

MIDDLE GRADE NINJA

Rob(ert) Kent's blog about reading and writing middle grade novels utilizing, ninja stealth and skill

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My name is Rob Kent and I am a middle grade ninja. I'm the author of the middle grade novel *Banneker Bones and the Giant Robot Bees*. I also write stories for older readers under the name Robert Kent. I'm in the business of promoting middle grade and young adult novels, and cousin, business is a' boomin'. If you're an author or a publishing professional who'd like to appear on the blog or the podcast, **email me this instant:**

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Or [friend me on Facebook](#) or follow me on Twitter: [@MGNinja](#)

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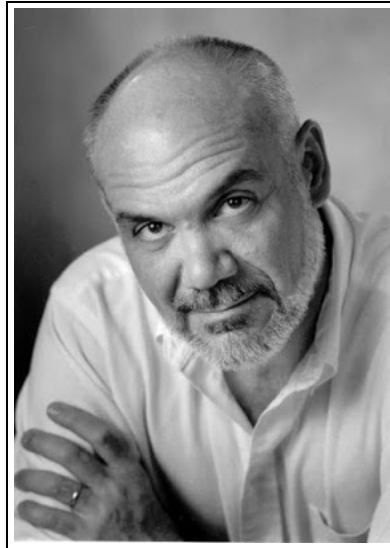


PODCAST

- [1st Middle Grade Ninja Clip](#)

Thursday, April 20, 2017

7 QUESTIONS FOR: AUTHOR BRUCE COVILLE



Bruce Coville was born in Syracuse, New York, in 1950. His family lived in far territory, about twenty miles north of Syracuse. Bruce grew up around the corn from his grandparents' dairy farm, where he spent a great deal of time as a ch dodging cows and chores to the best of his ability. As a young reader he loved Mary Poppins and Dr. Dolittle, and still has fond memories of rising ahead of t rest of his family so he could huddle in a chair and read THE VOYAGES OF L DOLITTLE. He also read lots of things that people consider junk (Nancy Drew the Hardy Boys, Tom Swift, and zillions of comic books). His only real regret is the time he spent watching television, when he could have been reading inste (A mind is a terrible thing to waste!)

His first book, THE FOOLISH GIANT, was published in 1978. It was illustratec his wife, Katherine, whom he had married in 1969. This was followed in 1979 SARAH'S UNICORN, also illustrated by Katherine. After a long period of work separately, the Covilles began collaborating again with SPACE BRAT and GOBLINS IN THE CASTLE, both published in 1992.

Before getting published Bruce earned his living as a toymaker, a gravedigger cookware salesman, an assembly line worker, and finally as an elementary school teacher (second and fourth grades). He left teaching in 1981 to devote himself to becoming a full time writer - though it took another five years to

achieve that goal!!)

Bruce has published over 100 books, which have appeared in over a dozen countries around the world and sold more than sixteen million copies. Among his most popular titles are MY TEACHER IS AN ALIEN, INTO THE LAND OF THE UNICORN and THE MONSTER'S RING. In 2001 he founded Full Cast Audio, an audiobook company dedicated to creating unabridged full cast recordings of the best in children's and young adult literature.

[Click here to read my review of My Teacher is an Alien.](#)

And now Bruce Coville faces the 7 Questions:

Question Seven: What are your top three favorite books?

Well, at least you allowed me three! This is better than those who want to know the absolute favorite, which changes with the day and my mood.

Okay, here we go:

1. TUCK EVERLASTING by Natalie Babbitt, which I think is the greatest children's book of the second half of the 20th centu was able to share it with a group of gifted fourth graders back when I was teaching, and their insights and appreciation for th text filled me with joy. It is simply a brilliant book.

2. BLEAK HOUSE by Charles Dickens. He is my favorite writer since I became a mature reader, and this is quite simply the most monumental novel I have ever read.

