

For Review Only



DRAW ON LOVE gives us a peek into the life of self-taught artist and Guinness Book of Records holder, Peter Draw. In his inspirational autobiography filled with personal photographs and drawing tips, Peter shows that, in spite of roadblocks in life and even without years of art school, he can still be a successful artist and lead a fulfilling life through his drawings.

Here he shares his passion for drawing, from his early childhood years when he held his first pencil stub, to his teenage and adult years when he realized how his drawings can help him make a positive difference to the world. This is a book that will inspire you to reach for your dreams and motivate you to use your interests for the bigger good of society.

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DRAW ON LOVE

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Peter Draw

PETER DRAW
DRAW
ON
LOVE

THE INSPIRING
STORY OF AN
ORDINARY
SINGAPOREAN



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“Peter’s dedication of the whole of his entire adult life, drawing to protect children who cannot protect themselves, has warmed the hearts of many children and adults alike, including me.

What you love has become your life. I hope your story will inspire even more people to find the courage to pursue and never give up on their dreams.”

Jackie Chan

International Movie Star

“Nothing seems to dampen his hope, shake his belief or daunt his crusade. Somehow, Peter has an incredible resolve in helping kids believe that they have a right to dream.

Even ordinary folks have been moved by Peter’s energy: they can make others’ dreams come through. Being in the charity and social circuit, we see something categorically pure in Peter’s art, intention and labor.

Keep drawing on love, Peter. May your story rouse many more to draw out the hopes and dreams of others.”

Jennie Chua & The Management of The RICE Company Limited

“The young artist who came to our family carnival had an unusual name, Peter Draw. He explained with a smile that he had adopted it as a gift from children he met at his art workshops who had trouble pronouncing his surname, ‘Zhuo’. He had just finished National Service, and was starting a new venture to draw colour to the world.

This is a story of an ordinary Singaporean with extraordinary determination, a gift to draw happiness to others, and a mission to inspire children and the child in everyone to live a joyful and purposeful life.”

Evelyn S Wong

Writer, Consultant

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“Through his drawings, Peter is able to touch and inspire children around the world. He has the heart of a child and it is this youthful enthusiasm for life that allows him to relate so well with kids.”

Lim Sau Hoong

Creative Director for Guinness Stout TV Campaign 1989-94, Bank of China Campaign 1996, Speak Mandarin Campaign 2010, Singapore Teochew Festival 2014, Visual Advisor for Opening of Beijing Olympics 2008.

“This is a book about determination, creativity, and following your own path. Peter and I have never met in person, but our paths have crossed through our mutual love for the way creativity lifts the human spirit. This is an important book for people of all ages.”

Joshua Fruhlinger

Writer, Nerd, SVP Defy Media


“Not only is Peter a talented artist, but he is also a very caring and humble person. Everyone should read his inspiring story.”

R Ramachandran

Executive Director, The National Book Development Council of Singapore

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PETER DRAW

DRAW
ON
**LOVE**

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Chapter 1

Falling in Love



I wanted to be a doughnut when I grew up.

At least, that was what I wrote in my English composition “My Childhood Dream” in Primary One. My teacher was not amused when she read my composition. “Peter, you have to find another dream,” Mrs Wong told me sternly as she peered over her glasses.

I was puzzled. Did she not like doughnuts? They were so delicious! I loved doughnuts. Every week, I would diligently save my pocket money. This was no easy feat for a hungry boy of six with only 40 cents a day: 20 cents for a small meal, 10 cents for a drink, and 10 cents for a sweet or a snack. When Saturday morning finally arrived, I would jump out of bed and rush to the confectionery shop near my house to get my little sugary bites of what was heaven to me.

"Teacher, why can't I be a doughnut?" I asked innocently.

"You can't be a doughnut! It's not a job, it's not a business."

"But they are so delicious! If I am a doughnut, I can eat doughnuts every day." The thought of biting into the soft, warm, fluffy dough made my mouth water in anticipation.

My teacher sighed. "So what happens after you finish eating your new doughnut body?"

