

[music]

Elliot: Oh, stop, stop, stop! Today we have a special episode.

Children: Woah!

Elliot: It will sound very different to this.

[music]

Elliot: Yes, and also, Lisa, Cowy, Billy and I won't be there!

Lisa: You are scaring them Elliot! Let me explain. It's Children's Book day, and since we all really like books here, we wanted to share something special with you!

Cowy: So, today it will be all about books and we will hear from an author!

Billy: tweet

Narrator: That's right Billy. The author's name is Matt de la Pena. He joined us to share what it's like to be an author and write books for children! Kids at home, today's episode will be longer than usual, you will probably hear some new words and meet some new people! If you hear a word you don't know, we recommend you pause and ask a grown up about its meaning. Parents, this episode comes from our friends on the *Growin' Up* podcast. There kids get to learn about all sorts of different professions or jobs, a bit of history and fun facts and they get to meet a real pro! In the description to this episode, you will find some extra materials, including links to the podcast.

Now, is everyone ready?

Children: Yay!

Emily: Do you have a favorite book? Guess what children's book is the most popular one in the world? Stay tuned to find out, later in the episode. Hey, kids at home, did you know that this episode is episode number 28? This means that we've already had 27 amazing guests who've joined us here, and 27 amazing professions we got to explore. We hope you've been enjoying the show. Now, I have a favor to ask. We would love to hear your thoughts about this show.

What did you like, or maybe what you didn't like? What was your favorite part, and what would you love to hear more of? All this will be a great help for our second season of the *Growin' Up* podcast. Yes, you heard it. Second season is coming, and we want your voice heard. Send us an email to podcast@lingokids.com. Ask a grownup for help.

[music]

Now, do you love stories? If you've dreamed of being an author, you won't want to miss this episode. We'll meet Matt de la Peña, an author and creative writing teacher who has captured the hearts of young adults with riveting tales that draw from the love of sports and his Mexican heritage. What do you know about being an author?

Child: They write stories about adventures.

Child: They know how to spell.

Emily: Let's find out more.

[music]

Hi, welcome to *Growin' Up with Emily*, a lingokids podcast that helps kids discover how to be whatever they want to be. Are you ready to make writing your superpower?

Children: Yes.

Singer: Growing up, growing up.

[music]

Emily: Hey, over here. Thanks for coming. I thought the Bookworm Café would be the perfect spot to meet, for the lingokids Read for a Month challenge. Did you finish your first book?

Child: Yes.

Child: Yes.

Emily: I'm on the last chapter of my book.

Child: Is this like a book club?

Emily: Sort of. Book clubs usually meet to discuss the same book, but people have been getting together to talk about literature for over 2,400 years. In the beginning, it was mostly men discussing philosophy and politics. I heard that even six minutes of reading can cut stress in half. Reading and talking about it helps your brain connect ideas, build imagination, and add new words to your vocabulary. To get started, let's share the title, the author, and a bit about the story.

Child: My book is called *Amazing Animals*, by Claire Hibbert. It gives facts about animals. Did you know some lizards can walk on water?

Emily: That's a fun fact.

Child: I read a comic book called *Cowa!* by Akira Toriyama. It's about three monsters and a sumo wrestler on a journey to find medicine to save their village. I learned that Katsukazan means active volcano in Japanese.

Emily: Wow, that's super cool. I'm reading *Agatha Christie's Secret Notebooks*, by John Curran. It reveals details about the life of the most famous mystery writer in the world. Hey, speaking of mysteries, did you read about the stolen luggage worth \$10 million?

Child: No. Was the luggage ever found?

Emily: Yes, turned out to be an open-and-shut case. Get it? Luggage, open-and-shut case.

[kids laughing]

Joking aside, it's interesting that we each picked a different genre or style to read. The animal book is all facts. That's called non-fiction. The comic book is make-believe, that's fiction, or fantasy. There are so many styles to choose from, science-fiction, action and adventure, thriller, romance, short story, young adult, and that's just a sample.

