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Summary

Middle school student Charlie Joe Jackson hates to read and will do anything to avoid it. Since last year, he’s had a sweet deal with his friend Timmy. Charlie Joe buys Timmy an ice cream sandwich and Timmy tells Charlie Joe what happened in the book. One day, Timmy refuses to tell Charlie Joe what happened in their most recent required reading. Instead of simply reading the book, Charlie Joe sets out on a series of misadventures to avoid it.

Discussion Questions

1. Was Charlie Joe’s reluctance to read books selfish? Why or why not? Did this hurt anyone?
2. In the book Charlie’s Tip #4 is: “Girls think it’s kind of cool if you don’t read a lot and still get good grades.” Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
3. How far would you go to avoid doing something you didn’t like, such as school work or chores? Explain.
4. Do you think Charlie Joe went too far to get out of reading? Why or why not?
5. Telling on your friends is generally looked on as being a bad thing. Do you think Timmy’s telling his parents about his deal with Charlie Joe was good or bad?
6. Since it was going to incriminate him, too, was Timmy being brave or just mean? Why?
7. Because of the way things worked out with Hannah and Jake, do you think Hannah should have given Charlie Joe his record cover back? Why or why not?
8. Do you think cliques in schools are a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
9. What do you think would have been a better alternative for Charlie Joe as punishment for having Jake read his books for the Position Paper?
10. There are illustrations scattered throughout the book. Did you like having pictures in the book? Why or Why not?”

Material from state.lib.la.us, Submitted by Brandi Burton, Teen Librarian, Central Branch Library, EBRPL System and Angela Germany, Children and Teen Services Consultant State Library
About the Author and Illustrator

Who is Tommy Greenwald

Who would like to read about the details of my childhood and how I always wanted to be a writer and how after all these years it’s so awesome that my dream has finally come true, and therefore I ROCK?

Didn’t think so.

Here’s all you need to know, really.

My wife is named Cathy, and she doesn’t want her picture on the website because even though she’s gorgeous (seriously), she always thinks she looks horrible in pictures.

My three kids are named Charlie, Joe and Jack. (Charlie Joe Jackson, get it?)

My two dogs are named Moose and Coco, just like in the book. They’re both rescued chocolate labs, and they are ridiculously awesome.

My job when I’m not writing books is executive creative director at Spotco. We make ads for broadway shows. If you want to know more, check out our website: www.spotnyc.com

This other thing I wrote is a musical called john & jen. It was done in NYC in 1995 and still gets done around the country and in Europe and stuff. If you want to know more, google it or go to mtishows.com; if you want to buy the CD – and really, who doesn’t? – go to amazon.com

http://tommygreenwald.com/charlie-joe-jackson/

About J. P. Coovert

I am a cartoonist, illustrator and designer living in Minneapolis with my wife, Jacie, and two puppies, London and Ollie. During the week I design t-shirts for Target and on the weekend I draw comics, play video games and eat pizza.

I co-run One Percent Press with my buddy Stephen Floyd. We publish comics and release records by our friends.
I’ve illustrated lots of kids books, including the Charlie Joe Jackson series. For book illustration work, I’m represented by Judy Hansen.

I love telling honest, whimsical and optimistic stories with words and pictures. If you’d like to work together, please get in touch.

Email me: JP@onepercentpress.com

Partial Client List:

Macmillan, Simon and Schuster, Penguin, Target, Hallmark, Tugboat Press, and The Center for Cartoon Studies

http://www.jpcoovert.com/about/
7 Questions For: Author Tommy Greenwald

Question One: What are your top three favorite books?

I'm just starting to read kidlit so I'm going to have to go with adult books, hope that's okay! *Catch 22*, by Joseph Heller; *Letting Go*, by Philip Roth; *The Magus* by John Fowles. Fave kid book so far: *Emma Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a Tree*, by Lauren Tarshis.

Question Two: How much time do you spend each week writing? Reading?

I used to read a lot until I started this whole writing thing. I write on the train going to and from work, so usually about 5-7 hours a week, then some touch-ups on the weekend at the library. I can't write at home. Home is for television.

Question Three: What was the path that led you to publication?

My three boys - Charlie, Joe and Jack - all hated to read growing up. It was a helpless feeling trying to get them to read. I decided to write a book especially for kids who don't like books. Thus, Charlie Joe Jackson was born.