I was stumped. "Teacher, I didn't think that far ahead!"

Fortunately, doughnuts were not the only love I had as a kid. My other big love was much less superficial and has stayed with me until now. It is my first love — drawing.



I was three years old when I held a pencil for the first time. I cannot say for sure, but I think it was my mother who handed it to me with some paper, in an attempt to keep me occupied while she made dinner or did some household chores one busy afternoon. As the second child, I often played with the toys that my elder brother had already outgrown. The pencil was no exception. Short and stubby, it was a cheap made-in-China 2B pencil that had alternating red and black sides, topped with a red eraser that always left the paper rough and ugly with grey streaks after use. After being sharpened repeatedly, the pencil had become too short for my brother to hold comfortably, but it was the perfect size for my tiny hand. I wrapped my small fingers around it and made a mark on the paper.

I was fascinated by the dark grey line running down the paper.

When I was a baby, I was often waving my finger in the air, entranced by the shapes and lines around me. My mother used to say I was “drawing in the air”. Here, for the first time, I could see what had only been in my mind, brought to life on the paper. It was an eye-opening moment to realise that I had the ability to create something tangible, something real, using nothing more than some paper and a pencil.

I moved the pencil across the page — up, then down, then in circles, over and over again. Soon, the paper was covered with random pencil marks and I felt an inexplicably overwhelming sense of satisfaction at my scribbles. I yearned to find another piece of white, pristine paper and cover it with my drawings! It was to be the start of my lifelong love affair with drawing.

From then on, I drew constantly on all the paper I could find, which was not much. My father was an umbrella salesman at Mustafa Centre, a popular 24-hour shopping centre in central Singapore, while my mother was a housewife who took care of my brother, me, and my younger sister. Together with my grandfather, we lived in a small but cosy four-room flat in Ang Mo Kio, a housing estate in the north of Singapore. We were never poor to the point of having to beg for food or shelter, but bringing up three kids on a single income meant living frugally. My parents did not skimp on the daily necessities and our educational supplies, but sketchbooks and drawing blocks did not fall into those categories. I had to be resourceful about finding drawing paper.

In the 1980s, it was common for Chinese households in Singapore to display a traditional daily almanac on their living room wall. Each page of the calendar would feature the date in bright red numbers,

with the day's Chinese horoscope printed at the bottom. Meant to be torn off and thrown away daily, the paper was thin and flimsy to the point of being slightly translucent.

One day in November, my parents put up the new calendar for the next year. It hung there like a ripe red fruit; clean, shiny, and inviting. I couldn't resist it. Here was an endless supply of paper for my doodling hands! Without telling anyone about my plan, I quietly carried a stool from my parents' bedroom and pushed it against the wall below the calendar. I clambered onto the stool and tore off "1st January" from under the cover.



Success! I had paper on which to create my masterpieces. "Now, I just need the space to do it," I thought.

Back then, there was only one study table in the house. As my brother was the only one attending primary school, he had

the rightful use of the table for his homework in the afternoon. Only when he was done, would I be able to use the table. I waited impatiently for him to complete his homework each day, until one day I realised, hey, the entire floor was my table! I didn't need the table, I just needed a flat surface for the paper! After that discovery, I could be found most afternoons lying on my belly on the floor. A pillow cushioned my chest and propped up my head as I scribbled furiously on the calendar pages, oblivious to the sounds of pots clanking in the kitchen and the occasional squeals of children playing outside.

Every inch of white space was precious and I filled the paper from edge to edge with my childish doodles. I drew the wildflowers and bougainvilleas that surrounded the playground next to my block of flats. I drew the huge white clouds passing by my window grilles each afternoon. I drew the people I met at the supermarket when my mother took me along to buy groceries for the week.

The paper was so thin that it tore easily as I drew over my own sketches, until it was a messy, unrecognisable mass of black. When at last the paper could not be salvaged, I would tear off another piece from the calendar and repeat the whole process.

