



Named one of the best children's books of 2009 by TIME and Publishers Weekly

## School appearances

My goal in school appearances is to get kids excited about books, writing and art. My presentations are energetic, interactive, and kid-friendly. I use lots of drawings, photos, and images from my books, and I always draw for the kids. Any program can be tailored to incorporate your curriculum.

Most of my programs are for grade school kids, but I also do presentations for high school students, college classes and adult groups.

## Programs

### How is a book created? 30-40 minute presentation / grades 1-8

The question I hear from readers most often is "How did you get started as an author?" In this presentation, I tell the story of how I wrote my first book (by accident!), how I come up with ideas for books, and how I create sketches and final illustrations. It includes an overview of three age-appropriate books. I finish up by doing a drawing for the kids (with their input, which they LOVE), and some Q & A.

### Let's create a book! 60-90 minute workshop / grades 2-7

This is a fun art and writing workshop where each child creates a book of their own. I present a quick overview of how I create books, and give the kids some starting points for their story. Then I help the kids as they create their own books. Kids get a lot out of this workshop, but please note that it requires tables or desks, art supplies and more time than the usual class period.

### How to make a living by making stuff up 30-40 minute presentation / grades 8 and up

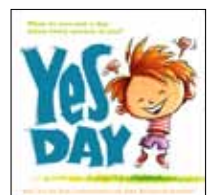
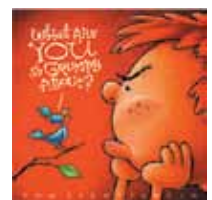
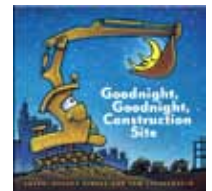
I've been very fortunate to make a living with my creativity for over 25 years. I like to share my story with young people to demonstrate that creativity is not just a novelty, but has real value in the professional world. Perfect for middle and high school kids.

### Nurturing our creative side 30-40 minute presentation / college and up

Creativity is becoming more important in our culture and our economy, but how do we teach it? Speaking from personal experience, I talk about what inspired me as a kid and how we can encourage kids to think creatively.

### Miscellaneous activities Special activities to fill the day, grades 3 and up

- Small group discussion, critique or lunch with gifted writers and artists
- Art class participation. I take part in the regular lesson and chime-in with observations.
- Storytelling mini-workshop. A condensed version of the Let's Create a Book workshop.



**"Tom has the qualities you want in a speaker for children: funny, engaging, energetic, memorable, and certainly motivating."**

Esmé Raji Codell  
Author & Certified Readologist



## Planning an event

### INITIAL INQUIRIES

After reviewing my programs and the details about appearances, contact me at [tomvisits@att.net](mailto:tomvisits@att.net). Include as much information as possible:

- Your name
- Name of venue (school, library, etc.)
- Sponsor (if different than venue)
- Type of program you're interested in
- Time required
- Date preferred
- Special requests
- Your contact information

I will respond within 3 working days.

### HONORARIUMS AND SCHEDULING

Contact me at [tomvisits@att.net](mailto:tomvisits@att.net)

### IN ADVANCE OF AN APPEARANCE

#### Scheduling the day

My most popular program is "How a Book is Created," which I customize to the grade level(s), and takes about 45 minutes. I can do up to four of these programs in one day, and can fill in the remaining time with visits to art or writing classes, mini storytelling workshops, etc. It's hard to effectively connect with a group of disparate grades, so please try to limit the range in each session to three grades. Please confirm the age ranges of the audience, and the size of each group, in advance.



#### Contracts

Unless you have a contract that needs to be used, I have a standardized contract that spells out all the details. Once the particulars are worked out, we put them in the contract and it's signed by both parties. Then we're in business!

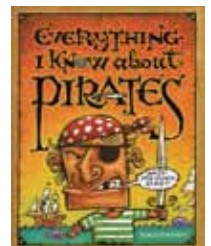
#### Out-of-pocket expenses

Unless there are unusual circumstances, sponsors are not responsible for travel expenses for appearances in the greater Chicago area. For further distances, I ask the sponsor to pay reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, including but not limited to mileage/airfare, lodging and meals. Receipts will be presented for reimbursement.

To save costs, I encourage you to partner with other schools or libraries in your area to organize multiple appearances. That way, you can collectively cover the honorarium or travel expenses. If I'll be appearing at more than one location, I might need transportation between venues.

#### Getting the kids (and parents) excited

Please read my books to the children so they'll be prepared for the event. I will send a complete packet of materials to help you promote the event. The packet includes author information, book cover images, a press release, reproducible activity guides, and a bookmark customized for your school.



