

Making a Mark

by Karen Fletcher, a guest contributor

A book about Mark Stoddart's life will help young dyslexic learners.

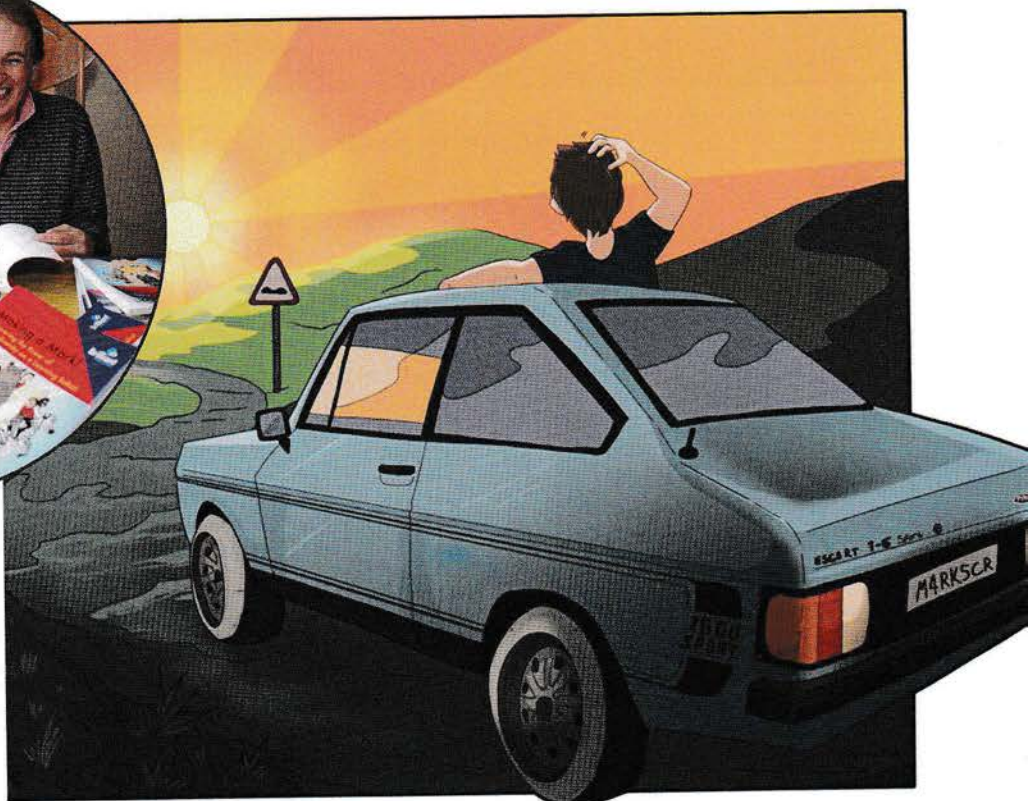
In the ever-evolving landscape of education, understanding and embracing neurodiversity is a crucial journey that society continues to undertake. Mark Stoddart, ambassador for Dyslexia Scotland and a passionate advocate for neurodivergent individuals, has embarked on this path, which he thoughtfully chronicles in his first book alongside Katrin McElderry, 'Making A Mark: Discovering the Power of Neurodiversity on a Learning Safari'.

This illuminating narrative takes readers on a captivating safari through the diverse terrain of neurodiversity, where the nuances are unveiled, and untapped potential is exposed.



Above:
Dyslexia Scotland
Ambassador Mark
Stoddart signs books.

Right: Illustration from
'Making a Mark'



A personal journey through neurodiversity

From an early age, Mark was treated differently. His struggles with reading in his formative school years led to bullying from both students and teachers, who mistakenly believed he wasn't trying hard enough. It was only after being identified as dyslexic and finding the right learning environment, one that catered to his creative nature, that he was able to flourish. Mark's journey eventually led him to become the accomplished artist he is today, with his sculpting work attracting renowned customers including Sir Elton John and Buzz Aldrin.

Unveiling 'Making A Mark'

The book, which is about Mark's life, serves as a roadmap for navigating the intricate landscape of neurodiversity in education. With immense passion and a deep understanding of the challenges faced by neurodiverse individuals, Mark embarks on a 'learning safari' that is as enlightening as it is empowering. The book is not just a recollection of personal experiences retold through the characters; it's a comprehensive guide for anyone seeking to better understand and support neurodiverse individuals. It is important to note that Mark is donating all proceeds that he receives for the book back into charitable neurodiversity causes.

The power of neurodiversity

One of the central themes explored in *Making A Mark* is the immense potential within neurodiversity. Mark and Kate argue that the traditional educational system often fails to harness the unique strengths and talents of neurodivergent individuals. By sharing Mark's story of how he got through his struggles and harnessed neurodiversity as a source of strength, the book offers hope and inspiration to those navigating the challenging world of education. Neurodiversity is portrayed not as a limitation but as a source of incredible power and potential.

A paradigm shift in education

Making A Mark challenges the conventional model of ►



education and offers a refreshing perspective. It highlights the one-size-fits-all approach fails to address the diverse needs of students. The book advocates for a shift in educational paradigms, one that places individual learning styles, strengths and challenges at the forefront. This shift acknowledges that neurodiversity is a spectrum, and each individual's experience is unique.

Empowering parents and educators

The book doesn't limit itself to the experiences of neurodivergent individuals alone. It provides guidance for parents, teachers, and caregivers, offering insights into how to support and nurture the potential of neurodiverse children. The book shares practical strategies and resources to empower those who play pivotal roles in the lives of neurodivergent individuals.

What's next? The global initiative: a bronze sculptured hippo and oxpecker bird raffle

Mark Stoddart's dedication to improving the lives of individuals with dyslexia and neurodiverse issues goes beyond the pages of his book. Mark is not one to rest on his laurels; his next endeavour is a worldwide charity raffle in collaboration with the Rotary Club, in which a special edition Mark Stoddart bronze hippo table with a sterling silver oxpecker bird (hallmarked by the renowned Hamilton & Inches) is the first prize. All proceeds from this raffle will go to The Rotary Club, supporting awareness of mental health and neurodivergence. Mark always believes there is more work to be done, he loves doing what he can to create a fairer, more supportive world and doesn't plan on stopping anytime soon. ■

Above and right: illustrations from the book by Scottish illustrators Rachel Cush and Rossie Stone.