

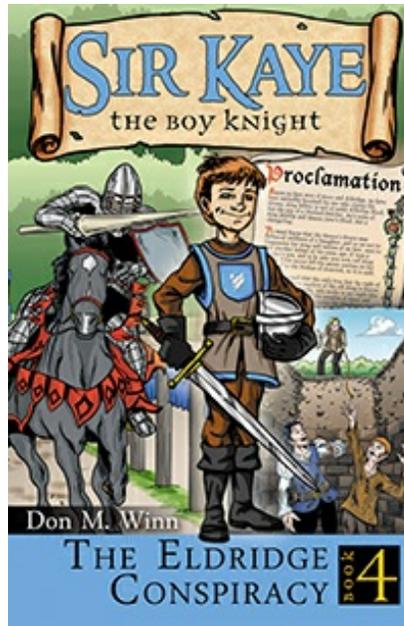
Author Don M. Winn: Sir Kaye Strikes Again!

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An Interview with Author Don M. Winn: Sir Kaye Strikes Again!



Michael F. Shaughnessy

1) Don, your series about Sir Kaye is one of the most intriguing, interesting series out there. Tell us about the latest adventures of Sir Kaye!

The fourth and last book in the Sir Kaye series, *The Eldridge Conspiracy* (available June 16, 2017), is the most action-packed yet. The previous three books have been building up to a climax in both plot and character development that culminate in this story where Kaye, Beau, and Reggie set off on a mission to save Kaye's father's life. To do so, the friends have to overcome many obstacles, face their own fears, and think on their feet. Apart from the physical journey, Kaye and Reggie also have moments of crisis in their friendship and both question their own identity. Reggie comes to terms with his struggle to decide what he wants to be when he grows up, and Kaye has to make peace with the fact that, through no fault of his own, he was given the humiliating nickname "Sir Donkey," which is exactly the opposite of how he wanted to be perceived in the community. This book is sure to make young readers think about the importance of their friendships, what it means to be loyal to a cause, and how people learn to feel good about who they are.

2) Now what is the story behind the "Legend of the Forest Beast"?

The story opens in the castle hall with the queen asking her knights to protect her former tutor, Alchir, from the criminal, Dworfurd. But the meeting is interrupted by the arrival of Alchir's daughter, Layla, with news that her father has already been kidnapped. This fast-paced adventure has best friends Kaye, Reggie, Beau, and fellow knights dispatched to rescue the Queen's beloved tutor, Alchir. The search for Alchir leads the boys to a manor house at the edge of a dark forest where nothing is what it seems. A legend of a deadly forest beast keeps the nearby citizens living in fear, but is the beast real, or are the mysterious events in the area the result of something else entirely?

A great thing about this series is that it grows with its readers. *Legend of the Forest Beast* introduces new themes and deeper insights into the characters that will have readers thinking more critically as they read. The book focuses

on how not all things are quite as they seem, which introduces readers to the power of myth and legend. As with all my books, there are lesson plans that allow educators to use the story as a window into real-life situations where myth and legend have literally shaped history.

Our trio of heroes also encounter a new character, Layla. Layla comes across as very harsh and unlikable at first, but as the book goes on, readers will learn to understand her point of view and grow to respect her tenacity and loyalty. The lesson plan around this aspect of the story features an exercise in which students learn to re-think biases or judgmental reactions to other people and learn, instead, how to discover their strengths and admirable qualities. Additionally, readers will learn about humility as Reggie and Kaye both have to set aside their pride for the greater good of their kingdom. While this book is a great adventure story, it is also packed with lessons that will stay with readers for the rest of their lives.

3) I understand that you also have some resources for parents and teachers who have children with dyslexia. Tell us about these.

It's a long story, but please stay with me: it will be worth your while. I was diagnosed with dyslexia during my second time through the first grade, but it was just a label, and there was no intervention or accommodation, other than a few months of one-on-one help with reading. After that, I was on my own, but the challenges of dyslexia in a learning environment that did not accommodate my learning style still remained. As far as I knew, my ongoing problems were because I just wasn't good enough. The treatment I received from teachers and other students only confirmed that belief. I didn't understand why I struggled with so many different things, not just reading, but writing, numbers, sequencing, an unreliable sense of direction, and more. I felt ashamed and had very limited expectations of what I could and could not do.

This internal conflict stayed with me for most of my adult life and even when I succeeded or excelled in certain endeavors, it seemed more of a fluke. I never really felt like success was deserved. Little did I know that my story, filled with inner conflict and struggle, was not unique to me and that I share it with literally hundreds of thousands of other people with dyslexia.

My perception and understanding of dyslexia, and in turn, of myself, took a dramatic leap forward a few years back when I discovered the Rawson Saunders School in my area that exclusively educates dyslexic students. The school was hosting a special screening of the documentary, "The Big Picture: Rethinking Dyslexia," and I was invited. My world shifted profoundly as I recognized myself in the experiences of those onscreen for the very first time. Thus began my personal journey to understanding what dyslexia is and is not.

Since then I have written many articles about dyslexia and have done numerous presentations for parents and educators about the condition. Below is a list of a few of my dyslexia-related blogs.