Question Four: Do you believe writers are born, taught or both? Which was true for you?

I think it's a combination. An ear for dialogue and authenticity is something that I think is more innate than learned. But everything else - structure, plot, pacing, character development - is worth learning about. And by learning, I mean everything from taking classes to reading a lot of books and writing a bunch and simply talking to people. I've never taken a writing class, but have soaked up a lot of knowledge in other ways.

Question Five: What is your favorite thing about writing? What is your least favorite thing?

My favorite thing about writing is finishing. My least favorite thing is starting. At heart, I'm a reluctant writer. Which is maybe why I write for reluctant readers.

Question Six: What one bit of wisdom would you impart to an aspiring writer? (feel free to include as many other bits of wisdom as you like)

I'm a firm believer in word count. Word count is your friend. Word count can keep you going. Word count can help you set goals, and achieve them. And don't be afraid that keeping an eye on word count will ruin your artistic vision. For me, it helped my pacing and my discipline.
Question Seven: If you could have lunch with any writer, living or dead, who would it be? Why?

Woody Allen. I'd like to know how he's had the energy and desire to make one movie a year for 45 years. And I'd like to know how he comes up with the names for his characters. (My fave: Fielding Mellish)

http://www.middlegradeninja.com/2011/07/7-questions-for-tommy-greenwald.html
Eleven Up: Interview with Tommy Greenwald, author of CHARLIE JOE JACKSON’S GUIDE TO NOT READING

http://apocalypsies.blogspot.com
Wednesday, July 6, 2011

K.M. Walton here and I have the pleasure of sharing my interview with Elevensie author, Tommy Greenwald. Tommy, when not writing books, is executive creative director at Spotco. They make ads for broadway shows. If you want to know more, check out their website: www.spotnyc.com

Tommy has three sons named Charlie, Joe and Jack. (Charlie Joe Jackson, get it?) Over the years, he struggled to get his sons to read. He decided to write a book about how to avoid books.

CHARLIE JOE JACKSON may be the most reluctant reader every born. He does whatever it takes to get out of reading, and so far, it’s worked out really well. But one day in middle school he gets into trouble, and finds his impressive record is on the line. Will he push his luck and do whatever it takes to get out of reading, or will he finally bite the bullet and… gasp… read a book??!!?

Tell us a little about your journey to publication. My journey to publication was embarrassingly short. My agent, Michele Rubin at Writer's House, is an old friend from high school and she’s been after me to write an adult novel for a long time. Finally I sent her a picture book text about a boy who hated reading, based on my own sons. She asked me to turn it into a middle-grade novel, which I did. I wrote a draft in three months and she sold it two months after that, to Nancy Mercado at Roaring Brook Press.

Tell us a little about your book. My book is called CHARLIE JOE JACKSON’S GUIDE TO NOT READING, and it's inspired by my three sons, Charlie, Joe and Jack, all of whom hated to read growing up. I resolved to write a book that even reluctant readers would be interested in. I figured a book about how to avoid books was the way to go.

What was the biggest challenge in writing this book? The biggest challenge writing the book was to create a book that starts out as a guide to not reading, and ends up a compelling story that kids find interesting. I'm kind of trying to fake out reluctant readers by making them think they're reading some simple guide book, but then before they know they're genuinely enjoying an actual book book!

What's a typical writing day for you? I commute from Connecticut to Manhattan every day, and so when I'm writing I usually get most of it done on the train. On the weekend I go to Barnes and Noble or the library to write for an hour or two a day. I can't write at home. Home is for
playing with the dogs and watching tv.

Who do you share your writing with when you need critical feedback? Crit partners? Crit group? Family? The dog? Which works best for you and why? My agent was my sole source of feedback for the first book, and when I finished it I made my wife and kids read it too. I'm now in a critique group and they've been a great help as I've worked on the second book.

How much revising did the book need after you found your agent and editor? I did one massive revision, and then a bunch of tweaks. Then the illustrations came in, which were wonderful, and I had to do a bit of re-shaping to fit the drawings.

