

Author Visits with Sarah L. Thomson

Interacting with my readers is one of my favorite parts of being a writer. I love talking to kids about my work and helping them see that writing is not a mystical talent enjoyed by a privileged few, but mostly a matter of hard work, careful craftsmanship, and lots and lots of reading!



All presentations include time for a Q&A session.

Gorillas and Tigers and Sharks...Oh My!

(Grades K-3, Nonfiction)

After reading my I-Can-Read title *Amazing Snakes*, I discuss how I write nonfiction. Kindergarten students get their bodies moving with some animal activities; older students work together to organize 4-6 facts into a “mini-book.” Great for units on the environment or conservation. (30-45 minutes)

Stars and Stripes

(Grades 1-3, Nonfiction)

After reading my nonfiction picture book *Stars and Stripes*, the students and I design a flag for their school or classroom. Great for American history units. (30-45 minutes)

Black Holes and Dinosaurs

(Grades 3-5, Nonfiction)

After reading from my nonfiction picture book *Extreme Stars*, I discuss the process of writing nonfiction. The students and I work together to create our own nonfiction page about dinosaurs. Great for units on science and writing reports. (30-45 minutes)

Imagine: A Poetry Workshop

(Grades 3-6, Poetry)

After reading my poetry collection *Imagine a Night*, I discuss the writing process with an emphasis on editing and revision. The students write their own poems and try revising them. Great for poetry units and creative writing classes. (45 minutes-1 hour)

Dragons and More: A Fiction Workshop

(Grades 4-5, Fiction)

After reading from my middle grade fantasy, *Dragon's Egg*, I talk about the inspiration I get from myth and folklore. The students and I pick a mythical creature and discuss how an author might change existing legends to come up with a idea that's fresh and original. Then they try a writing exercise about an imaginary animal of their choice. Great for units on folklore or fairy tales. (45 minutes-1 hour)

Secrets Revealed: A Fiction Workshop

(Grades 7-12, Historical Fiction)

I read a selection from my novel *The Secret of the Rose* (set in Elizabethan London) and discuss how history can provide inspiration for fiction and how secrets can provide momentum for a plot. The students try a writing exercise using the idea of something hidden. Great for creative writing classes and units on Shakespeare. (45 minutes-1 hour)

“The best author
we have had.”

—Barbara Merritt,
librarian

Tips For a Great Author Visit

Prepare, prepare, prepare: Have the children read at least one book (or at the very least, a few chapters of a longer book). Talk in class about questions the students might want to ask, or ask them to write up some questions as homework. The more the students know about the author's work, the more the presentation will mean.

Think about group size: One or two classes together works best (20-35 children). This way, children feel they are truly interacting with a real author in a way that isn't possible with a larger presentation. (Having an author give a speech up on a stage isn't the same as having an author right there in your classroom.)

“You were great because you know how to communicate with children not only through your books, but by talking, listening, smiling, and accepting their thoughts.”

—Yuri Kim
kindergarten teacher

Autograph, please! If you would like to have books available so that the children can buy signed copies, I can help set this up. Advance notice is very helpful, since it can take about 6 weeks to order books.

Lunch? Some schools like to have a small group (15 or so) students who are particularly interested in writing meet with the visiting author for an informal lunch and question- and-answer session. I'm glad to do this and charge \$75, half of my presentation fee.

Equipment: For “Black Holes and Dinosaurs,” “Imagine,” and “Secrets Revealed” I'll bring my projector and will need a screen or a blank wall. For poetry workshops and fiction workshops, children should bring paper and pencils or pens.

Time: For Kindergarten I'll need 30 minutes; for 1st and 2nd grades, 35-45 minutes; for 3rd and up, 45 minutes to an hour. Please schedule at least 10 minutes between presentations.

“That was the best book I ever read. I think you are the best author in the world.”

—Max,
2nd grade

Questions? If you have any questions or special requests, please let me know!

Contact Sarah

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Fees

In Portland, Maine: \$150 per presentation
Outside of Portland, Maine:
\$600 for 4 presentations a day,
plus travel expenses