

Solving English Riddles

By **B.C Lewis**

He's a multi-award winning childrens author who's also had a rich career as an illustrator and newspaper cartoonist. And now Katoomba's Tohby Riddle has turned his attention to sorting out the grammar woes of the country.

The Greatest Gatsby: A Visual Book of Grammar is a visual journey through the world of grammar, with easy to understand explanations of the rules and structures used every day. It is due for release this month.

So why write it?

Riddle said it was a "combination of things".

"I'm really interested in language and I'm also really interested in turning ideas into visual information, especially tricky concepts like grammar. I also wanted to make the kind of book I would have wanted to have when I was a schoolboy — I think I was more of a visual learner."

Riddle isn't sure who will read his latest tome, the seventh book he has had published since moving to the Mountains eight years ago, and his 20th since he first started writing in 1989.

"Actually, I'm terrible at guessing who will read my books. When I create a book I just focus on capturing the idea

as well as possible.

"I hope the book's audience will be anyone who wants to feel more confident with grammar and is looking for a more accessible, cheerful and innovative presentation of the subject. From what I can tell, this seems to include editors, teachers, students and also people for whom English is a second language."

Riddle said he has already had good feedback from the one advance copy he was given by the publishers which his nine-year-old son Archer liked and took in with him recently to his Katoomba school.

"Archer, liked the book and wanted to show his teacher and class. His teacher said she would like to use the book with the class," Riddle said.

The book was a "massive challenge" for the whimsical writer and designer, conveying difficult concepts in a memorable and fun way instead of his usual approach in stories where he "entertains the highly improbable" like zoo escaping animals and talking donkeys.

"I got to try all kinds of techniques and ideas because I wanted variety and differentiation within the book to make each bit of information more distinctive and memorable."

Riddle hopes it "makes the subject less threatening and the



Selling grammar: Tohby Riddle with one of his biggest fans, his nine-year-old son Archer.

teaching of it less solemn" by "using humour and absurdity".

"With a subject like grammar there's always more you can learn about it."

The Greatest Gatsby: A Visual Book of Grammar is published by Penguin and available in bookstores from March 25.