Show

- 2nd Middle Grade Ninja Clip Show
- 3rd Middle Grade Ninja Clip Show
- A Reading From Banneker Bones And The Alligator People
- A Reading From The Book Of David
- Episode 01: Author Laura Martin
- Episode 02: Author Barbara Shoup
- Episode 03: Author Jeff Norton
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- Episode 05: Editor Mary Kole
- Episode 06: Author Susan Kaye Quinn
- Episode 07: Author Jacqueline West
- Episode 08: Editor Amy Tipton
- Episode 09: Literary Agent John Cusick
- Episode 10: Author Daniel Kenney
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- Episode 12: Literary Agent Jennifer March Soloway
- Episode 13: Author Steven K. Smith
- Episode 14: Author Lamar Giles
- Episode 15: Author Kathi Appelt
- Episode 16: Public Relations Expert Megan Beatie
- Episode 17: Author Padma Venkatraman
- Episode 18: Literary Agent Holly Root
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- Episode 23: Literary Agent John Rudolph
- Episode 24: Author Dustin Brady
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- Episode 28: Editor Diana M. Pho
- Episode 29: Author M.G. Hennessey
- Episode 30: Author Debbie Dadey
- Episode 31: Literary Agent Jennifer Mattson
- Episode 32: Editor Molly Cusick

3. THE HIGH KING by Lloyd Alexander. I love the "Chronicles of Prydain" and this book, the glorious culmination, reduces me to tears every time I reread it. Lloyd's gift for combining humor with drama, adventure, and high emotion has been a model for me for my entire career.

Question Six: How much time do you spend each week writing? Reading?

I don't spend nearly as much time writing as I should, or even as much as I want to. My goal is three hours of solid writing per day, but rarely happens anymore. It's partly my own distractibility, and partly how many distractions surround me!

On the plus side, when I am coming in for a landing toward the end of a book, I can sometimes work for hours and hours.

Question Five: What was the path that led you to publication?

The basic one: writing and sending stuff out.

For eight years.

Question Four: Do you believe writers are born, taught or both? Which was true for you?

Oh, both, definitely. You have to have some native talent, and an innate desire to do this thing. But then you have to spend time learning your craft. I am a demon on craft, and think it is a writer's duty to not only master craft, but to spend his or her entire career increasing that mastery.

Question Three: What is your favorite thing about writing? What is your least favorite thing?

My favorite thing is something that happens toward the end of a book. The earlier part is usually a struggle as I'm trying to shape the story, understand the elements, arrange the pieces. But once everything is in place the final part of the story or book sometimes comes pouring out, often surprising me with stuff that makes perfect sense but that I hadn't realized until that moment. I love it when that happens!

My least favorite thing is a daily occurrence – the struggle to sit down and start! It is so easy to put off doing the very thing I love most. It is a strange aspect of how the brain, or at least my brain, works!

Question Two: What one bit of wisdom would you impart to an aspiring writer? (feel free to include as many other bits of wisdom as you like)

Do not give up. I went to college with people who probably better writers than I was. But they will not be published because they gave up. The three most important aspects in forging a writing career are talent, luck, and bone-headed obstinance.

Question One: If you could have lunch with any writer, living or dead, who would it be? Why?

Though there are dozens of contenders, I've had the good luck to dine with many of my contemporaries. That leaves the departed, and among them it is, hands down, William Shakespeare. For one thing, if we set aside all differences of language I think it would be a marvelously bawdy encounter. I have written and spoken often about the importance of earthy humor (far jokes!), and the great bard was clearly in line with this. We could discuss the adaptations of his work that I have done (seven all) and I would brace myself for either approval or scorn, hoping for the former. Whatever he thought of how I had toiled to bring his work to young people, I would have had the joy of sitting with one of the greatest scribes of all time, even if he chose to blow a raspberry at my own efforts. But I think that even if he did, we would have a marvelously merry time exchanging jokes and opinions. I would never want it to end!