

Presentations

K-1: “WHAT COULD THAT CHILD BE THINKING?”

To emerging readers, I talk about the funny things we all see in the world around us, and how I get my ideas by paying attention to them and asking questions. I use the Princess Posey books, as well as the Moose and Hildy early readers, as reference.

2-3: SPYING AS A CREATIVE WRITING TACTIC

Kids love to spy. So do I. I let them know I’m spying on them as I talk and may well use some of their bizarre behavior in a book. I talk about my childhood, and where ideas come from, and what they can learn from watching their families that they can use in their own writing, and plots, and characters, and —yes— the dreaded revision. I use the Owen Foote books, as well as the Princess Posey, Sophie Hartley, and Moose and Hildy books.

4-5: CHILDREN ARE RUTHLESS READERS

This age group is great. They’re on the edge of skeptical. They need to be wooed by books. I talk about how quickly they’ll reject a book based on the jacket or first sentence, and how they can pick out a good one before they lose interest in reading. I talk about elements of craft in writing, including plot, conflict, etc. and go into more depth about revision, using my manuscripts as examples.

Selling and Signing my Books:

Signing books for the children I write for is one of the greatest parts of my job. I’m happy to sign books in front of them while I’m there. If they can be sold in advance, all the better. Things move faster. If not, that’s fine, too.

Tips on Organizing a Successful School Visit:

BOOK EARLY

One of the easiest ways to assure that your school will have a wonderful and productive author visit is by giving your students plenty of time to read my books before they arrive. I prefer to book a school 3-6 months in advance to allow for that, if possible. When the children know and like my characters, we’re old friends by the time I arrive and the level of excitement is high.

ENCOURAGE CREATIVE PROJECTS

One way to get children involved is to let them do creative projects based on one or several of my books. I’ve been greeted by wall-length posters, alternative endings to my books, quilts covered with my characters, drawings of the children’s favorite characters, children wearing costumes such as moose antlers ... The creativity of media specialists and teachers never fails to amaze me. It seems limitless!

GROUP GRADES CAREFULLY

I'm comfortable talking to either small groups in the media center or large ones in the auditorium or gym. Size isn't as important as talking to a group that's roughly on the same reading level. The most effective grouping is: K-2, 3-4, 5-6. Of course, every school has its own requirements and I will adapt to any grouping. But if the grades are clustered, I can edit my presentation to be as meaningful as possible to each age group.

HELP RECOUP YOUR EXPENSES!

PTA groups can make a good percentage of the cost of my visit by pre-selling my books and sending an order form home with the children 6-8 weeks in advance. If schools order directly from the Publishers, they can get a school discount of 30-40% and make a profit by selling the books for the usual price. Many schools opt to work with a local Independent bookstore which will often order the books, accept returns, and give the school 20% of the profits. Book sales can go a long way toward recouping the cost of my visit.

I can provide schools with a list of my books and ISBN numbers, as well as contact names at my publishers. I love signing books while the children are there during my visit. So as to get the correct spelling of each child's name, I ask that it be written on a slip of paper and put inside the book. Or, I can send the school a template of my personalized bookmark to copy and hand out, in advance.

FEES

My daily rate includes three presentations, plus travel and accommodation, if necessary. I'm also happy to meet with a small group of creative writers and talk about their work during that time, which is something schools have asked me to do. Please [email me](#) for my rate and to discuss having me visit your school.

All travel arrangements should be made from Durham, North Carolina, where I live.

I'D LOVE TO MEET ALL OF YOU IN PERSON

Thanks for your interest in my books. You and your students are the people I write for.