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Author Don Winn: I write books so at-risk readers can begin to think of themselves as learners, full of potential + strength

April 4, 2017 / in All About the Book, Guest Author,
Interviews / by IR Staff

*Sir Kaye the Boy Knight Book 3: Legend of the
Forest Beast* received a 4+ star review, making it
an IndieReader Approved title.---

Following find an interview with author Don
Winn.

**What is the name of the book and when
was it published?**

*Sir Kaye the Boy Knight Book 3: Legend of the
Forest Beast*. Published July 2016

What's the book's first line?  

“Beau opened the door to the great hall and
held it for us, a wide, contagious smile lighting
up his whole face.”

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The Last Guy

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BILLY

What's the book about? Give us the

“pitch” [1] [SEP]

The beloved tutor Alchir has vanished! And a dangerous criminal with a grudge against Alchir has just escaped from prison. Kaye is determined to find the tutor and earn a fine reputation as a knight. The search leads Kaye, Reggie, and Beau to a sinister manor house at the edge of a dark forest where nearby villagers live in terror of a deadly monster. As they investigate the mystery of the forest beast, they uncover a terrible plot that could destroy Knox. When there's no one to turn to for help, can they save the kingdom—and their lives—by themselves?

What inspired you to write the book? A particular person? An event? [1] [SEP]

As a dyslexic, I know what it's like to struggle to read. My grandmother spent time with me, reading with me, and helped me develop a love of great stories. That love of story is what helped me persevere as a reader, and now a writer, although reading and writing will never be effortless for me.

As a kid, the more stories I read, the more I learned to see myself differently. That was important, since nearly all of us who are dyslexic judge ourselves harshly. We always compare ourselves to our peers who seem to learn with little or no effort, and unfortunately, we can gain the impression from even well-

*BEDIVERE IN
THE QUEST
FOR THE
DRAGON
QUEEN*

SOLE SILENCE

*PLAINS TO
THE PACIFIC*

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on *MAIL-
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ENGINEER
(and Get Any
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meaning educators that we're unmotivated, stupid, slow, or lazy.

But when I was immersed in a story with characters who had feelings like mine, or who struggled with challenges like mine, I learned that I wasn't the only person who felt the way I did. It gave me hope to see that others could meet challenges and do difficult things and believe in themselves. That meant that there was hope for me!

Little did I know that I was encountering what's called in psychology a "hero of self-reference." While there weren't any stories about people with dyslexia when I was a kid, reading about people who dealt with other struggles served my need to feel like I wasn't that different from everybody else. Through stories, I learned that struggle is nothing to be ashamed of.

Today, at-risk readers and dyslexics are rarely presented with successful depictions of characters like themselves. And while I write to entertain all my readers, there's a special place in my heart for struggling students who can't imagine themselves ever being a good reader. I want them to see heroes of self-reference uncovering hidden strengths, dealing with their feelings and the frustrations of their own situations. I want kids to learn that if they need to do things differently to get the job done, that's a strength, not a weakness.

Once kids actually learn to read, then, for the rest of their life, they read to learn. Reading still

provides the largest educational platform. That means that for the tens of thousands of folks out there who never learned to read well, their learning opportunities diminish dramatically at a very young age. If I had never begun to think of myself as a reader, I could also have never been a learner.

I write books so at-risk readers can begin to think of themselves as readers and learners, full of potential and strength.

What's the main reason someone should really read this book?

It's a fun story that focuses on lovable characters learning to do the right thing—without superpowers or magic—while having a great adventure and developing solid friendships.

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