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Cressida Cowell [00:00:13] Hello there, I'm Cressida Cowell. Author and illustrator of How To Train Your Dragon, Wizards of Once, and Which Way to Anywhere, my new book series. And I'm so glad you've joined me for the Reading is Magic Festival. Sometimes things that you do or say have a way of turning into something bigger than you imagined and carrying on longer than you thought they would. Like The Reading is Magic Festival, which started in 2020 when I was the Waterstones Children's Laureate. It was inspired by my belief that reading is magic, and magic is for everyone. All the events during the festival explore the themes of the charter I wrote when I was a Laureate and celebrate all the things you have the right to: Creativity, having a planet to read on, seeing yourselves in a book, reading for the joy of it, and getting brilliant advice about books and about reading from people whose job it is to do that. I hope you enjoy this.

Lauren [00:01:32] Hi. I'm Lauren. I'm a TV presenter. I'm currently wearing an orange and white top. Today, I've got my hair up in a ponytail and I'm currently in my kitchen. In front of my reading is Magic Festival bunting because we are here for day two. Hope you are really good. Onto our very next author! His name is Richard O'Neill, and he has got a fantastic novel called The Can Caravan. He's going to be telling us a little bit about how we can use our imagination to recycle everyday objects and how the inspiration for his book came from a simple can. So let's head over to Lancashire to meet Richard.

Speaker 3 [00:02:09] Thanks with Joseph Coelho, Programmed by Bath Children's Literature Festival.

Richard O'Neill [00:02:16] Hello, I'm Richard O'Neill, storyteller and author of the Traveller's Tales series of picture books. I'm wearing a straw hat with grey hair sticking out of the sides. I'm a mature man. I'm wearing reading glasses and I'm wearing a nice white shirt. And I'm joining you from my home in Lancashire, in the northwest of England. Now, I wanted to talk to you today about my new book, The Can Caravan, which is all about recycling and reusing. Now, I want to tell you a little bit about my history, my family history and where I come from. And answering the question that a lot of people ask me, why do so many of your books have caravans in them? Well, the answer to that is very simple, because, you see, I grew up in a large Romani travelling family, so I grew up in a caravan. I had never lived in a house until I got much older and my family travelled around from place to place. So caravans were very much part of my life, very much about my home, that was always the caravan. So that's I think why I have so many. And I'm quite fascinated by them. The fact that you can move your home, your whole home. Imagine if you live in an apartment or a house or a bungalow or whatever, and you could put wheels on it and move it. Imagine that. Be quite interesting, wouldn't it? Maybe that's another book. But for now I want to talk about this book, but I want to give you a little bit of history, if you will, and to where the book came from. Now, I love to travel around the country. It's something I love to do. And as part of my job as an author, going to lots and lots of different schools, then I end up having to travel on lots of different roads. And whilst motorways can be a little bit boring, they are very efficient and they're quite quick. So they get me to where I need to go. But I also when I'm travelling on motorways, then I'm fascinated by trucks, you know, what is inside those trucks and very often you see these big trucks and some of them have number plates on. You can see they've come from another country. And I'm always curious to know what's inside those trucks. And very often you can't see them because they have these... They're enclosed. They have these these things called curtain sides. And you can move them backwards and forwards when they get to their destination. But I'm always fascinated by what's inside those trucks. And then

