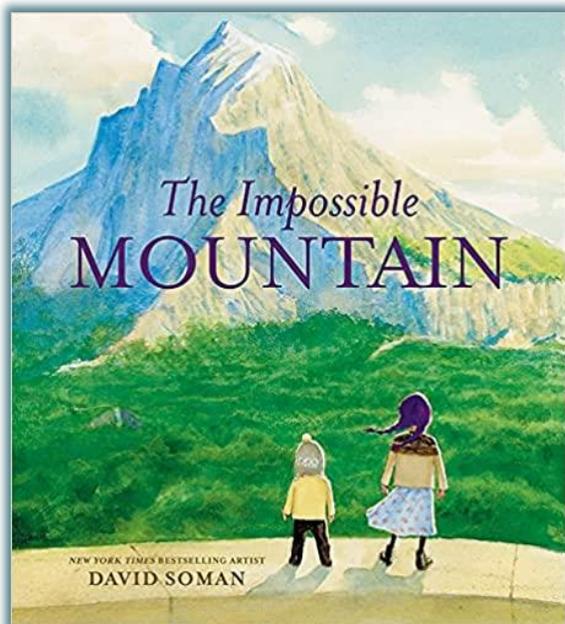


David Soman has illustrated many beautiful picture books including the *New York Times* best-selling *Ladybug Girl*, which he co-created with his wife Jacky Davis. He is an instructor at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, and lives with his family in upstate New York where he often walks the mountains outside his studio, and where sometimes, his yard is visited by a Great and Not so Terrible Bear. Get to know him below.

**Q. *The Impossible Mountain* hits shelves in November 2021, but it feels like a timeless classic. What were some of your inspirations, both in terms of illustration style and the prose?**

I live in the Hudson Valley, a beautiful, watery and mountainous part of the country, and I spend a good amount of time being in the woods. Even when I am in my studio, the views are beautiful; a lot of *The Impossible Mountain* comes from that. I think there is something about the natural world that is timeless- it's where we come from, and I think even if we temporarily forget that, or get lost in our urban lives or screens, there is something inside all of us that feels it is always our place. I am always inspired by the world's ever-changing beauty.

When I began the project, I had originally planned to work in a more stylized and graphic manner, but, as I went along, I wanted the readers to connect and feel Anna and Finn's world with them, and the art just evolved to become more naturalistic. I've found that in each project I do, the book's voice sort of leads me to what feels right for the pictures, even if I had other plans. At this point in my artistic life, I've learned to trust that process.



I love watercolors as a medium, and feel that a sense of light and air comes through so well. One of my very favorite illustrators that endlessly inspires me is Lisbeth Zwerger, but despite my best intentions, my work never ends up being anything like hers.

In terms of writing, I've read many of the great adventure stories, folk tales, and fantasy epics, and they are obviously influences, but my biggest inspiration in writing *The Impossible Mountain* was Ursula K. Le Guin; the economy and poetry she can pack into a sentence floors me.

**Q. You're also the co-author (with your wife Jacky Davis) and illustrator of the NYT bestselling series *Ladybug Girl*. Was your approach to working alone on *The Impossible Mountain* different?**

Yes and no.

Whether I'm writing with Jacky or by myself, writing a story is always a process of discovery, of finding what works, and often what doesn't. Sometimes I discover that what I thought I was going to write, and what I actually write is no longer the same thing.

The difference is that when I work with Jacky, we have each other to bounce ideas off of, which is creatively energizing, but we also have to be willing to let go of what is mine or hers and see what the story wants. There has to be trust and a letting go of creative ego. When I work alone, it's all me, which is freeing, but also sort of scary.

**Q. Why did you have Anna and Finn encounter obstacles on their journey? Was it important to you to show their resilience in the face of the difficulties that came their way?**

Well, without obstacles, I'm not sure there is a story!

But, seriously, it was very important to me to show their grit. As I developed the story with my editor, Susan Rich, Anna's need to follow her own path became its center. I think for all of us, but especially for children, learning that we can work for what we want is an important lesson. We can do hard things. Life is a challenge; we don't often have a say in what challenges we may face, but we can make choices about how we meet them. The hero's journey is also our own.

**Q. The color pallet for *The Impossible Mountain* has lots of deep blues and greens—the greens of the forest and apple trees, the blues of the sky and mountain. How did you decide on which colors to use in the book?**

I looked out my window!

These are the colors of my home (though the scale of everything is a lot bigger in the book—especially the bear!), and I've been a landscape painter for years, so the palette came directly from my experiences walking amidst the mountains, streams, and orchards of Ulster County. I feel very lucky to live here.

**Q. What is your favorite thing about the sibling-hood between Anna and Finn? What was your favorite part of illustrating their adventure?**

My favorite part of Anna and Finn's relationship is how they support each other, and help each other continue on their journey. They are really there for each other. In the beginning, it may seem like Anna is bringing Finn along for the journey, but by the end it is clear that Anna needs Finn, too. They are truly stronger together.

It's hard, almost impossible, to choose a favorite part of illustrating the book. I love painting landscapes, but I love telling stories just as much, and doing the early sketches where I can explore different possibilities is just as exciting as doing a finished painting (although less stressful—watercolor is an unforgiving medium).

**Q. What do you hope young readers take away from reading *The Impossible Mountain*?**

First, I just hope readers enjoy the story and really feel the adventure themselves. But if they do take something else from it, I hope that it is an understanding that you can do great things, and that though this isn't always easy, if you work at it, you can do it. And more than that, I hope that they understand that doing something—whether it's playing a piano, drawing a picture, kicking a soccer ball around, or climbing a mountain—is its own reward, that in life, the journey is more important than the destination. That's its beauty and excitement; there are always more mountains to climb.

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*The Impossible Mountain* published November 8<sup>th</sup> and can be purchased in [hardcover](#) on TitleSource 360.