What are you reading now? I'm reading a bunch of books by my fellow elevensies! I'm partial to realistic fiction - not a big sci fi or paranormal or dystopia guy. I've just read RIVAL by Sara Bennett Wealer, DOGSLED DREAMS by Terry Lynn Johnson, and SOMETHING LIKE HOPE by Shawn Goodman - all fantastic.

What's your next writing project? I've just turned in the second book in the Charlie Joe series, called CHARLIE JOE JACKSON'S GUIDE TO EXTRA CREDIT. The goal is to eventually make it a 5-book series, but I plan on taking a break between books 2 and 3 to write something different! Enough Charlie Joe for a while!

A few “apocalyptic” questions:
In the post-apocalyptic world, what one book would you like to have with you? Why that book? My post-apocalyptic book would be CATCH 22 by Joseph Heller, because it's the funniest book I've ever read, and I think I'll be needing a laugh right about then.

What one food would you most like to have with you? How come? The food I would take with me would be rice. I LOVE RICE.

How about music? What tracks would you make absolutely certain were on your device? Or would you choose a single album? Oh the dilemma. Music-wise, I would take some Beatles, some Elvis Costello, some Simon and Garfunkel and some Beethoven. If I had to pick one album above all others, it would be PARSLEY SAGE ROSEMARY and THYME by S & G. Never gets old.

Visit Tommy Greenwald at: http://tommygreenwald.com
Follow him on Twitter: @tommygreenwald

New Voice: Tommy Greenwald on Charlie Joe Jackson’s Guide To Not Reading

Tuesday, July 05, 2011

Tommy Greenwald is the first-time author of Charlie Joe Jackson’s Guide To Not Reading (Roaring Brook, 2011).

Charlie Joe Jackson is proud to say that he’s never read an entire book from cover to cover. Sure, he’s glanced at the first chapter and last chapters and maybe even read the flap copy, but when it comes to actually reading what’s in the middle, Charlie counts on his friend Timmy McGibney to do the reading for him in exchange for an ice cream sandwich.

But when Timmy decides that his price has gone up to three ice cream sandwiches, Charlie Joe Jackson is faced with two very unappealing options: let himself be blackmailed or read an entire book. What's an enterprising non-reader to do?

How did you discover and get to know your protagonist? How about your secondary characters? Your antagonist?

This one’s easy. My protagonist, Charlie Joe Jackson, is a literal combination of my three kids: Charlie, Joe and Jack. They’re all in high school now, but in elementary and middle school they all hated to read. Hated it!

I’d always loved reading, even as a child, so it was extremely frustrating for me to drag them into a bookstore or library and watch them kick and scream and moan the whole time.

So when I sat down to write a book for kids, I knew it had to be one that even the most hardcore reluctant readers might respond to. And then I thought, what better way to attract non-readers than a book for kids who hate books? And when I decided it should be “written” by the narrator, the name Charlie Joe Jackson immediately popped into my head.

All the other characters in the book are based on friends of my kids’. The parents are based on myself (sloppy) and my wife (perfect). And the dogs, Moose and Coco, are modeled after and named after my own dogs, Moose and Coco (who are thanked in the acknowledgments).

How have you approached the task of promoting your debut book? What online or real-space efforts are you making? Where did you get your ideas? To whom did you turn for support? Are you enjoying the process, or does it feel like a chore? What advice do you have on this front for your fellow debut authors and for those in the years to come?
This is been an interesting process. I do not naturally have the self-promotion gene, and I’m not a huge social network guy, so I’ve really had to re-train my personality to gear up for this whole author thing.

I’ve done all the right things, I think – I facebook, I tweet, I blog (occasionally), I have a website – but it’s a real effort.

And I still basically feel like there’s a great big world of children’s book authors out there, and they’re all best friends, blogging and commenting and hanging out, and I’m kind of on the outside looking in.

Not to mention I see your online presence and become completely intimidated at how you’ve mastered this whole gig! Amazing.

But, the awesome thing is that as I dip my toe in to social network, I realize how great everyone is out there. How supportive, and friendly, and communicative.

The Elevensies website is a great example of a found community from all corners of the country who just all of a sudden have bonded over this intense experience. And it’s great.

So, it’s both a chore and a pleasure.

My advice to other writers about to launch is simply this: dive in. the water’s cold at first, but you’ll get used to it. And after a little while, it will feel great.