you've got these trucks called big flatbed trucks, and you can see what's on the back of them. For example, sometimes these massive great big rocks that fill the back of this truck is as big as a room inside a house or a classroom at school. And I think, gosh, who wanted a rock and where is it going? What are they going to do with this massive rock? Now, I was driving down the motorway this particular day on a motorway called the M62, and I saw a massive truck on the left hand side. But on the back of it wasn't a rock. It was this huge chunk of metal. Now, I didn't know what kind of metal it was. It was a massive, great, big piece of metal that sort of went and it was sort of like flat at the bottom and almost like a sort of a massive, great, big, rectangular, solid shape. But it was a little bit like a pyramid as well. So it was wider at the bottom and it went up, but it didn't go to a point. It was flattened off the top and massive, massive chunk of metal. And I thought, oh, this is really interesting. So slowed down a little bit, kept a safe distance and imprinted on the back of this massive ingot, which would be, you know, as big as a van if you think about a Range Rover or a transit van, something like that on the back of this truck, that's how big that was. It was like a wall in your school. It was that big. And written on it was: 'This aluminium ingot has been made from one and a half million drinks cans.' And I'm like, Wow. One and a half million drinks cans. And you see, I like, I like cola and things like that. So I thought, gosh, and every time I try and put my can into a recycling bin so it can be recycled, but I hadn't really thought too much about what happens to it after it goes in the bin and where does it go. It obviously goes to some kind of recycling place, but I didn't really think about what happened after that. So there I was. I was in my car. I'm really very curious now, one and a half million drinks cans. I mean, like I'm trying to picture how much space with that take up. Even if they were all squashed, how much space would it take up? And what do you do with one and a half million drinks cans? Well, I went home, got on the Internet and searched. Oh, my goodness me. That was so much fun. I found out what happens to these drinks cans, where they go and what they do with them. And the fact is they recycle them. And apparently an aluminium drinks can can be used and used and used and used and used indefinitely. So I thought, this is good. And then I thought, hang on a minute. I was drinking a little can like this and I kind of knocked it over on its side and I thought, hang on a minute. What if... Now you see, this is one of the things that we writers use a lot. We think: what if this? What if that? What if that happened? What if this person did that? And I thought: what if this can had wheels on it? It would actually look like a caravan. And then I started designing. Now I don't do the illustrations for my books. I'm very, very lucky. I get other people to do amazing drawings. They are wonderful artist. But I like to do doodle a little bit. I got a pencil, a piece of paper, and I started to doodle and think, 'Oh, how would this look with wheels on?' And I drew some wheels on a can and I thought, 'What would it be like?' And then I started designing the inside of the can caravan. I thought, 'What would I want inside that can caravan?' And that gave me an idea for the story, and the story just kind of came after that. So that was, that was how the story came about. So I want to show it to you. I want to show you the book. And this is the book here is called The Can Caravan. Now, I'm holding up a picture book and it has written can caravan on the top. And there are two characters, the two main characters, I guess, in the whole of the book, which is a girl called Janie and an older lady called Mrs. Tolen. And they're standing in front of this lovely aluminium, silver coloured caravan, which looks like a drinks cup. So I'm going to show you, first of all, what we call the endpapers in picture books and these endpapers here, if you just about see that, I think you can see. All the different colours and all the different designs. And I'd like you to think about that when you're having a look around a shop or a supermarket or wherever. Look at all the different designs on those cans, particularly the drinks cans. And maybe some of them are pretty much the same size, but then they do slightly smaller ones. I mean, like a baby caravan. So, this is the book Can Caravan. Now we're holding up the book. And you can see inside these two pages, the first two pages in the book, there is the main character called Janie, who is a

girl with sort of red gingery coloured hair. She's about ten years old and sitting on the same table. Next to the table is a granddad, is her granddad. He's a man. He's about in his sixties. He's got grey hair, he's wearing a blue striped shirt. And behind them you can see inside of Janie's caravan where she lives, it's very modern, it's very smart. There is nice big windows. This wood is a nice floor. Everything is very, very clean and tidy and it's very modern. So let me read you a little bit from this bit here. It says: 'Janie was always drawing. She had a great imagination and she turned everyday objects into wonderful creations. Her favourite things to sketch were caravans. She imagined the trailer' - that's what we call it, the trailer - 'she wanted to live in when she was older and often made models of her drawings. Granddad liked helping with the painting.' Now you see what I found out from people who make things. Even people who design and make cars. They often create a model and sometimes a whole shopping centres or massive blocks of flats or whatever. They do the design, then they make a model so it can be seen by people. Even though we've got this wonderful computer technology, people still make models of things. You might have seen or you might have seen one when you were going down to a shopping centre or when they are going to change the way the town is laid out and they show you the the design of it, then they show you the model. Well, this is what Janie does with her stuff. She makes models and granddad paints them, so they look really nice. So now I'm going to turn the page and we've got two more pages here. And what I'm showing now is I'm showing Janie's caravan site that she lives on. And you can see on one page a very modern caravan. It's Janie's caravan. It's got darkened windows so that when it's a very warm, sunny day, it stops all of the heat coming in and the caravan is painted this nice white shiny colour because that will sort of stop the sun and reflect it a little bit. And it's very what we call aerodynamic. So if you're towing it on the road, the air, the resistance will go over it very, very easily. But in the corner of the picture, we can see Mrs. Tolen with her old caravan. It's a sort of a beige colour, like a red roof. It's a sort of waterproof red paint put on it and it's very square. So if you tried to tow this, it wouldn't be as aerodynamic. And it's got very small windows, so that they just let a little bit of light in, whereas Janie's caravan let lots and lots of lighting filtered through these beautiful tinted windows. And then on the other page, we've got Janie talking to Mrs. Tolen and she's talking to her about the old days. 'Janie was proud of her designs, and she loved showing her work to Mrs. Tolen, her granddad's oldest friend. "You're a chavvi after my own heart, Janie," said Mrs. Tolen.' Now, in my language, the Romani language, we say chavvi for child. So when we say chavvi, we mean child. 'This is a photo of me back when I was training to be an engineer. Look at my old lathe.' Now Mrs. Tolen is showing Janie a photograph of when she worked in an engineering company. And on the photograph, you can see her. She's in her safety wear overalls and she's actually working on a machine called the lathe. Now, lathes are very interesting machines because you can make all kinds of wonderful things out of metal and wood. And I think these days, even plastic on a lathe. It makes things beautiful shapes and you can get them just right. Parts of a car, parts for machines, all kinds of things. Wooden bowls have a look of lathe and see what people do with lathes, they are really interesting. 'I think Dad had one of those in his workshop. Remember Janie? If he was still around, I could have borrowed it to fix up this old caravan,' said Mrs. Tolen, smiling sadly. Now on the next page, we have Janie at school and her teacher is telling a whole lot about recycling. And then on the following page, we've got Janie. She's come home from school. She's very excited about this new recycling project that the teacher is going to do, and she wants to tell Mrs. Tolen all about it. But she can't see Mrs. Tolen. She can only see her mother and her granddad. And when we look at the classroom on this picture, lots and lots of children sitting and watching the teacher. At school, Janie's teacher announced that he'd organised a trip to a can recycling plant. 'Does anyone know the history of recycling?' Mr. Green asked. Janie's hand shot up: 'Travellers have been recycling for centuries. My granddad told me that his

mum collected aluminium panels during the war. The factories needed metal to make aeroplanes.' Janie couldn't wait to tell Mrs. Tolen but her caravan was empty. Mom was outside tending to her plants. 'Have you seen Mrs. Tolen?' Asked Janie. I can't find her. 'She's broken a hip and had to go to hospital,' said Mum. Don't worry, though. She'll be okay.' Now, I hope you're going to read this book at some point and find out what happens to Mrs. Tolen, what happens to Janie and why and how we end up with this beautiful can caravan. Now, in the meantime, what I'd like you to think about is I'll show you: Now I'm holding up a drinks can. It's sort of an average drinks can, holding it up towards the camera and it's made of aluminium, but it feels very, very solid when you press it now because it's got the drink inside and it's a fizzy drink. So he's got that the pressure. But when you drink the drink, it's really squashy. You can you can actually squeeze it quite, quite easily. But what I'd like to do, I'd like you to think about whether you've got one of these cans in school or at home. It's just to have a sit down, get a pencil, get a pen, get a bit of paper and start sketching. So I'm doing a doodle like I did and think, if you were going to design a caravan, what would you make it look like? Would it be a particular colour on the outside? Would it have pictures of your favourite sports people, pictures of your favourite authors? If you're really into books like me will the inside be like just like a total library, there would be books everywhere. If you're a gamer, if you somebody likes playing games, would it be like the ultimate gamers' caravan? So when you went inside there, there was just two gamer seats for you and your friend and it's a massive screen everywhere. Would it be like that? So what I'd like you to think about is designing your own can caravan. What would it look like? And maybe you're the sort of person who would make it for someone else. Is there somebody in your neighbourhood? Is there somebody in your family? Is there somebody that you really like that you think a friend? I would make one for them. Maybe you would make one for your teacher. So I hope you're going to enjoy designing your own can caravan and maybe try and have a look at that book a little bit later on. But for now, it's Richard O'Neill saying goodbye.

Speaker 3 [00:16:03] Reading is Magic festival 26th of September to the 30th of September 2022.

Lauren [00:16:10] Oh, thank you so much, Richard. That's given us loads to think about. And how about you try designing your very own caravan? How cool would that be? I think if I was designing my very own caravan, I would just fill it with lots of different cheeses. How good would that be? I would love to see your creations as well. Send them in to us and we will display them in our Creators Gallery. How good would that be? And if you want to find out what happens next in the book, you can head over to the reading is magic website to buy yourself a copy or check out your local library and stick around loads more amazing events coming your way this week.