's wonderful to have this space that separates me from my home office (where I keep my computer). My illustrations for *See You Next Year* were originally meant to be silkscreened, and I constructed them as if they could be printed.

ANDREW: I have to admit, I know very little about silkscreening.

TODD: Silkscreening is a printmaking process, a way to print multiple images by pushing ink through a screen stretched on a frame. The screen contains a stencil of an image. Generally speaking, each color in an image is printed separately, so an image with four different colors will have four separate screens. When I was thinking about the illustrations for the book, I tried to stick to a limited number of colors. After many years of silkscreen work, I have come to realize I now see the world in this way — in layers of color.

I do carry notebooks of various sizes, although I feel I come up with my best ideas when I'm nowhere near them and I'm not thinking about working on something. I need a notebook for my notebooks!

ANDREW: Sometimes, I guess, we do our best work or get our best ideas when we are neither working nor thinking. When I was writing *See You Next Year*, I would sneak off and write on the sly. It was all very secretive, as I was meant to be in holiday mode rather than writerly mode. I'd return to the beach, creatively satisfied, and wait patiently for the next wave of inspiration to wash over me.

TODD: When I was first introduced to the manuscript for *See You Next Year*, I was struck with how the words seemed to flow, as opposed to being constructed brick-by-brick around a "Big Idea." It makes sense to me that the words came to you when you weren't necessarily in work mode.

ANDREW: It's ironic, isn't it? As a writer, my best work is often done when I'm supposed to be doing other things. That reminds me, it's time to go and get my son from school. Maybe I'll be inspired on the walk...

END.

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