Child: Do you think authors were in book clubs too?

Emily: They say it takes a great reader to become a great writer. Many famous writers, like J.R.R. Tolkien, who wrote *The Hobbit*, and *Lord of the Rings*, formed book clubs to critique each other's work.

Child: Hey, you wrote a few books, right?

Emily: As a matter of fact, I have. I actually have one of them with me right now, *Reach for The Stars*. Want to hear a piece of it?

Child: Sure.

Emily: The more you reach, the more you learn, there's so much here to see. The world has wonders waiting. What will you grow up to be? I'll teach you how to reach for things that are very hard to do. You may succeed and that is great, but failing's common too. We try and fail, jump and fall, and tumble, trip, and then reach for my hand. I'll pull you up, and we will try again, for being brave does not mean that nothing makes you scared. It means you never let your fear prevent the dreams you've dared.

Child: Cool. How did you make that happen?

Emily: It can take a long time before any work is published. Some writers start with personal journals, short stories, or poems. They might join a writing club, or enter writing contests. Many get a college degree in creative writing, communications, or journalism. Maya Angelou didn't attend university, yet she's a highly celebrated and honored poet. Oh, and the most popular children's book of all time was written by a fighter pilot.

Child: Are you kidding?

Emily: No. Remember the question from the start of the show, "What children's book sold the most copies in the world?" Take a guess.

[music]

Child: One of the Harry Potter books.

Emily: Good guess. Those were written by British author JK Rowling. Here's a hint-- This author was French.

[music]

Child: I give up.

Emily: The answer is *Le Petit Prince*, or *The Little Prince*. It was written and illustrated by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, a French aristocrat and military pilot. The story follows a young prince to different planets as he experiences loneliness and friendship. Since 1943, it has sold 140 million copies. It's been turned into audiobooks, movies, plays, ballets, and operas. Imagine your words being read by so many people.

Child: I'd love to be a famous author.

Child: We'd be lucky just to meet one.

Emily: Well, it just so happens an author is about to do a book signing next door. His name is Matt de la Peña. He has won several awards for his novels for young adults. Want to pop over and meet a real author?

Children: Yes.

[music]

Emily: Hi there, Matt. I'm with Lingokids and we want to find out what it takes to be an author. Do you have time to answer some questions?

Matt: I do. I would love to answer some questions.

Emily: Great. Tell us, when did you start writing?

Matt: I started writing in middle school and high school. When I was around, I would say, 13, I started to write poems. I called them spoken word poems that I spoke to no one, because I was very shy about my writing. Also, I should share this, I grew up in a community where I didn't think boys were supposed to write poetry. It was too sensitive. I grew up playing basketball. I got really good at basketball, and that became my identity.

See, to me, poetry didn't fit into that definition. Then you get a little bit older and you realize-- Well, wow, if you have many things you're interested in, you become a more interesting person.

Emily: Matt, all of our guests have to answer this question. What are three things all writers need?

Matt: First, discipline. If you want to complete a project, you have to sit down and do it. You can't wait for this rush of inspiration. You have to have discipline, so you have to complete the story. That's the first thing, is discipline. The second thing is, the greatest writing teacher in the world is reading great books. I think you have to be a real reader. You have to see what other stories are out there, so be a reader. Then, I think this is the most important one.

[background conversation]

I think you have to be a great listener to be a writer. I always say, writers, we should speak less and listen more. The reason I say that is because there are incredible stories floating around us everyday, and then our job will be to transfer that story onto the page.

Emily: Very interesting. Our Lingokids listeners have some questions of their own.

[music]

Child: Matt, how many books have you written?

Matt: Oh, so the number of books, this is also complicated, because I've written 21 books, and I've published 17 books. What a lot of young people aren't aware of is that when you finish a book, it doesn't come out the day you finish. It usually comes out around two years later, so it takes a long time for a book to come out.

Child: What was it like when your first book was published?

