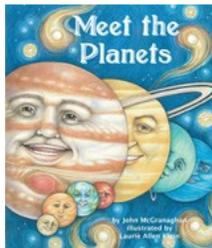
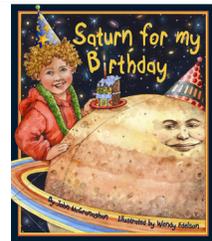


A Conversation with John McGranaghan author of Saturn for My Birthday



Where did you get the idea for *Saturn for My Birthday*?

The inspiration for my book came from my son Kyle. A few days before his fourth birthday I asked Kyle what he wanted for his birthday. Kyle asked for the planet Saturn. That answer stuck with me. It eventually became an idea, which eventually turned into a book. His request must have awakened all those old 3rd & 4th grade science fair projects I did on the solar system.



Where did you get the idea for *Meet the Planets*?

The inspiration for *Meet the Planets* came from the news a few years back that Pluto had been demoted to a dwarf planet. I wanted to write a story about Pluto's demotion. However, the final product became much different than the original idea, but that is part of the writing process. I'm just happy that Pluto remained a central part of the book.

What are the most frequently asked questions you encounter as an author?

The most frequent question that I get asked is something along the lines of, "Have you written any other books?" I tell people that I have written many other books, but not all of them get published. I use this question as an opportunity to let people know that hard work and perseverance are an integral part of the success equation. There is no such thing as an overnight success. Anything in life that is worthwhile takes effort, and don't get discouraged if you don't see immediate results, because hard work pays off in some many ways.

What gets your creative juices flowing?

My creative juices get flowing when I have an experience that gets me thinking that this could be a good idea for a book. What usually happens is the idea simmers in my mind, sometimes on the back burner, but eventually the idea takes the form of a story and then what's really fun is when I start writing.



What is your favorite part of the writing process?

I can't say that I have one favorite part of the writing process. The writing process is very much like life. There are ups and downs. There are moments of frustration and doubt coupled with moments of inspiration and confidence. At times there are things you don't want to do like; read, research, write and edit. But then there are things you can't wait to do like; read, research, write and edit. Obviously, I like the highs better than the lows. but I have come to understand that the writing process is multi-layered and all these aspects are intertwined and you can not have one without the others.

As a school counselor, you spend a lot of time around kids. What advice do you have for their parents?

The best advice I can give to parents is to read to their children. Something that is easier said than done. From a learning standpoint, reading is probably the single most important thing you can do. Reading expands your child's vocabulary. Reading deepens understanding. Reading develops comprehension. Reading even sharpens math skills, not to mention the quality time you are spending together.



But it is more than just reading. It is stopping to talk about what you're reading. It is summarizing and asking questions. It is connecting what you are reading to life events and experiences. For example, that book about Saturn may spur a discussion about your past third grade science fair project or your child's upcoming science fair project.

Our desire to give our children the best often comes up against our hectic sometimes overwhelming lifestyles. The practice, dance recitals, baseball, etc... Don't let reading with your child become just another item to cross off your to-do list. Slow down, enjoy the time together.

That question your child asks in the middle of a sentence is an opportunity to talk and listen to each other. All too often we dismiss this opportunity because we want to finish the sentence, turn the page or complete the book. If we stop and listen, kids will talk. The difficulty is that kids often talk about things we find hard to listen to. Our expectations get in the way.



Research has shown that the single most important protective factor for keeping adolescents out of trouble is, if the teen feels connected to their family. Reading can be a doorway to that connection. So the next time you sit down with your child to read, and you open that doorway. Forget about your expectations, forget about finishing the book, and just see where the doorway leads you.

Great advice. What will your next book be about?

I'm not sure. I always have ideas, but the challenge is turning ideas into stories and stories into books. In the meantime I find that the more I read, the more ideas I get ,and the better writer I become. So I'll keep reading. I'll probably start with Sylvan Dell's 2011 Spring titles.

Want to continue this conversation? Schedule an interview!

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