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Rudy is a new venture for you. What prompted you to want to write about Rudy the werewolf?

I love Halloween! I also have a son who's the perfect age to read about Rudy and I wanted to write books that would get him hooked on reading, which he was struggling with. It worked and hope Rudy gives other young readers the reading bug!

You have two titles publishing concurrently, how easy was it to write both, I assume consecutively?

It was very easy because each Rudy book is a separate adventure that stands alone. You can read them in order if you want, and there's a couple of nods to previous books to reward you, but it's not essential. I'm working on more books now...

I spent some time pouring over the map of Cobble Cross before even starting to read and the names of the places are just brilliant! Was it easy to plan the setting?

Thank you! Naming the places and planning the town of Cobble Cross was one of the best parts of writing these books! Book two is set in Rudy's school, but if you read it closely, you'll see that the name don't actually appear anywhere in the story. Since coming up with names is so much fun, I came up with a name for it anyway. Who knows, it might appear in another book!

Having enjoyed the map I then of course started the story and your word play, use of language is inspiring. Does it come naturally to you or is it something you work hard to perfect?

That's a lovely thing to say! Initially I spent a long time working on the writing style to give the series its tone of voice own and personality, so all the books feel like Rudy

Books. Now that's established, when I sit down to write a new one the language and word play come very easily and feel natural.

As an adult I loved Rudy's adventures, I found myself reading them purely for pleasure and knowing there was an underlying message. My young readers adored the stories and understood they were about looking after others. Is this what you hoped would come from the stories and how do you create that?

That's fantastic, I'm delighted to hear that! Yes, I absolutely wanted to bring messages out through the stories. I think books are better and mean more to people when they have a deeper message or are about more than just the story. All the best books do that stay with us do that, so I think it's important to do that in children's books so they get the most out of reading.

I think the trick to getting that reaction is not to make the message too obvious and work up to it gradually, so the meaning of your message is wrapped up within the conclusion of the story.

The books are fully illustrated and use a simple (I think 3 colour) palette. Alongside the story itself do you think this helps to inspire a love of reading in children?

I do because these are first chapter books, so they act as a bridge for young readers between picture books and basic phonics and learning to read books they're given in school. Jumping straight to books full of entire pages of text can be very daunting for young readers so the illustrations help them get over that barrier and into reading. The fact George has done a fabulous job also really helps!

You've taken some familiar (if sometimes scary) story elements, the werewolf the mummy and the trolls from 'Wolf Cub' how do you think it's possible to incorporate them into these stories for younger readers

without causing fears or anxieties? If anything the story lessens anxiety and I wonder if you can explain how you think you manage this?

Scaring readers doesn't really come from making characters look scary, it mostly comes from their intentions and the fear of what they're about to do. In the Rudy books, none of the seemingly scary characters are actually dangerous. So even though Rudy's teacher is a vampire, he's not actually going to do anything nasty other than send you out if you're naughty. This greatly reduces the scare factor. That's not to say there's no jeopardy in these books, but Rudy and his friends are never in any real danger or threatened, so there's nothing to be scared of.

From the stories I and my readers not only took the fun but also the seriousness of the importance of friendships of listening of solving problems. How important a role do you think reading plays in learning these skills?

I think it's very important for learning about these skills and many others. If you can read about someone who's gone through a particular issue or solved a particular problem, whether it's in fiction, a personal biography, or even a children's book like Rudy, you can learn from it. Most books can teach us something, even if they're not billed as cautionary tales.

As we know the first two books are out and ready for children to read. How many books do you have planned for Rudy and his friends?

So far we have four more books in the works that will take Rudy and his friends to all sorts of new and wonderful places. If people like them, I'll happily write some more. I really hope they do because I love writing them. It's the best job in the world!

Will any of the future books feature the other characters in a main or starring role?

Rudy will stay as the main character for the time being – he still has a lot to learn! But I'd love to take one or even a few of the other characters away on adventures of

their own. We could delve into their past, take them on a family holiday, or even an expedition into the world beyond Cobble Cross. They're all fun characters, so whatever they do, it'll be great fun!

I am always intrigued to know how the author-illustrator relationship works, did you work closely with George Ermos on the illustrations?

I think authors and illustrators work as closely together as they need to. George and I don't actually work very closely because he's so good at what he does – and while I'd happily to speak to him every day, there's no need to.

Are you working on any other book projects at the moment or do you have any future plans for new series and new characters? I assume that authors are constantly working on possible ideas?

In addition to more Rudy books, I am working on several new ideas – I can't help myself! My agent also has a couple of manuscripts that's she's sending to publishers, so who knows... I love writing, whether it's Rudy or something new, so I couldn't be happier.

And one last one – do you enjoy skateboarding? (Readers will understand this when they too have read the books!)

I skateboarded a long time ago, but I wasn't very good – I still have a couple of scars to remind me of those days! I used to skate with one of my best friends. We didn't have a local skate park, like Rudy and his friends, so we went out very late at night and skated when the roads were quite. But I wouldn't recommend that. If you want to skate, find somewhere like the Skateway!

Paul Westmoreland is the author of the *Rudy* series for children aged 6-8,
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