

"How Righteous Ray-Ray Was Born"

As a young child, my favorite character in books was *Curious George*. I enjoyed reading about all of the adventures he would get into. When I walked to the store, I would pretend to be *Curious George* and do something silly to make an adventure out of the two-block walk. I would read anything I could get my hands on. However, as I got older, I began to notice that there were not many books that had characters or situations that I could relate to. While in college, I realized I had the power to create these types of books.

What kind of book would it be? A chapter book? Naah, I want to make something for early readers, so that a love of reading would be developed early on. Picture book it is! Characters? Would it be an amazing fantasy world of gypsies? Some animals that learn to get along with each other? Maybe, maybe not, we need something realistic, there's so much phony and fake in the world today, so I'll use people as the characters.

Sarcastic Sam was going to be the name of the character for a long time, but as I daydreamed in one of my college classes, I kept looking at my nickname, which was written on my folder. Ray-Ray DIIINNG! I should use Ray-Ray as my book character's name! If I was in a store and I saw Ray-Ray on a book, it would peak my interest, even if Ray-Ray wasn't my name, I think. Cool. Is it Ray-Ray, and that's it? What's a cool word that begins with "R"? Reckless Ray-Ray? Rude Ray-Ray? Rambunctious Ray-Ray? Never! It should be something positive, that speaks life into people. Words have power dude! I thought to myself.

At that time, I was reading this book called "Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member" by Sanyika Shakur. In that book, the word "righteous" was used so many times that it began to almost appear **bolded** to me. It was used so much because the word "righteous" was slang for "OK" during the 1970's in California. Righteous Ray-Ray! That has a nice ring to it! I'll use that!

What will the character Ray-Ray be like? I'll use myself with a little twist. My best Righteous Ray-Ray writings happen when something from my own childhood experience is tied in, loosely based on my life. What were some entertaining and funny things that happened to me in my childhood? How can I add positive and amusing twists and make them into stories?

In my first book, "Righteous Ray-Ray Has a Bad Day" Ray-Ray trips into a puddle of mud and gets his pants dirty. In the sixth grade, my teacher would not let us go to the bathroom, unless at our scheduled time. So, I'm embarrassed to say, but one day I actually peed on myself! LOL! Fortunately, I had some navy blue sweat pants and no one ever knew, I think. My second book "Righteous Ray-Ray Stays Home From School" opens with Ray-Ray dreaming about his bike getting stolen. That actually happened to me as well, and it forms the motivation for Ray-Ray to do some righteous things in the story. Which of my experiences will inspire the upcoming Righteous Ray-Ray books? Stay tuned to see!

Alright, I digressed a little bit, but that's my story of how "Righteous Ray-Ray" was born. How were your ideas born? We all have a story to tell....

Peace,

Raymond Smith