

Stories **masters Ink**

MAY 2020



The Literary Resource for Teachers,
Librarians, and Parents

ROSS BURACH

PENS A BUZZ-WORTHY SERIES
FOR LITTLE READERS

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RELEASES HER MUCH-ANTICIPATED
MIDDLE GRADE NOVEL

WESLEY KING

DISCUSSES NEW BOOK IN KOBE
BRYANT'S INSPIRING SERIES

ONE TO WATCH:

ARIA BROOKS

ONE TO READ:

JASON LEWIS

DUSTIN HANSEN

CREATES A GRAPHIC NOVEL
WITH A GAMING TWIST

OLIVIA AMIRI

JOURNAL OF A CHANGING WORLD

ALANE ADAMS

IS A LITERACY WARRIOR

JUDY NEWMAN

MY FAVORITE TEACHER

TEACHING TOOLBOX

DO WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Q&A WITH

BEA BIRDSONG





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Alane Adams

is a Literacy Warrior

by Melissa Fales

To say Alane Adams is passionate about literacy is an understatement. Not only did she form the Rise Up Foundation, which uses books to combat childhood poverty, she's also an award-winning children's author who released the first book in her new series, *The Legends of Olympus: The Eye of Zeus*, earlier this month.



conditions; schools with barely any school supplies and all the students have bare feet and yet they are completely enraptured in what the teacher is saying,” she says. “Reading is magic to them. It allows you this secret power to communicate with the outside world.” The experience touched Adams so profoundly, she focused the Rise Up Foundation’s efforts to use literacy initiatives to help improve the lives of children living in poverty.

Since then, the foundation has made a difference by making sizeable contributions to humanitarian groups, such as UNICEF, donating towards literacy projects in low-income schools, and providing afterschool tutoring to underserved communities. One of the initiatives Adams is most proud of is her foundation’s participation in the 2019 “Clear the List” movement started by a teacher in Texas named Courtney Jones. “It was to help teachers get the supplies they need

for their classrooms,” says Adams. “Teachers would complete a wish list on Amazon and people would purchase their basic needs schools aren’t providing. We helped over 500 teachers clear their lists.”

The Rise Up Foundation also works to help school children affected by natural disasters such as wildfires and hurricanes. “We’ve partnered with First Book, one of the nation’s largest distributors, three times so far to visit schools and donate books,” says Adams. Most recently, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rise Up Foundation has donated over 1,000 books to children whose schools are closed.

Adams knew she wanted to be a writer since she was a little girl, but didn’t pursue that calling until later in life. “I would write a book and stick it in a drawer,” she says. “It wasn’t until I retired and had the luxury of time that I was able to consider focusing on my writing.”

“My books are simply one part of my platform,” Adams says. “I want to create impact in the lives of young people. I want to take my message—that reading is a superpower—to as many children as I can.”

After leaving her post as the CFO for her family business in 2008, Adams felt called to make a difference in the world. She started the Rise Up Foundation with a goal to fight childhood poverty. Her travels to schools all over the world, in places like Nepal, Laos, and Angola, taught Adams how crucial education is in lifting people out of poverty. “I’ve seen schools in the most barren



The *Legends of Orkney* Series

Adams started writing middle grade mythology books in response to a request from her then-teenage son, Alex. In 2014, Adams published *The Red Sun*, the first book in her *The Legend of Orkney* series.

Based on Norse mythology, *The Legends of Orkney* books follow the adventures of Sam Baron who travels to a magical realm. *The Red Sun* was followed by *Kalifus Rising* in 2016 and *The Raven God* in 2017.

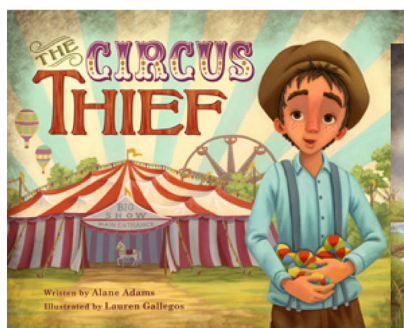
Adams has also written historical fiction picture books based on the tales her father told her about his life growing up in 1920s Pennsylvania, including *The Coal Thief*, *The Circus Thief*, *The Egg Thief*, and *The Santa Thief*, which won the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators' (SCBWI) Spark Award for Best Picture book in 2017.

Adams' author visits to schools are more like performances. "I use lots of energy," she says. "I have a number of different voices and accents. The kids are engaged and just fascinated by me." The Rise

"My books are simply one part of my platform. I want to create impact in the lives of young people. I want to take my message—that reading is a superpower—to as many children as I can."

Up Foundation covers all costs, so there's no charge and no place she won't travel to in order to talk to kids about why reading is a superpower. "I'll go anywhere," she says. "I've visited schools on Native American reservations and New York's most inner-city streets."

It was during her author visits that Adams realized there was a gap in her work. "I had these picture books for students in Kindergarten to grade three and I had the middle grade books, but what about those kids in between?" she says. "I decided to write a junior middle





grade series, a prequel to *The Legends of Orkney*, and that's how *The Witches of Orkney* series was born." The series launched in 2018 with *The Blue Witch* and *The Rubicus Prophecy* followed in 2019. This fall, Adams plans to release the third in the series, *Witch Wars*.

In Adams' brand new series, *Legends of Olympus*, she switches from Norse mythology to draw on her vast knowledge of Greek mythology. Adams is a fan of author Rick Riordan and his *Percy Jackson* series, but rejects comparisons to his work. "Percy Jackson was unique and the first in its kind," she says. "Rick really set the bar high for middle grade adventure novels. However, it had been over ten years and I felt it was time to explore Greek mythology with my style, portal fantasy, where the books start out anchored in our world, then move to a magical realm." While writing *The Eye of Zeus*, Adams came up with several intriguing "what if" scenarios. What if Perseus had a twin sister? And what if the Oracle of Delphi

Alane Adams' new book in her new series, *Legends of Olympus: The Eye of Zeus*, was released earlier this month.

predicted that one day his twin would destroy Olympus? "I came up with the idea of 12-year-old Phoebe, an abandoned child who's been in the foster care system all her life," says Adams. "But it turns out she is the daughter of Zeus and she can control the weather. It was Zeus who sent her to the modern world, sending her away from Olympus to protect her, knowing that the Gods would destroy her."

In *The Eye of Zeus*, the safest thing for Phoebe to do is to go on with her normal life. But when Ares kidnaps Phoebe's social worker Carl and brings him back to Olympus as bait, Phoebe and her friends risk everything in an attempt to rescue him by travelling to ancient Greece. Then, Phoebe learns about a new prophecy that requires her to go on a quest to gather talismans by battling some of the most terrifying creatures in mythology. Only then can she stop Ares. "It's a hero's

journey, facing six monsters," says Adams. "But is Phoebe up for the task? Along the way, she learns to take responsibility for her mistakes. It's got a really sweet ending."

When it came to publishing her books, Adams became frustrated with the long process of finding a traditional publisher. "As an entrepreneur, it's sometimes hard for me to be patient," she says. "Instead, I took an independent route, which has allowed me to utilize my books as tools more than I would've been able to otherwise. I've donated thousands of copies of my books to schools, something I wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. That's the upside. I might not have the same reach, but it's a trade-off. I've found my niche and I'm proud of the impact that I make."

To learn more about Alane Adams and her books, visit alaneadams.com. For more information about the Rise Up Foundation, visit riseupfoundation.org. ●

Witches of Orkney Series