**"I was captivated, much as my class was, from beginning to end."**

Christina Riccelli,  
Alice Gustafson Elementary School

*I'd love to come  
to your school!*



## Equipment

For group presentations, I will need:

- LCD projector and screen
- Floor-standing easel with two 27x34 pads of paper.
- Tall stool and small table
- For larger groups, a microphone (wireless is preferable)

If we're doing a book workshop I will provide a complete supply list. This will be worked out in advance, specified in the contract, and confirmed prior to my appearance.

## Book Sales

Some sponsors like to offer book sales and signings. I do not personally sell books, but I'm always happy to sign books.

To order my books for you to sell, contact your local book seller or, in Illinois, contact:

- Anderson's Bookshops, Barb Fessler (630) 355-2665 / [barb@anderbook.com](mailto:barb@anderbook.com)  
(books are discounted, and can be picked up at their warehouse or shipped to you).

To schedule a book fair that will feature my books and also include many other titles, contact:

- Anderson's Book Fair Company, Tami Smith (630) 820-0044 / [tami@anderbook.com](mailto:tami@anderbook.com)
- Books on Parade, Paula Pettersen (815) 282-1510

Outside of Illinois, contact your local book seller for referrals in your area.

## THE DAY OF AN APPEARANCE

### Classroom etiquette

Is that an oxymoron? Surprisingly, not. I've found most classrooms have a set of rules and a way for the teacher to remind the kids when the rules need be observed. Please let me know in advance what the rules are and how I can be consistent with them.

### Photos

I might bring a camera and ask a teacher or other adult to snap some pictures of me while I'm presenting. These photos would be used on my web site or promotional materials. Please let me know if you'd rather not have pictures taken in your school.

### Lunch Hour

If an event goes over the noon hour, lunch would be appreciated. I enjoy breaking bread with the staff or a small group of students.

### Book signings

Please provide sticky-pads for people to write the name of the person they want their book(s) signed to. Tom will write an inscription that is appropriate for each book, and will personalize with the child's name.

### Payment of honorarium

Payment is usually made at the end of an event. Let me know if you'd like to make other arrangements.

### Feedback

Comments and criticism help me improve my presentations. I will hand out feedback forms before a presentation, which can be filled out and returned to me either before I leave or by fax.

**Thank you for  
considering me  
for your event!**



Personal appearances by authors and illustrators can enhance students' learning and enrich your curriculum.

If you are thinking of booking an author visit, first determine what you want from the appearance. Do you want the author/illustrator to speak to all the students or just a segment? Do you want small intimate groups or will large auditorium events reach your goal? Do you want a writing, drawing, or creativity workshop?

In addition, before contacting an author, please determine:

- Your budget. You'll need to consider: The author's honorarium, travel (if not local, this will include airfare, cabs, hotel), meals and other possible expenses
- How extensive an event you want to plan, and which of your colleagues will need to be involved to make the event successful.
- A sample schedule for the day

A successful author visit involves advance planning and making connections: Connections with books (have your children read the author's books before the visit), connections with your curriculum (see Tom's free activity guides to connect his books with curriculum), and connections with the school/library/community (get the PTO involved, inform parents, possibly invite parents).



"How do I draw a gnome?" Stone Academy, Chicago

### CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING AN AUTHOR VISIT

#### 3-9 months in advance

- Select the author, determine availability and cost
- Talk to the author about their presentation; be sure it meets your needs and goals for the event.
- Get funding approved
- Set date and times. Consider other school events when selecting a date.
- Sign a letter of agreement or a contract

#### 1-3 months in advance

- Set the schedule for the visit; consider how the author's day will be spent (time for breaks? lunch?); submit schedule to other faculty for their involvement
- Contact the author for photos, biographical material to enhance the appearance
- Make a list of special equipment or materials needed
- Prepare teachers' resources
- Be sure teachers have a copy of author's books
- Order copies of books that extend the topics
- Prepare teacher packets to include author bio, web pages, a list of author's work, activity guides that correspond to author's work, etc.
- If you are planning a book sale/signing, plan:
  - When and how the books will be purchased by students and signed by author
  - Will parents be invited to the signing?
  - Order books from publishers, jobbers or local book store

#### 3-4 weeks in advance

- Confirm all plans with the author
- Create an author information sheet to send home to parents
- Create bulletin boards and other materials to support the event

#### 1-2 weeks in advance

- Talk to the author to confirm all details
- Obtain author's requested supplies and equipment
- Assign colleagues to escort the author, take photos, set up and staff signing
- Schedule staff luncheon with author