

AUTHOR TURF INTERVIEW

It would be greatly appreciated if you could follow these five guidelines:

- **Only include the questions you answer.**
- **Keep questions in bold & answers in plain text.**
- **Send your bio & interview in one document.**
- **Send your website link.**
- **Send *large* book images.**

Feel free to answer as many questions as you like.

And most importantly, have FUN!

Bio

Larry Dane Brimner is a third-generation writer, although he's the first in his family to venture into children's literature. The author of 158 titles for

young readers, ranging from humorous picture book texts to serious nonfiction for middle-grade readers, he launched his writing career with a series of sports books, including *BMX Freestyle*, *Karate*, and *Rock Climbing*. More recently, *We Are One: The Story of Bayard Rustin* won the Jane Addams Book Award in the older reader category. This was followed by *Birmingham Sunday*, an Orbis Pictus Honor Book; *Black & White: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene “Bull” Connor*, winner of the Carter G. Woodson Award (NCSS) and a Robert F. Sibert Honor (ALSC/ALA). His latest release (October 1) is *STRIKE! The Farm Workers’ Fight for Their Rights*. When he isn’t writing, he visits schools around the world. You can find him on the web at: www.brimner.com.

Quirky Questions

If you could dis-invent one thing, what would it be?

OCD! Then I'd be considered almost normal.

What makes you laugh until tears roll down your cheeks?

Children and their jokes.

What compliment do you wish someone would give you?

I've actually already received that compliment when I overheard a couple of teens—one a former student of mine and the other one who would be entering my class the next semester. My former student told his friend: "That's Mr. Brimmer. He's tough as nails but he's fair."

What do you waste time doing?

Stare out the window or diddle around on Facebook.

What is the first thing that pops into your head when you think of politicians?

Greed.

What do you do every day, without fail?

Think about riding my bike.

What is something you wish you did every day, without fail?

Ride my bike.

What was your favorite meal when you were growing up?

Porcupine meatballs and black-eyed peas. It's still a comfort food.

WRITING QUESTIONS

Who do you consider a literary genius?

There are no geniuses; there are folks who work hard at what they do.

What obstacles have you had to deal with in your career?

1. Finding an editor who loves my work. 2. Finding an editor who loves my work.

How did you pick your writing genre?

I wasn't aware I picked my genre. It picked me. I write picture books out of love. I write nonfiction out of personal curiosity. I write chapter books because there are people living in my head and I have to clear them out from time to time.

What life experiences have inspired your work?

Everything. *Elliot Fry's Good-bye* stemmed from an episode when I became vexed with my family and "ran away." The problem was I wasn't allowed to leave the yard and I've always been such a little rule-follower. *Birmingham Sunday* came from my desire to right wrongs—or at least bring those wrongs into the light of day.

How do you know when a book is finished?

Sometimes I don't. Sometimes you simply write and polish until you can't write or polish anymore. Then you send it to an editor (or five) and their comments

will give you a clue. At other times, you know in your gut that the book is done.

Do you ever feel that you have to censor your creativity because you don't want to offend anyone?

Not really. When people are offended by something, the onus falls on them and not on the creator of the art.

Do you do anything special to get your creative juices flowing?

This probably sounds weird, but I procrastinate like mad. The first thing I do is exercise, either riding my bike or going to the gym. Then I shower, taking my sweet time. Breakfast next. Tidy my desk and office. Finally, sometime shortly before noon, I buckle down and actually get to work.

What are your words of wisdom for someone starting out in the field of writing?

Write what you love, write what pleases you. Don't follow trends and throw out 99% of what you learn in workshops and classes.

How would you define creativity?

Creativity is the art of being yourself, with a little flare.

Have you ever felt that your personal expectations have limited your creativity? If so, how have you dealt with this?

I am my own harshest critic and if I listened to my inner voice, I'd likely never have published anything. Editors, however, have bolstered my self-esteem. Awards help, too. Let me tell you a little secret, when I'm feeling as if I can't write a complete sentence without butchering it, I log into an online bookstore and look at my list of publications. Then I think, "Yeah, maybe I can do this writing thing."