I drew so much, so fast, that I tore out all the pages from the calendar even before the new year had begun! I went to tell my mother, who was cooking dinner in the kitchen. "What!" she exclaimed in disbelief. "We just put up that calendar a few weeks ago!"

Ma knew that I had been drawing on the calendar pages, but she had not realised the extent to which I was ripping out pages every day to feed my growing thirst for drawing. I had devoured

the calendar like parched earth receiving the first drops of rain after months of drought, and it took only weeks for me to completely use up 365 pieces of paper.

That was when she decided enough was enough and bought me my first drawing block.



I am fortunate to have a supportive family who has always encouraged me in my love of drawing. Ah Kong, in particular, was my very first art teacher.

Ah Kong was my paternal grandfather and the only male among his siblings. As the only son, he had a strong sense of responsibility to work hard and become the breadwinner for the family. Being uneducated, he took on a variety of odd jobs, from being a cook for an expat family, to a construction worker, and finally a coffee shop assistant. Years of working outdoors in the sun and harsh weather caused Ah Kong to be perpetually lean and tanned. It was not easy, but Ah Kong did not complain or show any discontent about his lot in life. He single-handedly brought up his three children, who would become my father, my uncle and my aunt.

A childhood friend of mine remembers Ah Kong as being very fierce and stern. My friend, who lived in the same block of flats, would sometimes come to my house after school, to play. Before he came over, he would always phone me to tell me to open the door as he was afraid that Ah Kong would open the door instead. Sometimes, I would be so engrossed in watching cartoons that I would forget

to open the door for my friend, and the door would still be closed when he arrived. My friend was so afraid of Ah Kong that instead of knocking on the door and risking having Ah Kong greet him, he would run all the way home to call me on the phone again!

Ah Kong was not an expressive man, but it was clear that he doted on us, his grandchildren. Despite not earning much, he willingly bought gifts for us and seldom spent on himself. Sometimes, he would cut fruits for us to eat, which we particularly enjoyed after a hot, humid afternoon of playing with our toys and running around. In the photos that I have, Ah Kong was always smiling and laughing with us. My mother tells me that he loved to place kisses on our cheeks when we were young.

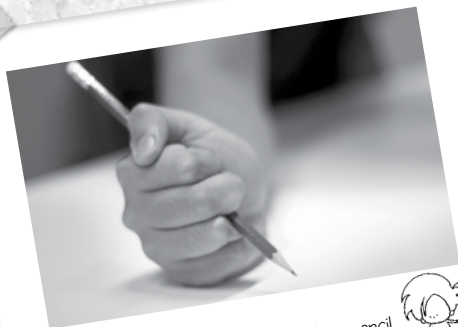
Ah Kong was not a great artist, but his specialty was the sparrow. He loved sparrows and could draw them really well. I remember spending many sunny afternoons with him, watching the pencil dancing gracefully in his chapped fingers as the sparrow took shape on the paper. Ah Kong showed me how to use different strokes to create different lines and textures. Depicting the softer down of the sparrow's belly called for a lighter grip, while the sharp lines of its beak required a firmer control over the pencil. I learnt that the harder I pressed on the pencil, the darker the tone became. Ah Kong explained to me that a combination of techniques was required to create this deceptively simple drawing.



My mother was also a great source of encouragement for me. After that first drawing block had been completely used up, she bought me my second one, my third one, and countless others after that.

Ma also tried to correct the way I held the pencil. The most common way to hold a pencil is known as the tripod grip. The thumb, index finger, and middle finger form a tripod on which the pencil is balanced, while the last two fingers are curled into the palm. The pencil is slanted at a 45-degree angle to the paper and supported by the third finger, while the index finger guides its movement. Most people use this grip for writing and some people feel that it is the most efficient way to hold a pencil.

However, from the first time I held a pencil, I positioned it such that it rested on my fourth finger while being wrapped snugly by my thumb, index and third fingers. This meant that the pencil is almost upright and its motion guided mostly by the third finger. Ma tried all ways to get me to use the tripod grip, but I continue using my own grip to this very day as I feel that it allows me to draw more freely.



