

10 Questions for the Author

1. Why did you write your first title *The Chocolate Story*?

I've always enjoyed writing, yet in my "day job", the writing is marketing-oriented and intended to sell. So, I've always wanted to write something that's more warm and fuzzy, simple and good for children. A few years ago I had some time off from work due to health issues, needed something positive to do, and the idea of writing a fable came to mind. The basic *Chocolate Story* concept comes from a story that my children and I cooked up during family walks in forest preserves.

2. What do your children think of it?

My children are older now, and even though the fables are written for children, all three have been very supportive. . .they love to read and are fantastic writers. Nick has come to a few Storytimes with me. . .he is an awesome greeter and great with kids. He's also signed books with me and the kids think this is very cool, since he is in the books. I better watch out; he might take my job one day!

3. How long did it take?

The first draft of *The Chocolate Story* took a full day. I let that sit for a while, and the second draft took about half a day. After sharing the manuscript with friends and school teachers, there were a few minor edits. The illustrations, book design and website took about 6 months to complete.

4. Did you do the illustrations?

No. I do paint and draw on occasion, yet great visuals are so key in a childrens book, I looked for someone who has a style that works well with the subject of the book and has experience in developing children's books. Rex is a perfect fit and an excellent collaborator.

5. What is your favorite part of the process?

Seeing the story come to life in the first "pencil rough" illustrations is awesome! Seeing the first bound copies is another leap forward. And, the first Storytime is very cool. . .watching the children's faces as the story is read and the illustrations are revealed, hearing them laugh, and then listening to their answers to the discussion questions. The stuff they come up with is amazing! Lately we've been holding "Reader's Theater," where adults and children read the parts of the characters. Great fun!

10 Questions for the Author cont.

6. Will there be more titles?

Yes. *The Chocolate Story* is the first of a series of modern fables, which have a similar format and illustration style. *The Lemonade Story* and *The Pillow Story* have been released, and there are several more titles in the works. There has also been discussion of creating an “Africanized Version” of *The Chocolate Story* so we’ll see what 2010 brings!

7. Do you have any formal training in writing?

No. . .yet I did enjoy taking Creative Writing classes when I attended Northern Illinois University. Go Huskies!!!

8. What is your favorite part of *The Chocolate Story*?

I like when Nick and Emily are discussing their predicament, and the little spark pops out on the fire in the fireplace, which leads Em to a solution.

9. What authors have influenced you?

Aesop’s Fables, Shel Silverstein’s *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, and C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* were all favorites at our house. I also remember reading Virginia Lee Burton’s *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* when I was a kid.

10. What is your favorite kind of chocolate?

Dark chocolate, no doubt. It's good, and good for you!