- Here is where it all started, my [screening of The Big Picture, Rethinking Dyslexia](#).
- A [follow-up to The Big Picture documentary](#), where I share a few facts I found interesting about dyslexia.
- [Tools and Strategies for Dealing with Dyslexia: Reading Aloud](#)
- [Tools and Strategies for dealing with Dysgraphia: Writing with Confidence](#)
- [Alleviating the Complications of Shame for Dyslexic Children](#).
- [Ways to communicate with and encourage children with dyslexia](#).
- [Parenting with Dyslexia: Reading with your Kids](#)
- [Creative Writing and Dyslexia](#) may seem like an unlikely combination, but some of our most talented writers have dyslexia.

- A brief look at the [genetic links \(nature\) to dyslexia and how nurture \(outside help\) and hard work can help](#) to conquer what nature dealt us.
- Discover how [hero narratives have the power to change our conscious belief systems](#)—especially our beliefs about ourselves and what we are capable of doing.
- Taken from one of my presentations about dyslexia; see [how fostering the love of story can help motivate the at-risk, struggling reader](#).
- [The upside to being dyslexic](#).
- It may seem basic, but read about [how the words we use can have a positive influence on the struggling reader](#).
- For last year’s teacher appreciation month I talked about [one of my teachers that had a profound impact on my early life when my dyslexia was first diagnosed](#).
- A great [interview with Perry Stokes of the Rawson Saunders School](#) where dyslexia means extraordinary.
- [Everyone Fails at First](#). Learn how that simple acknowledgment can have a profound impact on the struggling student.
- [5 Harmful Misperceptions About Dyslexia—Spread the Word!](#)
- [Dyslexia: When It’s as Good as it Gets](#)

Dyslexia, however, affects far more than just academics. The biggest problem can be the social and emotional toll it takes on the child—the feelings of shame, inadequacy, and a lack of belonging. Sadly, the social and emotional problems caused by dyslexia are rarely addressed.

One insightful woman hopes to change that. I would be remiss if I didn’t share a recent [interview](#) with fellow dyslexic, Academy Award–winning film producer/director Peggy Stern about her own struggle with dyslexia and her passion for helping children with dyslexia and attention issues, including the social and emotional complications. That passion led to the creation of [Dyslexiaville](#), a multimedia resource focusing on social and emotional learning for children with dyslexia and attention issues. Their mission is to help kids succeed in both school and life, because of—not in spite of—their learning differences.

Some of the multimedia resources available from Dyslexiaville include the [Super d! Show](#), which is available for viewing on YouTube. The approach, message, and crafting of the show makes it the most effective platform yet for helping kids who struggle to learn to develop a healthy self-concept and feel great about themselves.

4) Now, who is Zack the Space Cop and what is going on with him and his adventures?

In the summer of 2013, I published a series of blogs about the power of imagination, covering everything from thinking symbolically, its role in problem-solving, to its psychosocial and psychological benefits.

All of this culminated in the release of my picture book, *Space Cop Zack, Protector of the Galaxy*. Space Cop Zack is about the “beta version” of imagination—childhood imaginings that help us develop our foundational imagination into powerful tools that can serve us well throughout our lives.

Zack’s character is a celebration of the power of the imagination. In book one, Zack and his faithful robot sidekick GARG take on the pursuit of the terrible Dr. Dogbreath, chasing him through the asteroids, oceans, and unusual plant life of Zack’s galaxy. Zack and GARG brave bad smells, squishy slime, giant ocean monsters and even motion sickness, and all without leaving their back yard.

In book two, *GARG’s Secret Mission* (available in late spring of 2017), GARG is sent on a mission to rescue a space

princess held captive by the notorious General Electric. When mission control loses contact with GARG, Zack goes looking for him. Will Zack find GARG and help rescue the princess before it's too late? Will Zack stop the notorious General Electric? That will all depend on where your imagination takes you.

As in the first book, the true nature of the items that form the basis for Zack's imagination are real objects and are revealed as a surprise at the end of the story.

5) What are you currently working on?

I recently starting hosting a monthly radio show (The Cardboard Box Adventures Show) in which my guests and I discuss a variety of topics related to children's education. Our primary goal is to provide tips, topics, and inspiration that will help parents and educators in their quest to raise readers.

My first show was a conversation with Academy Award-winning director and producer Peggy Stern, where we talked about her great new web series called the [Super d! Show](#). We also get a glance behind-the-scenes through conversations with some of the dyslexic students who star in the show. The first show is now available on my [website's Radio page](#) along with a preview of future shows.

I also have a new mystery story in the early development stage. My father used to live in San Francisco in the mid-1950's and would tell me lots stories about the time he lived there. When I was nine years old, we made a family trip to San Francisco and the highlight of the trip for me was getting to ride a cable car for the first time.

Reminiscing about all of my dad's stories about San Francisco and remembering my early experience with the city has given me the idea for a new book project—a mystery that takes place in San Francisco after World War II. The cable car system is part of the mystery. The story is about a boy whose father—a cable car gripman—dies under mysterious circumstances. The boy is now an orphan, and as he waits in the train station to journey to his new home with his great aunt, he decides that he can't leave without knowing what happened to his father. His life changes forever with that decision.

6) Where are your books available?

The books are available in softcover, hardcover, eBook format and the first two Sir Kaye books are available as audiobooks and can be purchased from most online resellers: [Amazon](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), [Audible](#), etc.

The Sir Kaye titles are also available for significant discounts to schools, libraries, non-profits, retailers, and vendors through [Progressive Rising Phoenix Press](#) or [Ingram/LSI](#).

You can find additional information and links on my website, www.donwinn.com.

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