



A NORMAL PIG

Letter from author K-Fai Steele

What is normal? Who gets to decide what the word “normal” means?

Pip is a spotted pig who grows up in an all-pink pig town. Pip is by her standards pretty normal; she likes to draw, play with friends, read, and make art. Everything changes when she’s told that she is, in fact, not normal at all.

A Normal Pig is about the moment in a kid’s life when they become aware that they’re different from other kids. In Pip’s case, it’s done by both kids and adults in her school who don’t realize that by pointing out her differences they’re making her question who she is and whether she belongs. *A Normal Pig* is about the triumph of realizing that there’s no such thing as “normal.”

I made *A Normal Pig* while examining my own experience being “othered” as a kid, and I hope that people use the book as an opportunity to talk about any kind of difference or feelings that kids experience when they realize that they’re not part of “the norm” or the dominant paradigm. One of the most emotional parts of the story for me to draw was when Pip comes home from school and makes a “normal” drawing of a house. It’s funny and sad, and it shows what she’s willing to sacrifice in order to fit in with her classmates.

Although the book was inspired by my experience growing up as a nonwhite kid with an “unusual” name in a mostly white, rural town, the messages in *A Normal Pig* can apply to many adults and children beyond the theme of race. It’s about embracing who you are, how you respond when the world wants to put you into categories, and how to push back.

It’s also my intent for *A Normal Pig* to make readers laugh. A lot of how I process the world (besides through writing and drawing) is by observing the humor in the ways that people and kids interact when they don’t realize they’re being watched. I wrote and drew Pip to be charming, with her round belly, stick legs, and big eyes, her fierceness and her self-doubt. Pip is based on so many wonderful kids I know now as an adult and in my memories as a little sister to two big brothers (to whom the book is dedicated).

A Normal Pig began as a very personal endeavor for me. It turned into a book that grew through conversations with friends and other people's stories that I read and listened to. Making books allows you to start from a very private, intimate moment you don't think you can share with anyone, to an opportunity for conversations with many, many people. I hope kids, families, educators, and caring adults will use *A Normal Pig* to have a conversation about how and why we sometimes feel the need to put people (including ourselves) into boxes according to made-up metrics, and why it's so important to embrace people on their own terms.