

Talking with T.A. Barron

By Molly E. Bercow, age 10

Family Life

November, 1998

T.A. Barron is one of today's top fiction writers for young readers. The father of five draws on his knowledge of myth and lore to create his stories, but the people in his life often inspire his characters. His success as a writer could also be due to the fact that he believes in the magic found in all living things.



Bercow: How important to you are the issues that your characters care about, like the environment and family relationships?

Barron: What keeps me going through the work of writing a book is issues and ideas underneath the story. I have to love the story. I have to love the characters and want to know them better. But it's those underlying ideas—How do we save our planet? How does a 12-year-old girl relate to her parents or her grandmother or grandfather? How do we all find our way in life?—those are the things that really get me going and let me spend that year or two it takes me to write a book.

Bercow: What's the most important issue you've written about?

Barron: It's the idea in *The Lost Years of Merlin*, when we discover what happens to this shipwrecked little boy who becomes a great wizard. We might also realize that we have—that you have inside of yourself—a special magic that's all your own. So just like Merlin gets to discover that he has magical powers, so do you. And just like Merlin, you might not know it for sure. And you might not even call it magic when you do know it. But you do have a kind of special magic. That's the wonderful thing about the story—and it has helped me understand more about that idea.