

Mid-Michigan Library League

Weekly Update

June 10, 2009



Embrace the Dark:

Author, Michael Garrett Farrelly, Youth Services Librarian and graphic novelist

Source: Public Libraries, May/June 2009 issue, page 26-27

"We need to scare kids more. No, I have not decided to finally embrace my advancing years, take up residence on my stoop, and begin shaking my fist at those darn teenagers and their loud music. I am not calling for boot camps, forced marches, and early morning calisthenics. I simply think we need to scare kids, especially tweens and teens, more.

The first stories we encounter are simple fables. A quick review of one we should all know just for example' sake: Little Red Riding Hood bring treats to her sick grandmother and is accosted by a big bad wolf, who swallows both the kindly old woman and Red and, one would presume, the basket of treats. The wolf is eviscerated by a passing hunter, saving Red and her grandmother (though again, no word on the treats).

The story can be, as the literary wonks will say, unpacked quite a bit. There is the lingering sexuality of the wolf accosting the girl. The color red, with its many cultural associations from the Bible to brothels to stoplights, is a wide field. The act of devouring represents consumption as both violation and absorption. The violence of the story mimics that of nature. Predating Darwin, the story is about survival of the fittest, in this case the hunter with his axe.

It is also about a big scary thing with fangs that wants to hurt you and those you love. A story that still manages to chill many a child. Past the simpler stories of childhood, tween and teens crave more elaborate scares. They're not scared of cross-dressing anthropomorphic wolves, but give them a bloodthirsty vampire or a magician with a destiny or, more down to earth, a young girl chronicling the annihilation of her people while hiding in an attic.

Being scared is primal. It engages our brain and teaches us to cope with startling sensations and unexpected emotions. Our brains are shaped by real-life trauma. Horrible events in our daily lives shape us from the start. A sudden loss, death, abuse, or humiliating experience changes our wiring in profound ways.

Books that scare offer a chance to experience those powerful emotions without being damaged by them. We are able to face a fear of the dark because we know that the monsters residing there are simply the stuff of fiction. Sometimes though, the monsters are real. In my career, the book most often stolen by patrons have been Dave Pelzer's *A Child Called It*. This is a book so savage and unyielding in its depiction of one boy's abuse at the hand of his mentally ill mother that I, as an adult, felt a cold sink of fear

reading it. Actually, in many instances, fear became nausea, even anger. After reading the book, I felt a redoubled urge to be an advocate for young adults. I have used the book in a number of books discussion groups over the years, always to astonishing effect. Invariably, one young adult will make a comment that raises my suspicions about their own home life, past or present. In experiencing the fear of the young boy, the young reader is empowered.

This generation is the last that will be able to speak face-to-face with a survivor of the Holocaust. Every day more of that story vanishes into history. Every day, young men and women return from war with stories to tell. Soldiers and sailors, not much older than teens themselves, who can put a human face to stark battlefield numbers. Prisoners, police officers, and survivors of abuse and sexual assault all have a story to tell. Bring them into the library, let their stories be heard, and have faith that young adults will be all the better for having heard them.

Do not shy away from books and programming that are intense or even frightening. Embrace the dark and find that fear is much like a vaccine, a dose of something not quite virulent to inoculate against a far more potent scourge.

In facing our fears, understanding them, moving through and past them, we are stronger. The notion that young adults need to continue into an extended childhood is more dangerous than scary stories, even true ones.

Great Websites for Kids:

The American Library Association Great Web Sites for Kids committee has selected 19 sites as a 2009 Great Web Site for Kids. These sites have been added to the Great Web Sites for Kids page. To see the sites go to this website: <http://www.ala.org/greatsites>.

Great Web Sites for Kids are those considered the best web sites for ages birth to 14, outstanding in both content and conception. As applied to web sites for young people, "great" should be thought to include sites of especially commendable quality, sites that reflect and encourage young people's interests in exemplary ways.

Library Programs:

Not only is the unified web site of Summer Reading events (mylocallibrary.org) useful to the public, it is useful for librarians. Taking note of what other libraries in the area have planned will give you ideas for future programs at your library.

To view the list go to: <http://www.mylocallibrary.org/summerreadingprogramevents.htm>

(It is not too late to have your events added if they are not already on the list. Send them to Holly, holly@mml.org)

Overdrive:

June 15 is the last day to express your interest in participating in Overdrive. If you are interested in participating contact Jim Lawrence- lawrencej@mml.org.

Michigan Information Literacy Initiative (MILI) June 19, 2009:

The Michigan Information Literacy program is just a few weeks away. At it, take away tips to improve Library/Faculty collaboration. Preplan talking points, identify prime

opportunities to engage, and pinpoint champions, all to better promote library instruction and better serve your customers. Hear from a panel on teacher/librarian collaboration. Participate in breakout sessions on: Information Literacy Assessment and the First-year Experience, Elevator Chat: Promoting Information Literacy and Library Instruction; Insight into a Successful Librarian-Faculty Collaboration". [View the day's agenda.](#)
[Register today.](#)

The 100 best picture books:

A *Library Journal* book poll has determined the 100 best picture books. The top five books are:

- #1: [Where the Wild Things Are](#) by Maurice Sendak (1963)
- #2: [Goodnight Moon](#) by Margaret Wise Brown (1947)
- #3: [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) by Eric Carle (1979)
- #4: [The Snowy Day](#) by Ezra Jack Keats (1962)
- #5: [Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus](#) by Mo Willems (2003)

To view the complete lists go to:

<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/blog/1790000379/post/540044254.html?nid=3713>

MMLL Schedule and Upcoming Events:

June 11, 2009: Creating Dynamic Documents in MSWord 2007 Workshop: 9:00-3:45

Presenter: Kim Frazho, Technology Coordinator/Trainer for the Houghton Lake Public Library.

Location: Cadillac Wexford Public Library
.5 CEUs

Cost: MMLL Member: \$10.00 per person Non-Member: \$20.00 per person

Registration: <http://www.mml.org/Workshops/word09.htm>

Current Number registered: 15 – Class full

June 12, 2009: Advanced Word: 9:00-3:45

Presenter: Kim Frazho, Technology Coordinator/Trainer for the Houghton Lake Public Library.

Location: Cadillac Wexford Public Library
.5 CEUs

Cost: MMLL Member: \$10.00 per person Non-Member: \$20.00 per person

Registration: <http://www.mml.org/Workshops/word09.htm>

Current Number registered: 9

If you have an idea for a workshop or continuing education event, please let us know! Call or email MMLL, holly@mml.org, with your suggestions.