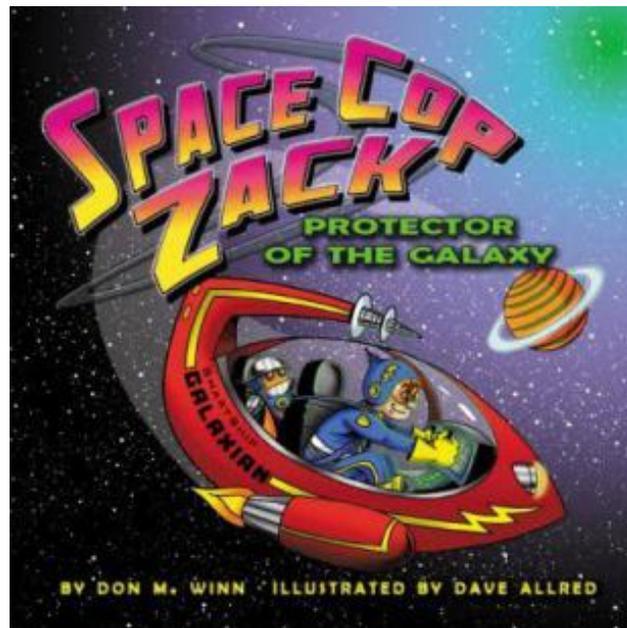


Don M. Winn: Space Cop Zack

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An Interview with Don M. Winn: Space Cop Zack

Michael F. Shaughnessy –

“Where else, if not in our imagination, can we explore the many possibilities?”—*Don M. Winn*

1) Don, your second book on “Space Cop Zack” has just been released. Tell us about it.

In the second Space Cop Zack book, *GARG’s Secret Mission*, GARG is sent to rescue a space princess held captive by the notorious General Electric. When mission control loses contact with GARG, Zack goes looking for him. Will Zack find GARG and help rescue the princess before it’s too late? Will Zack stop the notorious General Electric? That will all depend on where your imagination takes you.

As in the first book, the true nature of the items that form the basis for Zack’s imagination are real objects and are revealed as a surprise at the end of the story.

In the summer of 2013, I published a series of blogs about the power of imagination, covering everything from [thinking symbolically](#), its role in [problem-solving](#), to its [psychosocial](#) and [psychological](#) benefits.

All of this culminated in the release of my picture book, *Space Cop Zack, Protector of the Galaxy*. Space Cop Zack is about the “[beta version](#)” of imagination—childhood imaginings that help us develop our foundational imagination into powerful tools that can serve us well throughout our lives.

Zack’s character is a celebration of the power of the imagination. In book one, Zack and his faithful robot sidekick GARG take on the pursuit of the terrible Dr. Dogbreath, chasing him through the asteroids, oceans, and unusual plant life of Zack’s galaxy. Zack and GARG brave bad smells, squishy slime, giant ocean monsters and even motion sickness, and all without leaving their back yard.

2) What is it about outer space that seems to propel students to read?

Curiosity, exploration, motivation, and drive have always been some of the defining features of human consciousness. We want to discover things, share them with the world, understand how things work, and map our environment so that we can define our place in it.

Space, as the greatest unknown, offers the most charismatic, enthralling, engrossing possibilities, with the thrill of discovery eagerly anticipated. It's interesting to me that the majority of the reluctant readers I've had a chance to get to know seem to fall into two major camps: the dinosaur crew and the space cowboys. Both groups are challenged to stretch their imagination, the dino fans by obsolescence, the space group by the lack of human exploration. Reading about such things lights up the brains of young imagineers. The romance of exploration, being one of the 'good guys,' setting things right, making friends, all the while developing independence and autonomy. It's an enticing juxtaposition, one that encourages even the most reluctant reader to tenaciously keep reading!

3) Is Zack based on someone you know or is he totally a fictitious character?

Short answer: He's a combination of me and my son. When I was a boy my friends and I would frequently play cowboys or cops and robbers, but after a while, this would get old. I always wanted to explore and have adventures and there was no greater wilderness in need of exploration than our vast universe. My imagination soon took me to outer space. At first, I was in lockstep with NASA, sitting in my big cardboard box, preparing to be the first man—okay, boy—on the moon. But with imagination, I could go anywhere, and soon I was chasing intergalactic robbers throughout the galaxy.

My son, Anthony, as an only child, had a vivid imagination and would talk in different voices as he had conversations with his imaginary friends. He could truly entertain himself with no props required: just sitting on the floor, having lengthy conversations with his three buddies as they planned treasure hunts, navigated space adventures, hunted down bad guys, and thought up new games.

4) These movies like "Guardians of the Galaxy" all seem to predict what will happen out there in the farther reaches of the galaxy. Why are we preoccupied with these Star Wars movies and Star Trek films?

I think at heart, most of these stories are about second chances. So many of the characters had a rough start in life, or made some serious mistakes, were totally misunderstood by their peers, or were so different from others that they struggled to belong. But in the vastness of space, there's such diversity and such opportunity for growth that people can literally and figuratively escape the limitations of their past. Distracting ourselves from the mundane or troublesome granularity of daily life is a great way to escape for a couple of hours. Most of us can come away with an invigorated sense of our own possibilities after setting aside disbelief for even that short time. And of course, good triumphing (albeit with struggle) over evil is always a great emotional payoff.

5) Do you have a website and what would I find there?

My website is www.donwinn.com, and you'll find lots of information about my books and resources for teachers and parents there.

All of my books are available in softcover, hardcover, and eBook format, and the first two Sir Kaye books (chapter books for middle readers) are available as audiobooks. My books can be purchased from most online retailers: [Amazon](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), [Audible](#), etc.

All of my picture books are also available for significant discounts to schools, libraries, non-profits, retailers, and vendors directly from [Cardboard Box Adventures Publishing](#) or [Ingram/LSI](#).

The Sir Kaye titles are available for significant discounts to schools, libraries, non-profits, retailers, and vendors through [Progressive Rising Phoenix Press](#) or [Ingram/LSI](#).

As always, thanks so much for the opportunity to reach out to your readers!

