

Popular Merlin Author Inspires Students of All Ages

By Sidney, Grade 9

Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

October 12, 2012

Last week, SMUS was honoured to host T.A. Barron, a multiple award-winning author whose Merlin series is being adapted into film by Warner Bros. Barron spoke to students in Grades 5-9 about his writerly inspiration, environmental passion and recognizing young leaders through the Gloria Barron award.



The moment I saw T.A. Barron, I was intrigued. His eyes sparkled with a wicked delight, and the spring in his step was filled with a boundless energy. His face seemed clever, and kind. He had the look of someone who knew how to spin a good yarn, or how to invent an entirely new universe and fill it to the brim with interesting, wonderful, magical, and believable creations. If I had met him on the street, I would have known that he was an author.

It was just something about him that made me like him immediately. When he started to talk, this feeling increased and I learned that he not only writes for young adults, he also has faith in them fulfilling their amazing potential. T. A. Barron writes about and believes in youthful heroes. His commitment to heroes, young ones in particular, has shaped his fiction and his life. He has even created an award for heroes in North America because he truly believes that we can change the world and our lives in meaningful ways.

As soon as he began to talk, his eyes started to glow, and he spoke with a fervent passion about the craft of writing fiction. He taught us about the amazing parts of being an author, but also how humble it could make you feel. Barron gave us a moving story about how discovering “just the right word” for an experience or individual was crucial. Moreover, he told us about his books, and when he spoke you could see just how much he loved them, just how much he loved the process of blood, sweat and tears that are the requirements of writing a novel.

T.A. Barron taught us the three key things he uses in his own works to make them come alive. Creating the characters and making them share their deepest secret; second, working on the setting until it comes to life like a character, and third, having an idea bigger than the story itself.

He told us, “Fiction must feel true.” This may sound crazy, but when you think about it... it makes a ton of sense. He said this paradoxical idea is important to understand the need to draw on what is emotionally and historically true in one’s own life when striving to create fictional worlds.

He told us to observe, to “notice the world around us in deep detail.” He told us to practice, practice, and practice some more, so that “the magic of language [would] grow more present and familiar over time.” But he also told us to believe. The most challenging part of writing is believing in your characters, believing in your story, and believing in yourself. Truly believing that what you have to say is unique and valuable is tough, but is necessary to succeed.

After Barron’s presentation, the audience was given the opportunity to ask questions. The answers he gave were well thought out and informative, and he seemed to thrive on the fact that both his speech and his novels had inspired us to have questions to ask. He took his time in replying; carefully making sure that every aspect of each question was answered.

So thank you, T.A. Barron, for giving us just the right words.