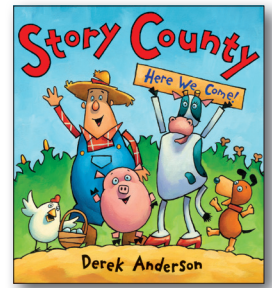


Dear Readers,

I can't wait to introduce you to my new friends in **Story County: Here We Come!** But first there's one thing you should know: Story County is not a made up place—it's real. It's right in the middle of Iowa farm country, and it's where I grew up.



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My grandfather was a farmer and I loved visiting his farm when I was a boy. It was such a fun, magical place to explore. For years I've wanted to create a book with a farm that had that same feeling—a place where anything is possible.

But I wasn't sure exactly how to go about it until my new friends—Farmer, Dog, Pig, Chicken, and Miss Cow—came along. Let me tell you how we met, you'll never believe it.

I've been speaking to children for years about drawing with simple shapes—it makes drawing really easy and fun. One day, I sat down, started drawing shapes and there she was: Miss Cow! It was almost as if she'd wandered into my studio on her own. And she was wearing high heels! Then one by one Pig, Chicken, Farmer, and Dog appeared. All were made of simple shapes but with big personalities. Pig was round and cheerful and he pulled his mud around in a wagon—silly Pig. Chicken was small and feathery with a heart on her head. But don't let her size fool you. She knows how to handle a tractor and when Chicken speaks, everybody listens. (I definitely see my mother in Chicken.) And let me tell you—if Chicken told me to eat my vegetables, she wouldn't have to say it twice! Farmer is probably the nicest fellow you could meet. And though Farmer thinks he's the head of the farm, I'm afraid he's not. Dog is the brains behind the operation. There wouldn't be a farm without Dog. If you want something done, just ask Dog. He'll make it happen, especially if you offer him a bone.

In **Story County: Here We Come!** Farmer, Dog, Pig, Chicken, and Miss Cow do build a farm but it's not exactly like my grandfather's farm. Do you know what they plant in the fields? They plant candy corn and jellybeans! My grandfather would be shaking his head if he saw that, and I think it would make him smile.

I hope you enjoy visiting my new friends in Story County—a place where friends come together to create stories and have fun...a place where anything can happen.

Your farmy friend,

Derek Anderson

