

Notes

One of the most engaging things about being an illustrator of children's books is the opportunity to create my drawings of the iconic figures in children's literature, such as Cinderella, Thumbelina, the Nutcracker—and now, the Three French Hens!

When I was a child, I began to imagine drawings in the church choir loft while I waited to sing. When the sermons got a bit slow, I would dream up scenes from my favorite stories to keep myself from fidgeting. I'd picture how I would show the characters moving about in their dramatic situations. In my mind I would draw the Snow Queen and her flying sled, Black Beauty running across the fields, Cinderella, Thumbelina, and many others. Unbeknownst to me, I was developing the technique I would use when I became a professional artist. When I decided I wanted to do a version of *The Twelve Days of Christmas* that would appeal to children, I entertained various notions of how all of the extraordinary gifts could be portrayed in a lively story. After I talked things over with my friend Sharon Lerner, whose idea of a trip to Santa's workshop, accompanied by ladies dancing and lords a'leaping, helped the story take shape, I began sketching scenes that would be used in the book.

When drawing people, I always use real-life models for inspiration. For this particular story, Sasha Nelson was my Emma, her dad, Josh Nelson, made a good Santa, and Elaine Llewellyn helped. My daughter, Ali Phillips, and her husband, Chad Phillips, directed the models and photographed the scenes. Using these as a reference, I again began sketching. Many drawings (and much counting of characters) later, I turned to my favorite 350-pound watercolor paper and began to paint, hoping that children would enjoy this whimsical interpretation of a holiday favorite.

