

The truth about Alice in Wonderland

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By Isaac Wolf Staff writer

Author and movie producer Frank Beddor let Orland Junior High School sixth-graders in on a little secret Friday afternoon: "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" isn't a fairy tale — it's actually a story of murder, treachery and imagination.

"I used to think Alice in Wonderland was girly," sixth-grader Mike Alfini said. "Now, I know it's a killing adventure."

Mike is halfway through Beddor's first book, "The Looking Glass Wars." It's a fresh twist on the 150-year-old classic, presenting the real story of Alyss (not Alice) Heart.

Beddor, 47, of Los Angeles, contends that Alyss Heart was a real person, whom author Lewis Carroll misrepresented so badly that he even muffed her name. And Beddor mentioned Carroll was a pen name for the author, the Rev. Charles Dodgson.

"Alyss' story is a story of murder and revenge," Beddor told the children before narrating part of his book.

He captivated the sixth-graders — 170 children sitting cross-legged on the library floor -- as he told the story, stomping on the floor and jumping on tables. Part of a tour to promote his book, Beddor's visit was organized by Naperville-based Anderson's Bookshop.

Children's book writing isn't Beddor's only claim to fame. He produced the movie "There's Something About Mary," earned a world championship in freestyle skiing and served as a stunt double in the John Cusack movie "Better off Dead."

Beddor has created a brand around his story of Alyss, including a clothing line and comic books. A movie and video game are in the works, he said. His products have an Alyss logo — the four suits of a playing card deck wrapped in a circle.

Beddor clearly believes in his product. Wearing an Alyss logo necklace and T-shirt on Friday, he also has small Alyss logo tattoo under his one of his biceps.

Beddor said he was inspired to write about Alyss after visiting the British Museum in

London in 1998.

He saw an exhibit of playing cards that included a deck of dark, demonic figures. Beddor spoke with that deck's owner, English antique collector D. Buffington, who told him they traced back to around the time that Carroll published the original version of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland."

After that meeting, Beddor spent five years imagining and writing his book. It was published in England in 2004 and released last month in the United States.

"The whole theme of the book is the power of imagination and the power to believe," Beddor said. "Alyss loses that — and she needs to find the way to get it back."

Mike Alfini said his favorite part of "The Looking Glass Wars" is the "pool of tears."

"It's a portal," Mike said. "It's kind of like an airplane — it puts you in a different place."

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