

# A CONVERSATION

David Shannon

*Jangles: A BIG  
Fish Story*

## Questions & Answers

**Q: When did you start fishing?**

**A:** The first fish I ever “caught” was in Glacier National Park, Montana, when I was two or three years old. My brother and I were fishing with a piece of string tied to a stick—that’s it. Well, whaddya know, we each caught a rainbow trout—and they were already cleaned, too! Some nice man had swum underwater and tied them to our strings.

Growing up in Spokane, Washington, you sort of naturally start fishing in the nearby lakes at around six or seven years old. Then my dad and I took up fly fishing when I was maybe eleven. Back then I tied my own flies, too. I took a course from this old guy who looked like a factory when he smoked his pipe.

**Q: Do you have a favorite fishing memory?**

**A:** I have so many! One of my favorites is the first time my daughter and I went fishing on the lake where I have a cabin. She was about five years old and she caught what we’ve always referred to as “The Whopper”—a great big cutthroat trout. The local newspaper put her name in the next edition. She was totally thrilled. She almost always outfishes everybody else in our group.

**Q: Why do you think fishing creates such a bond between parents and children?**

**A:** I think it’s because you’re sharing an adventure. You’re out in nature where there’s a lot of mystery, beauty, and excitement. Fishing memories are so vivid and unique. Plus, fishing has hardly changed at all over the years.

**Q: What inspired the story of *Jangles*?**

**A:** I’d been wanting to write a fishing story for a long time, and it finally came together when I took a whole bunch of little stories I’d either heard or actually experienced and rolled them all into one “BIG Fish Story.” One part is from a story my friend’s grandfather told us in Montana; a couple other bits are from tales I heard from guides; some of it is based on Native American mythology; a bunch of it is stuff that really happened to me; and then the rest I just made up!

**Q: The art style in *Jangles* is very different from your other books. Can you talk a little about that?**

**A:** It’s the first time I’ve painted in oils since I went to art school. I’d always used acrylics because they dry fast and they’re not so toxic and smelly (my studio was always in my house or apartment). Anyway, I’d begun to get really tired of painting a couple years ago so I started thinking about shaking things up a little. My studio is now separate from the house, and when *Jangles* came along it seemed like a good vehicle for some oil paintings. I tried not to think of anything but the painting—no deadlines, no expectations from others, no worries about ruining the piece and starting over—so I was free to try new things and experiment. It was a blast! (Once I got the ventilation worked out, that is.) I love the look and feel of oil paints—they’re so rich and fun to squish around in—I don’t know if I’ll ever use acrylics again.

**Q: *Jangles*, with his scars and hooks, seems so real. How does the art contribute to the sense of fishing that the story tells?**

**A:** I wanted the art to make the story more believable. I was hoping the reader would experience what the kid in the story is feeling—the sense of wonder, the humor, even a little fear.

**Q: Do you have a story of one that got away? And, is there one fish you've never caught that tops your “to do” list?**

**A:** Well, there was this red head in eighth grade. . . .

Actually, the part in *Jangles* where the kid drifts out into the deep area of the lake is based on something that happened to me. It was really getting dark and I hooked into something REALLY BIG! At first I thought I’d snagged bottom, but my line was going out a lot faster than I was drifting. Whatever it was just kept going until all my line was gone. I grabbed the last couple feet and held on, but it snapped right off. Then everything was quiet and I just sat there for a long time.

As far as the “to do” list, I finally caught my first golden trout last summer. That’s one I’ve always wanted to catch. They’re unbelievably beautiful and are native only to a few high-altitude streams in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

**Q: What is your favorite place to fish?**

**A:** I have a little cabin in the Sierras that’s surrounded by tons of rivers, lakes, and streams. It’s not just my favorite place to fish; it’s my favorite place, period!

**Media Contact:**

Tracy van Straaten | 212/389-3782 | [tvanstraaten@scholastic.com](mailto:tvanstraaten@scholastic.com)

*This interview has been provided by Scholastic Inc.*

© 2012 Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved.