



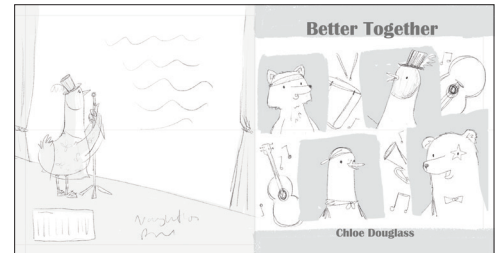
Better Together: Interview with the Author



What's better than a book about a band that welcomes a new member? A sequel about working out the challenges of growing and changing friendships! We interviewed author and illustrator Chloe Douglass about her new book, *Better Together*, the follow-up to [Band Together](#). Here's what she had to say:

APA: After writing *Band Together*, why did you decide to write this story about the members of the Band?

Chloe Douglass: I was interested to see what would happen to the band after Duck joined and they welcomed a new friend to the group and how that might change the dynamics within the band. I think we've all experienced this at some point.



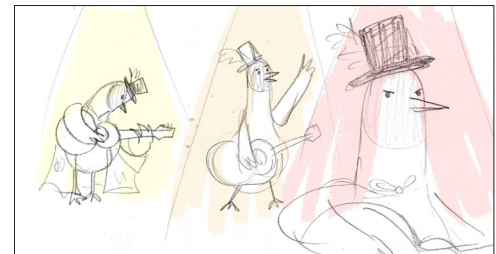
Cover idea

APA: You explore some really powerful feelings with Seagull. She feels envy, ignored, pushed aside, sad, angry, lonely, and jealous. Why do you think it's important for kids to explore these feelings?



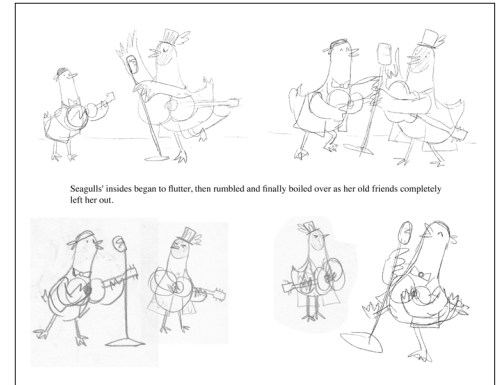
Cover idea

CD: They're powerful feelings, and it's ok to feel all of them and see how they might affect your own and others. I hope the book can be a starting point for conversations about an experience readers might have with these emotions, or help them be better able to put themselves in other people's shoes. They're all feelings a reader is bound to experience sooner or later, like someone new at school joining your friendship group, or you're the new person. Either way, I hope the book can help discussions from both viewpoints.



APA: You describe how Seagull's body felt when the band played Duck's song instead of hers: "Seagull's insides began to flutter, then rumbled, and finally boiled over." Why was it important to include a description of how Seagull's body reacted to big emotions?

CD: Feelings can manifest in so many ways, and that includes physical sensations. Again, it could be a conversation starter, learning to recognize how certain situations or things make us feel before you might lose your temper, or get control on rising anxiety before it takes over.



Seagull boils over

APA: Some readers might find they have more in common with Bear, Duck, and Fox. How did they not notice how Seagull felt? Were they just not paying attention? Were they carried away with someone and something new? Were they taking Seagull for granted?



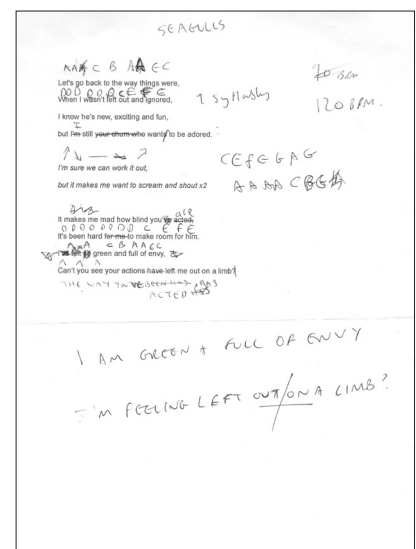
CD: Absolutely this! We've all been there at some point. It's really exciting when someone new joins a group of friends, or a new baby becomes part of the family. But it can be easy to overlook those who might feel a bit left out, or those who don't want the status quo to change. It's not always intentional, from both sides, but when you realize that you've overlooked someone's feelings, you can make amends and be more aware going forward.

