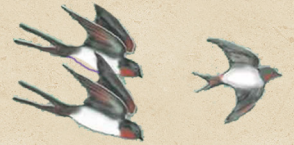


Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice

by Stephen Boni

illustrated by Maud Cronkhite



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About Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice

Charlie the Chicken loves to sing. She loves it so much, she sings all the time. In fact, she's really good at it. But the other hens want her to stop. They think only the rooster is allowed to sing—never mind that his voice is truly terrible. Finding herself cast out of the coop, Charlie must learn to face her fears and rebuild her confidence, one song at a time.

Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice delves into issues of community, conformity, gender roles, patriarchy, resilience, joy and forgiveness—all without hitting kids over the head with the message.



Author Bio

If someone were to give Stephen Boni writing advice, it would probably be to narrow his focus. In the past, he's published political and literary essays, created podcasts, scribed marketing blogs, and spent time as a performance poet. Having a feisty, story-loving daughter—who's as amused by chickens as he is—helped him get back to his first love, telling tall tales. *Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice* is his first children's book.



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Press Release

You Can't Keep a Singing Chicken Down

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**Available through: Amazon,
Bookshop, and IngramSpark.**

**For a review copy of Charlie,
please contact the author:
sbonifidebooks@gmail.com.**

Q & A

Where are you from originally?

I was raised in a southern New Hampshire town about an hour north of Boston. There were a lot of woods to tramp around in and a lot of old abandoned farms; a good public library and plenty of food for the imagination.

Like a lot of small towns, there was also a fair amount of pressure to conform to local customs and cultural norms. Overall, it was a great place to grow up, but later travels introduced me to an area that feels even more like home to me, the forested hills just east of San Francisco.

What motivated you to write this book?

I've always been affected and influenced by children's stories, fairy tales, and mythologies. As I grew up, I even went out of my way to save or repurchase my favorite books from childhood, so subconsciously I think I always wanted to write my own stories for kids.

Having a confident young daughter who loves learning and stories and art was the ultimate kick in the pants, though. Over the breakfast table, we found ourselves making up stories constantly and drawing pictures of the characters we'd created. (I'm a terrible artist, but my daughter is really good.) Charlie was our favorite idea and I felt that translating it into a book would be one of our coolest projects.

Why did you choose to work with Maud Cronkhite for the illustrations?

For Charlie, I wanted the drawings to be a little more detailed and realistic than you see in a lot of children's picture books. Maud is a painter who taught herself digital illustration and I thought her work had a lot of charm and humanity to it. She did an amazing job of capturing life on the farm and how small Charlie really is compared to the other farm animals as she goes about her adventure. Her rendering of character body language and facial expressions was priceless to me, as well.

Where do you get your ideas?

There are a lot of impressions and daydreams I've hung onto from childhood and they've definitely been a well I've gone to for some of my stories. I also get a lot from my immediate environment, watching the antics that animals get up to here in the hills, for one. Snippets of conversation around the house are surprisingly fertile ground, as well.

A while back, my daughter started saying, "Oooh, beast and alley birds," constantly in this hilarious tone of voice. I asked her where it came from and she just shrugged. I loved the sound of it and made up a story to go with it. Now it's going to be my first graphic novel for kids.

Which children's writers do you admire?

One of the books that made a big impression on me as a kid was this story by Jan Slepian called *The Hungry Thing*. It has an old-world, fairy tale quality to it, but it's also very participatory and fun to read aloud.

I love how Maurice Sendak was able to be so non-pretentiously poetic, especially in a book like *The Moon Jumpers*. And I think the Ivy and Bean books by Annie Barrows are laugh-out-loud funny and amazing in their sly sensitivity to the power of female friendships.

What are you doing next? Will there be more books about Charlie?

There's definitely another story about Charlie in the works. There's also my completed graphic novel, *Beast and Early Birds*, which, in the end, is a story about homelessness and cooperation. And I've also started a book I'm calling *The Tallest Tree*, which was inspired by the crazy squirrels in my neighborhood here in Oakland.

Reviews

Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice by Stephen Boni is a beautifully illustrated, well-written, entertaining children's book. BUT that's not all it is! This book has many meanings and many layers. It's about grit, determination, bravery, and the ability of one voice to create change on a global level. It's also about interrupting sexism, inclusivity, fighting oppression, and making a difference. Above all, it's about joy! This is not only a book for children, it's a book for people of all ages. As a psychologist, family therapist, and meditation teacher, I will recommend it to everyone.

-Susan Amsterdam, PhD
Psychologist and Family Therapist
Haverford, PA

Tonight, I listened to my second grader read *Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice*. Charlie, a pleasant chicken, has a talent for singing. It's what makes her the happiest! However, she quickly learns that it's not acceptable to have a talent that may compete for the respect given to the leader of the chicken coop, the rooster.

Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice is an exemplar text for teaching about courage and perseverance, acceptance and forgiveness. As an educator for the past 22 years, I've seen picture books serve as an effective tool to help children connect to important human topics. They can be taught empathy and begin to be motivated by their compassion for others—inspired to speak up about injustices they see in the world around them.

Readers will enjoy relating to an ordinary character with extraordinary talents!

-Jennifer Berry-Propst
Elementary School Principal,
Jersey Shore Area School District

Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice offers the perfect length, language, and theme as a read-aloud book. Charlie is a wonderful character in the mold of Molly Lou Melon and other strong girls in children's fiction picture books. She stays uniquely herself, practicing an unexpected hobby—singing for her own enjoyment.

She won't let her chicken community on the farm limit her because this is not her gender-prescribed role. As the other farm animals give her a warm reception, she is emboldened to inspire, share her talents, and teach others. The illustrations are interesting and many are very funny, especially the facial expressions of the chickens! This fills the need for books that celebrate being yourself and teach that you have the power to entertain yourself when you're bored. Appropriate for all library collections and bookstores.

-Tracey Cosgrove
Head Librarian,
St. Paul's Elementary School
Oakland, CA

Charlie the Chicken Finds Her Voice is a charming tale about resilience and finding your voice. Charlie loves to sing. When her coop mates tell her that only roosters are allowed to sing, Charlie sets out to find a place of belonging. Her journey leads her down a path of self-discovery and optimism, proving that staying true to who you are is what matters most.

This story will engage young readers with its relatable, easy-to-understand storyline about self-confidence.

-AnneMarie Guertin
Author of ABC, Rise Up and Be!:
An Empowering Alphabet for
Changing the World
Haverhill, MA