Matt: I can tell you a quick story about when my very first book came out. I went to the bookstore the day it was released. I was so excited. I saw my book on the shelf, and it had my last name, de la Peña, and I thought, "Wow, I can't believe something I wrote is in a bookstore. Me, just an average, ordinary person." Then I thought, "Okay, it's one thing to see your book published, but imagine if I could watch somebody purchase the book."

I hid out in the romance section, and I had a direct line of vision to my where my book was. I just waited and waited, for hours and hours. Nobody did, after three hours, and I was getting very tired, so I said, "If nobody else is going to buy this book, I'm going to buy this book." I went and grabbed the book, and I was walking through the store holding it up like this. I thought maybe somebody would stop me and say, "Excuse me, sir, did you write that book?"

I'd say, "Oh, this one? Yes, I did." Nobody did that. Then I went up to the cash register. I thought, "I could pay for this book with cash,-" because I had cash at the time, "-or I could use a credit card and they'll see that the name on the credit card is the name on the book, and there will be a big announcement in the store." Here's what happened. I said, "I would to buy this book with this credit card," and I put them right next to each other, and the lady who was taking the sale, she didn't ask me if I wrote the book.

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She just said, "Are you a Barnes and Noble member?" And I said no, so I had to pay full price for the book. That was my experience of the day my first book came out.

Child: This is so funny. I can almost see you walking to the register, holding your book. [laughs]

Child: What's the hardest part about being a writer?

Matt: I think the hardest part for me, as a writer, is ending a book. A-- I don't want it to end if I really love the character. I don't want to say goodbye to that character. B-- You've just spent often a year telling a story, and the idea of waking up the next day and not being able to tell that story, it feels deflating.

Emily: Do you write stories with Matt de la Peña as a character?

Matt: I actually put myself into every character I've ever written. It's not just the main character, sometimes it's the side character, it might be a parent, or it might be the dog. I put pieces of myself into every single character I write.

Child: I don't know, I feel like there's nothing special in my story.

Matt: Sometimes when you're young, you think, "Oh, my story is boring, nobody would write a book about me, or make a movie about my life." You think it's ordinary, because you're living it every day. When you do come up with stories, don't be afraid to use personal experiences, the way you're growing up, the way your family is, or how it is at your school. That might not be super exciting to you, because you're living it every day, but other people might be fascinated by the way you're growing up. Own your own story.

Emily: Will you remember this, kids? Your story is very special. Thanks for sharing that.

[music]

Matt, what can kids do now, while they're still growing up, to become an author?

Matt: One of the most important things you could do as a writer is read, because it's like the gasoline that we put in, our gas. I always recommend, if you want to be a writer, to read outside of your interests. If you want to write fantasy, then you should read realistic fiction also, but then, most importantly, I suggest that you play. Play with language, play with different stories, write a story that you're never going to share with anyone, but you're just experimenting.

Also, copy or imitate your favorite author. If there's a story you really love, take the character and write a different story with that same character, imitating that writer's voice or the way they tell a story. I think it's great to imitate your favorite authors.

Emily: Matt, meeting you today has inspired me to read and write more.

Child: Once the Lingokids Read for a Month challenge is over. I'm going to make my own comic book.

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Child: I may start with the story about my friends, or about my story.

Emily: I'm going to buy a copy of your book, Matt. I hope you'll sign it.

Matt: Of course.

[music]

Emily: We hope you've enjoyed this episode of the *Growin' Up* Podcast. Even if you never plan to be an author, you can start a book club to support existing writers, or create your own reading challenge. How many books can you read in a month? Let us know. Send an email to podcast@lingokids.com.

Child: To live a full interactive learning adventure, check out our Lingokids app, with tons of games and activities for endless fun.

Singer: It's so fun to learn what you can be,

Growing up, growing up

Come and join us,

Come, everyone,

So we can learn while having lots of fun,

Because it's so fun to learn what you can be,

Yes, it's so fun to learn what you can be,

Growing up, growing up, growing up.

Children: Lingo Kids.

[00:16:18] [END OF AUDIO]