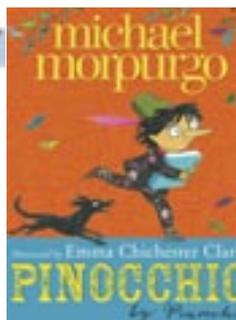




A new edition of Carlo Collodi's book by Michael Morpurgo and Emma Chichester Clark brings *Carousel* a privileged interview with

# Pinocchio



**M**y name is Pinocchio. You will have heard of me, I'm sure. I am without doubt the most celebrated puppet the world has ever known. There is at present a young pretender to this supremacy, a horse for goodness' sake. He calls himself Joey. He may be seen on stages all over the world at the moment but he's just an actor. He needs three puppeteers to

work him. But the great Pinocchio, he needs no one. He is unique, he is the only puppet who can work himself, he is me.

There was a writer called Collodi – he came from Florence – who once took it upon himself to write my life story. Don't get me wrong, without this Collodi no one would have heard of Pinocchio. I am very grateful to him for this. But if I am honest – and I like to be these days, otherwise my nose extension problem always recurs – there is much about me that Signor Collodi got wrong. And he did try to use my life as a manual of good behaviour for young boys, not to lie and cheat and so forth, a hopeless task anyway. He got the ending wrong too and the right ending is rather important in my story.

But I have to acknowledge, it is also the truth that Signor Collodi's book did have some considerable success, being read and known all over the world. It has become, I am reliably told, the best loved book in all of Italy.

But it was not only Signor Collodi who made me so famous, there was also a certain Mr. Walt Disney, who made a film about me, an all-singing all-dancing movie, that turned Pinocchio into a worldwide phenomenon. I was catapulted over-night into superstar status. Of course the Disney story was a travesty of the truth but there were some catchy enough tunes and songs. So again I have to accept that in many ways Mr. Walt Disney did me a favour:

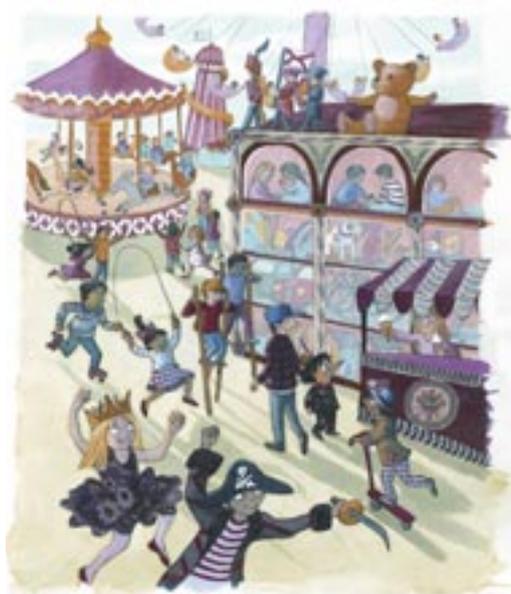
But excuse me, Signor Collodi, Mr Walt Disney, where are my royalties? I was the inspiration for

your book, for your film, and not one lira, not one euro have I ever received. Pinocchio is not greedy but surely a little something would not have been out of place.

What of the real Pinocchio, the authentic Pinocchio? Did Signor Collodi or Mr. Walt Disney ask me what I thought of how I was being portrayed? They did not. The real Pinocchio has been forgotten. I am fed up with seeing myself dangling there, nothing but a figure of fun in every tatty tourist shop in Italy alongside Inter Milan football shirts and Venetian gondolas. There is more to Pinocchio than this. So it's about time to tell your own story, Pinocchio, I thought, write your autobiography, tell it as it was, as it really happened - and with the right ending too!

But to write a book, I knew would be a problem for me. About some things Signor Collodi was right. I have a confession. It is true, I'm afraid, that at school I was never over-diligent in my studies, and in my writing and spelling in particular. "Rigour, Pinocchio," my fearsome teacher used to say, wagging his chalky finger at me. "Rigour, application, hard work – these are the only ways to succeed in life." The trouble was that, as a young puppet, I never much wanted to succeed. I wanted simply to have fun, to travel the world, to seek my fortune.