The way I hold my pencil



Being the eldest child in my family, my brother developed an unflinching sense of responsibility from the time he was a young boy. He was a hardworking and serious kid who consistently scored high grades in his studies. I looked up to him as a role model, and his drive would (and continues to) influence me to work hard on my own dreams and desires. My brother was also my playtime ally. After he had completed his homework, he would either doodle with me or play rough-and-tumble games, as boys do. Sometimes, we would compare our drawings and argue over whose was better. My grandfather occasionally stepped in as the judge, usually declaring mine to be better than my brother, to my satisfaction.

When I was five, my brother introduced me to *Dragon Ball*, a Japanese manga or comic series by Akira Toriyama. Like many other boys, I was completely captivated by the adventures of Goku, from his childhood through his adulthood, as he trained in martial arts and travelled the world in search of the orbs known as dragon balls. There were many books in the series and I could not help reading all of them one after another.

Pretty soon, I had built up an admirable collection of *Dragon Ball* comics and merchandise, such as action figures and T-shirts. It was impressive, considering my meagre pocket money at the time. It took me weeks to save up for just one comic book, as I could only save a few cents every day. My obsession with *Dragon Ball* continued into my primary school years, and some of my most prized possessions were the *Dragon Ball* figurines given to me by my aunt for my birthday when I was in Primary Five. I loved my collection and would play with them every chance I had.

Of course, my favourite character was Goku, the underdog hero. Like all little boys with overactive imaginations, I fancied myself to be a hero just like him and the bathroom was where I vanquished many imaginary enemies with my dazzling powers. My brother and I also engaged in many death-defying stunts and noisy sword fights as Dragon Ball characters, much to the amusement of my family and the annoyance of some neighbours.

A large appeal of the manga was its artwork, and I spent many hours drawing Dragon Ball characters and making up numerous scenarios for them. In the beginning, I would copy the various poses and expressions of Goku as closely as possible. Soon, I found out that I was best at drawing a front view of him, standing heroically, arms akimbo and muscles bulging. It was difficult to draw his profile, back view or any other poses. I drew him over and over again until I was able to sketch a full portrait of him in a few minutes. Sometimes I would divert my attention to the other characters, but I would always go back to sketching my favourite hero.

In those days, we did not have computers or electronic devices to play with, and using our imagination was the only way to fill up the abundance of leisure time we had. Besides Dragon Ball, I was also an avid fan of Ninja Turtles. Every Sunday morning I would be glued to the tiny 14-inch TV set in my grandmother's house, watching the latest episode. The exploits of the characters fired up my imagination and I could not wait to recreate them all on paper soon.





Everyone around me was always very kind and encouraging about my drawings. Although none of those rudimentary artworks have survived, on hindsight they must have been raw and unpolished, just like the scribbles of any five-year-old, really. When I proudly showed my art to the adults, I would always get praises and exclamations like “Wow, that’s so nice!” from them. Pretty soon, all my relatives knew about my dream to be an artist when I grew up and got used to seeing me with a drawing pad everywhere I went.

In those early years of my life, drawing was simply something I did for fun, just like playing with my Dragon Ball figurines, watching Ninja Turtles cartoons, or reading my many comic books. I drew without agenda and with freedom, unfettered by whether or not I was holding the pencil the right way or using the right techniques.

My idyllic childhood of doughnuts, drawing and Dragon Ball lasted until I was six years old, when a harsh, careless remark by an art teacher almost smashed my nascent dream of being an artist.



Peter's love of drawing started as a personal passion. One that was not a smooth ride, as he had to struggle with issues such as finances, having been kicked out of an art class because he could not afford the fees. However, he persevered and pursued this interest, receiving encouragement from his grandfather. When he lost the latter during his teenage years, Peter challenged himself to use his drawing skills to protect other children. He has since gone on many different trips to touch the lives of children through teaching and encouraging them to draw. On one such trip, he was inspired by a little girl in Costa Rica who had just lost her mother, to set up an IT company that would help create lasting memories. He made her that promise and today is on the brink of launching the company.