

EDUCATION NEWS

Educator Resources | Education & Information Age Education News

[Home](#) [News »](#) [Commentaries »](#) [Blogs](#) [Featured](#) [Global](#) [Higher Ed »](#) [Cyberbullying »](#) [InfoAgeEd »](#) [Contact »](#)

[Home](#) » [Commentaries](#) » [An Interview with Don M. Winn: There's A Monkey in My Backpack!](#)

An Interview with Don M. Winn: There's A Monkey in My Backpack!

Feb 20, 2019 by
Michael F. Shaughnessy EducationViews Senior Columnist

Michael F. Shaughnessy

1) Don, first of all, can you tell us about some of your books—I personally like Sir Kaye—but you have others.

Well, thank you, I like Sir Kaye too. Those are my chapter books. But I've also written twelve picture books and I am working on my next one now. My picture books are designed to help inspire young people to be heroes in their own lives by discovering their strengths and embracing their struggles. They enrich kids' imaginations and demonstrate ways to successfully handle complicated stages of personal growth and difficult emotions.



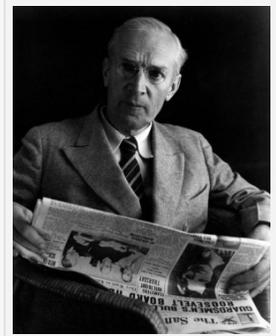
For instance, *The Higgledy-Piggledy Pigeon* is about a homing pigeon named Hank, who loves going to flight school until he discovers that he has no sense of direction. He's overwhelmed and saddened and feels like a failure, but then a kind teacher shows him how he can compensate for his problem and still succeed. This story is about how everyone learns in different ways, and how anyone can succeed—even despite a learning challenge—with the right kind of help and effort!

Hank's story is partly inspired by my personal experience with starting first grade—I was so excited to go to school! I knew I was going to love it! And then once I was in school, I realized that I wasn't keeping up with the other kids—that I just couldn't do it. It was a crushing realization for me as a child, (I didn't know at the time that I was dyslexic) and I wrote this story about Hank to help show any children facing similar situations that they don't need to feel humiliated or give up just because they have to do things differently than the other kids in the class.

Another favorite of mine is one of my earlier books. It's called *The Tortoise and the Hairpiece*. It's a great little fable about a lonely little tortoise named Jake who is embarrassed by his bald head. He won't even play with the other animals when they invite him because he's convinced that he looks so different that no one wants to be his friend. Then he comes up with a plan to make himself look just like everyone else—or so he thinks. But he learns that no one needs to try to be someone else or look like someone else just to make friends or feel good about themselves.

My chapter books, a four-book series called Sir Kaye the Boy Knight, are great, fast-paced adventure stories. The series tells about how twelve-year-old Kaye is knighted and faces the strongest knight in the land in a tournament, how he finds a missing treasure and uncovers the secret behind the old king's death, how he searches for a missing tutor and foils a plot against Knox, and finally how he risks everything as he races to save

SUBSCRIBE
Education News!



UPTON SINCLAIR AWARD
WINNERS 2018

We present university paper writing company online that can do a paper in a few hours.

5 most important things in careers research paper

Consider Studying Life Science Like Cody Moxam

Writer-Elite.com – professional custom writing service

How to Make a Website resource

Cheating Wife Tumblr

Donate

his father's life. One of my favorite features of this series is the friendship that develops between Kaye and a boy named Reggie who struggles with dyslexia, but who learns that he is still of great value in the world.

I'm not sure if you know about the *Sir Kaye Series Study Guide*. It's basically a lesson plan for using the Sir Kaye books in the classroom. It has lessons exploring a variety of themes from each book that can be adapted into classroom games to help students with reading comprehension, vocabulary, and creative and expository writing skills. There's also an appendix with historical information about life in the Middle Ages that I put together based on research I did while writing the books.

2) What do kids seem to like to read nowadays?

Kids today seem to gravitate more and more toward stories that feature magic and superpowers; after all, that's what's being marketed to them and to the adults in their life. Superheroes have the power to influence and shape a child's morals. They have the ability to develop a child's imagination through fantasy and magic, and I'm certainly not against a bit of healthy escape into an imaginary world. But here's the thing—magic and superpowers are not coping skills in real life. I'm heartened to see kids embrace my books and bond with characters who struggle just like they do, and yet figure out how to do the right thing and feel good about who they are.

3) What kind of feedback have you gotten from parents and teachers and readers about your books?

My favorite part of the day is receiving positive feedback from kids, parents, and teachers, but what has been most unexpected is recent positive feedback I've received from adult readers about my books—specifically the Sir Kaye series.

These fans describe how much they enjoy reading about Kaye's exciting journeys and adventures that relate to their own memories of childhood. It touches my heart to hear these things because the Kaye books were inspired by all the types of adventure stories I loved to hear when I was younger and that don't seem to be as popular with traditional publishers nowadays. I wrote the Sir Kaye series to fill a need that I noticed—fun, positive, wholesome adventure stories featuring kids who are true to themselves and to each other.

Here are a few recent comments I've received from adult readers:

Lora L. wrote, "Reading these books makes me happy. It's great to be able to enjoy books with my son as much as he's enjoying them!"

