



Author Appearance Q&A with Frank Beddor:

What is a typical appearance like with you? What do you do differently with audiences of varying sizes, ages, and interests?

I like to start with a short history lesson on Lewis Carroll and his version of Alice in Wonderland. Once I've rocked their world with my proclamation that Carroll got it all wrong I proceed to tell them what I term "the story behind the story" which is how I came to discover the true story of Alyss of Wonderland. At this point, usually amid gasps of disbelief, I unveil the 'BOX'. This mysterious antique wooden box, scarred and worn, contains the deck of illuminated cards which reveal the truth of Wonderland. I tell them that these are the cards that have inspired my books. Now...the room should be ready and waiting for the reading. But I don't read from my books, I act out parts of the story in a twist on oral storytelling which I find to be a really successful way to engage the kids (young and old!).

I conclude the visual presentation with pieces of concept art (characters and environments from the novels) and my book trailers. Basically this builds to the climactic moment when I hold practice auditions for the upcoming movie, this is by far the students (and teachers) favorite moment. To wrap up I usually engage the students in a discussion on writing and all the different mediums that are available to tell a story.

I usually do some variation on the above for all audiences no matter the size, age etc. What matters to me is the energy of the crowd. This is more subtle than gauging by size or age so it cannot be pre-planned. I just get up there and go with what I feel will be most entertaining and successful.

What makes your author appearances unique?

All of the above! What I do is more like theater or performance art than a straight forward reading and I think kids really appreciate the interactive quality.

Do you enjoy making appearances for adult audiences? What do you do when presenting to adults?

Yes I enjoy adult audiences. Usually I start with a strong drink. I focus on my writing process, how Lewis Carroll's works have inspired other artists and the intention behind the public domain. What's fun about adult audiences is watching the 'skeptical masks of age and knowledge' start to slip at the thought that maybe, just maybe, this is true. The whole room feels lighter when that happens.

What can schools and libraries do to ensure a successful appearance?

Getting the entire faculty on board and involved is key, building anticipation gets the students excited and interested. And check the audio/visual equipment ahead of time. Nothing kills a performance more than a bad sound system.

Do you enjoy traveling to other parts of the country for appearances?

Yes, as long as the hotel is close to the school. My one diva requirement!

Do you ever make appearances at more than one school in an area? Could schools and libraries from one area join together to bring you to their institution?

All the time. On one recent trip one teacher organized 5 different schools over five days of presentations.

What do you hope your audience will come away with from your presentation?

A sense of wonder, an openness to 'what if?' and, of course, an empowered imagination.

What was your favorite appearance experience?

After a presentation, one eight grader was inspired to create a Claymation trailer of my book and posted it on YOUTUBE. It was so good I hired him to create a second one for my new book. He's shares all of our correspondence with his English teacher so I hope he gets extra credit!

See the Claymation Video for yourself!