APA: Tell me about writing the songs in the story: Work It Out, Better Together (Birds of a Feather), and Super Duper Happy Song. What was it like to write songs?

CD: I needed a way to show how Seagull was feeling without it taking up a lot of space, or being too wordy. They're a band, so I thought expressing her feelings through song was ideal! It also adds another layer to the storytelling. If you're able to read the notes, you can hear that it's a sad melody along with the words she's trying to get her friends to understand. I needed Duck's song to be the opposite, completely brash and silly! At the end I needed an uplifting song to show Duck and Seagull learning to work together and The Band living in harmony, which is what *Better Together* is about.

APA: What role do songs play in expressing emotions? Do you think people prefer happy songs to songs that explore other feelings?

CD: I think people listen to songs that they need at that moment. Some days I listen to music that makes me happy, like albums from a favorite band or current stuff I'm enjoying. If I've had a rough day, I put something angry and loud on, echoing how I feel, and then I feel better!



Seagull's Song

APA: I noticed some allusions to the Beatles and some animal puns hidden in the illustrations. Are you a big Beatles fan? And do you often hide “Easter eggs” in your illustrations?

CD: YES! I love the Beatles! One of my first albums, when I was very small, was an orange cassette my Dad found in a loft on a plumbing job. On it was The Beatles Magical Mystery Tour and some B-sides someone had taped off records!

As I was making the book, Peter Jackson’s ‘Get Back’ documentary about The Beatles recording that album, and their final ever performance on top of Abbey Road Studios, came out. It was a huge part of what I was consuming as I made *Better Together*.

Easter eggs in films, TV shows, and books are brilliant! So, I always knew they were going to feature in mine. They make me so happy when I spot them in other things, so I hope it makes readers happy, too!

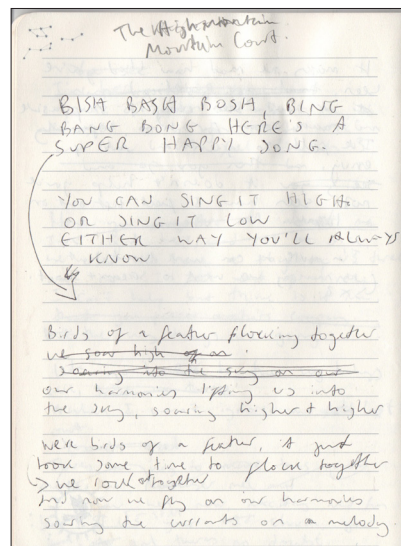
APA: What was the most challenging part of writing *Better Together*? What was the most fun?

CD: There were so many ways to go about how Seagull was feeling, how she deals with it, and how her friends also miss how she’s feeling. It was hard to try and narrow the ideas down for a picture book. It took a lot of editing to make it more succinct and to get the text finalized to what you see in the finished book.

I always enjoy the roughs, especially when I get to the point where I think this could be what I draw for the final image. I enjoyed dressing the band up for performing. It was fun drawing on different musical acts as reference for their costumes!

APA: Do you have ideas for more books? What comes next for The Band? Are they going on tour? Or cutting an album? You have a book that focuses on Duck and one about Seagull? Can we hope to see a book each for Bear and Fox?

CD: I’ve a rough story idea for Fox, so it would only be fair Bear gets one too! I love these suggestions for the next installments, I might have to use them!



Duck's Super Duper Happy Song