Dan G. states, "This series of books takes me back to my childhood when my young mind was brimming with possibilities of adventure and reminds me of one of my most special friendships from that time of my life."

Betty D. writes, "These books fill me with delight—the stories and characters are so engaging!"

And of course, young readers have plenty of great things to say as well. After reading the first installment of the Sir Kaye series, Samuel R. wrote, "This is the first time I've ever read a whole book! I couldn't stop reading even though reading is hard for me. When is the next one coming out?"

Jack T. wrote, "I love Reggie! He's just like me! Please write more!"

Emma C. wrote, "I have never known an author before. Please keep writing fun books! I want to read more about Kaye!"

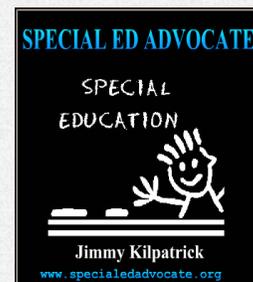
And librarian Kristine Hall wrote, "I have said it before, and I will say it again: the Sir Kaye the Boy Knight series makes the librarian in me want to gather a group of kids, put these books in their hands, and watch the magic happen. These books immediately draw the reader in with action, danger, and suspense, and it never lets up. Add to the mix bad guys readers will love to hate and the sprinkling of illustrations by the talented Dave Allred, and it's a perfect package for young and/or reluctant readers."

4) I understand you are writing about a student with "a monkey in their backpack..." What is this all about?

It begins with a third-grade girl entrusting the reader with the fact that, although no one else can see it, there's a monkey in her backpack. And he's full of mischief! He mixes up her letters in her spelling words, tells her to go right when she should go left, makes it hard for her to read and write, dances and makes faces at her when she's trying to pay attention in class, tickles her so she wiggles around in her desk and can't sit still, and even gets her in trouble! She feels frustrated and alone: it doesn't appear to her that any of her fellow students have monkeys making their lives miserable. But over the course of the story she sees that her monkey actually does some things that help her, teaching her lessons about herself, and that she can find her way around the challenges the monkey presents. It ends with her feeling good about herself and her monkey. And as with all my books, there are questions for discussion at the end of the book so parents and teachers can discern how the child feels about themselves and how the story impacted them.



Dr. Martin Haberman
1932 – 2012



INFOAGEED NEWS PAGES

- ▶ COMMON CORE #CAN I SEE
- ▶ Contact Us
- ▶ Cyber Bullying-31 Free Images by Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D.
- ▶ Cyberbullying – 20 National Bullying Prevention Month Images
- ▶ Cyberbullying Facts, Cyberbullying Examples-Education News
- ▶ Education News
 - ▶ Contributors
 - ▶ Haberman Educational Foundation | Education News
 - ▶ Privacy Policy
- ▶ Information Age Education Construct | InfoAgeEd
- ▶ Information Age Education News | IAEN | InfoAgeEd News
 - ▶ Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D. | Information Age Education
- ▶ Inside the Criminal Mind is Inside the Cybercriminal Mind
- ▶ Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D. Internet Safety Notes & Quotes
- ▶ Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D. | 2014 Cyberbullying Examples
- ▶ Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D. | An Internet Troll Overview
- ▶ Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D. | iPredator & InfoAge Forensics
- ▶ Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D. | What Are Internet Trolls?
- ▶ Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D. | What is Cyberbullying?
- ▶ Privacy Policy

5) Don for some kids, their monkey may be a slow reading rate, for others, poor decoding skills and for others, problems with reading comprehension. What are you trying to say with your new book?

The book's message is that all humans have parts of themselves that are difficult to embrace. We all struggle with something, and rather than hating that struggle, and feeling ashamed, broken, or inadequate, we can choose to be curious about our challenge and discover the ways it actually helps us. Also, kids learn that their struggle is just a part of who they are, it doesn't define them.

6) Don you have a super web site—can you give us the link and tell us what parents and teachers would find there?

My [website and blog](#) have recently been combined and it now provides a dynamic resource for parents, homeschoolers, and teachers. My website is also the portal where readers can communicate with me. I love questions and feedback from readers and do my best to answer each query personally.

You can find information there about the different [programs I offer to schools for author visits](#)—both for students (where I feature either picture books for younger students or give a slide show illustrating some historical background for the Kaye series for older ones. I also offer writing workshops.) and parents/educators. My two most popular presentations for parents and educators are about overcoming the challenges of helping dyslexic students learn to love to read and the value of shared reading.

You can easily locate specific articles related to [dyslexia and helping struggling readers](#), my [Making of the Sir Kaye Series](#) research blogs, my [Trip in Time](#) historical blogs, and you can search through my entire [blog archive](#).

You can also find short videos about my books on my website on both the [picture books page](#) and the [chapter books page](#).

In addition, [Cardboard Box Adventures Publishing](#) now has its own separate website that includes an online [CBA Publishing Catalog](#).

7) What have I forgotten to ask?

If you'd like to know more about when my upcoming book *There's a Monkey in my Backpack!* will be available, you can visit my website to [subscribe to my newsletter](#) or you can [follow me on Facebook](#) so you can get all the latest announcements.

I invite parents and educators to ask themselves: since this generation has more demands on their time and attention than any in history, isn't it wise to make the most of a child's reading time by carefully curating their reading materials?

As always, thanks so much for the opportunity to reach out to your readers!



Share this...