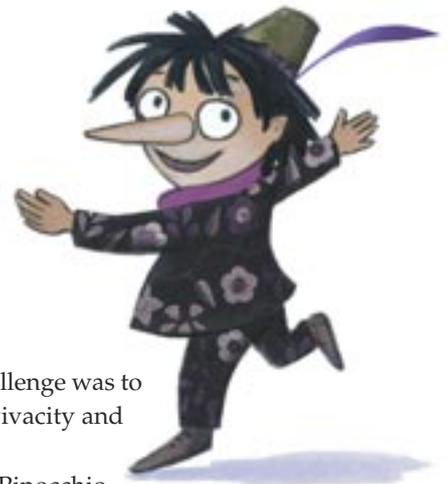
So here I was, now a much older, wiser puppet, about to try to write my autobiography, to tell the world at last the whole and authentic story of Pinocchio. This I knew I could not do on my own. I would need a ghost writer, someone who would transcribe my own story as I told it. I had no need of a well-known writer, the less significant the better. It is not difficult to find such people. They are two a penny. A simple but obscure wordsmith would do. I found just such a one in Michael Morpurgo. I needed also an equally obscure illustrator. Emma Chichester Clark would be adept enough, I thought. Between them, they would write and draw the story of Pinocchio but my way, my story.



*Pinocchio arrives at the Land of Toys*



# Redefining Pinocchio



One of the most fun things about being an illustrator is

being asked to reinterpret a character that has been drawn many times before. Sometimes it feels a bit cheeky – and I begin in a slightly apologetic spirit but by going on and on drawing, experimenting, altering features, hairstyles, and clothes – *determinedly* – after a bit, the character starts to become yours.

My first frightening experience of this was with *Alice in Wonderland* but *Pinocchio* is equally famous. If you mention his name at least half the world will immediately have a visual image. All over Italy you can buy wooden Pinocchio puppets, Pinochios that sit on the end of your pencil, Pinocchio key rings – almost anything with Pinocchio on it. He wears a little pointy hat, a tunic and short trousers, and he's generally red and green. I'm not very keen on red and green. They make me think of Christmas, so that was the first thing I wanted to change – but was I *allowed* to? Would the Italians hate it – and me, at the same time?

I decided I couldn't worry about that and I think Michael must have done the same because although he is true to the spirit and most of the story of Pinocchio, he has made some *massive* improvements! One of these is that Pinocchio tells the story in his own voice – and what a voice! It is everything a child/puppet should be – excited, joyful, vulnerable, frightened, questioning and brave. Pinocchio races through astounding adventures and you are there beside him, breathless, all the way.

When I read it, all my worries about the traditional Pinocchio image evaporated instantly. This text was such a new and refreshing take on the old much-loved story and the only way to illustrate it was to start afresh, without any of the

baggage of the past. My challenge was to give the pictures an equal vivacity and sparkle to Michael's words.

I began by finding *my* Pinocchio face and figure. How long could his nose be? It had to grow at some point, so I couldn't overdo it. I gave him big round eyes that looked as though they might have been painted onto wood. I wanted him to look cheerful and intelligent and a little mischievous. I imagined that Gepetto would have made his hair from horsehair, so happily, it might have stuck out unevenly, adding to his unpredictability. Michael's text said that his clothes were made from an old bedspread, which meant they could be *anything* – even patchwork, so I played with bits of collage and gave him three or four different outfits to choose from. Of course Michael chose the right one, and talking to him and Ann-Janine from HarperCollins, led to collage becoming part of the illustrations. I hadn't planned to use it for the final artwork but it had crept into the roughs. I didn't use it all over the place. It was more like a garnish.

I loved doing the landscapes – the forests, the sea, and the streets of Naples, and when I was roughing it out I learnt something *new* – after thirty years! Instead of painstaking pencil roughs that always seem to concentrate on detail too soon, I used watercolour, painting quickly and loosely, elements of the composition where I wanted them. Then I drew on top in pencil. The roughs were like mini-paintings, with atmosphere, which helped to give me the feel of the book before I began the artwork.

It was a great treat to do this book – one of the best treats of my life, and it was lovely to work with Michael again. His retelling of Pinocchio is a complete joy and I hope others will have as much fun with it as I did.

Emma Chichester Clark

Pinocchio in the belly of the shark

