



Meet Norman Bridwell



Find something you like to do, and do your best at it," says Norman Bridwell, author and illustrator of scores of books for children. Bridwell knows what he's talking about, having found creative fulfillment and success in a career that has spanned four decades.

Norman Bridwell was born in Kokomo, Indiana, on February 15, 1928, the son of Vern Ray and Mary Leona Bridwell. As a child Bridwell loved to draw, but he confides that teachers never raved about his artwork. "In school there was always somebody who was better than me; the art teacher always liked their work better than mine," he tells children.

Nonetheless, Bridwell followed his interests after graduation and set out to turn his love of drawing into a career. After attending John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis (1945–1949) and New York's Cooper Union (1953–1954), Bridwell went to work as a commercial artist in New York City. In 1962, while drawing cartoons for filmstrips and slides, he approached book publishers in the hope of illustrating children's books. By Bridwell's account, an editor selected one illustration from his portfolio and suggested that he develop a story around it. The illustration was that of a big red dog and a little girl. At his wife's suggestion, Bridwell named the dog after an imaginary friend from her childhood. Within one year, Clifford the Big Red Dog was in print and on his way to becoming a beloved icon in children's book series. By his side stood Emily Elizabeth, the young female character named after Bridwell's own daughter.

To date, more than 86 Clifford books are in print, along with two educational software programs and a public television series based on the well-loved character. In addition, Bridwell has written and illustrated other children's books, including the popular titles *The Witch Next Door*, *The Witch Goes to School*, and *How to Care for Your Monster*. Which Clifford books are his favorites? The author-illustrator fondly admires Clifford's spunk and sense of humor in *Clifford's Tricks*, *Clifford in Hollywood*, and *Clifford and the Grouchy Neighbors*.

His message to young readers? Bridwell advises, "Sometimes you'll do something you really like and no one else does. You'll feel terrible, but you've just got to press on and keep trying. If you like doing it and keep working at it, then someday you will succeed. Do it for yourself."