

# Book Fair Author Spotlight On...



## Shane Peacock



**Q** What inspires you to write?

**A** I always tell students and young writers that you must choose subjects about which you are truly passionate. I am inspired by the things I truly care about, whether it be a Victorian London setting, a story that speaks of the evils of racism and prejudice, or one with unusual, flawed characters who do fascinating things. I also like to joke that I am an author because I don't want to have a job. But in a way that is true. Writers don't have an occupation so much as they simply record life and the things they imagine – we attempt to tell the truth about life as we see it, in the form of stories.

**Q** What advice do you have for young writers?

**A** Beyond advising them to write about the things they really care about, I encourage them to always finish the stories they start. That gives them the discipline to keep at their work (most would-be authors fail because they give up) and also allows them to truly judge their work, since they end up with completed stories, not unfinished ones. They will then see what is good or bad about their work and understand how to improve it and/or truly see the strengths in it.

**Q** What was your favourite book when you were growing up?

**A** To be honest, at first, I liked to read hockey books! But when I was a little bit older, around 10 or 12, my parents read *Oliver Twist* to me and it absolutely enchanted me. I have been a huge Charles Dickens fan ever since. I think that shows in both the content and style of my *Boy Sherlock Holmes* novels.

**Q** What do you like to do when you're not writing?

**A** I like to read, first and foremost, but I also like to spend whatever time I can with my family. We have fun taking trips together or even staying home watching a movie. We particularly like to watch the long BBC productions of Dickens' novels that take us many days to finish (and discuss!) and Sherlock Holmes flicks. I like sports, too, and enjoy having time to throw a ball with my son, coach his hockey team, or take him to a game.

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**Q** What has been the biggest achievement of your career so far?

**A** Well, the greatest achievement for any author is getting that first book published. That seems like such a huge thing when you are starting out, such a hill to climb. But after that, I think the great success of *The Boy Sherlock Holmes* series, its considerable sales, critical acclaim, and especially all the awards it has won, has been pretty special. I'm also amazed by the fact that it has been published in so many other countries in so many different languages.

**Q** How do you do your research all the necessary historical details for a series such as this one, and what is it about this time period that keeps you coming back?

**A** Victorian London intrigues me because it was a place unlike any other has been before or since. It was the biggest city in the world's biggest empire and by the 1860s (when my Sherlock stories are set), it was growing at an incredible rate, creating both enormous problems (like crime, pollution, overpopulation and health concerns) and great excitement – it was full of famous people and remarkable entertainment and constant cultural,



scientific, and social change. It was also a period that we can now see in photographs, but not in film footage. So, it sits there in photos, looking back at us, but doesn't move. I like to move it in my books. Concerning my research, I do it very thoroughly, so that when my readers experience my books, they really feel as if they are back in time and reading about the REAL Sherlock Holmes, not a caricature of him. I read a great deal about the Victorian period, and not only non-fiction accounts of its history, its people and customs, but the great fiction of the time too, which really gives me a feel for the period. I also look at photographs from that era, watch historical movies that get it right, and research in museums and libraries. As well, I travel to London whenever I can, where I visit the areas where my stories are set. For example, I went to the East End of London (Whitechapel) and actually found a little alleyway where I set the murder in the first *Boy Sherlock Holmes*; *Eye of the Crow*.



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