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## Newbery Award Winner Avi Continues to Engage Young Fans

May 2013 – Author Avi, winner of a Newbery Award, a Scott O’Dell Historical Fiction Award, and multiple Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards, may have seen his first children’s book published in 1970, but that doesn’t mean he’s lost his knack for connecting with young fans.

“His books are really amazing,” enthuses Shae Henley, a going-into-4th-grade student, in a 2012 blog post.

Avi agrees that engaging his readers is one of the key reasons he keeps writing, and that he’s been fortunate enough to hear directly from readers about the impact his books have had. “I have been touched many times by readers who find some special connection between their lives and something I have written: the Danish girl who read something of mine in Danish, and struggled to communicate that in her halting English; the autistic boy who somehow found something meaningful about my books that reached his own inner life; the women who have told me how important *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* was to them when growing up; the boy who felt a new sense of courage after reading *Crispin*.”

Beyond his fans’ questions about the characters he’s created, the writer’s most commonly heard question may be about his own use of the single name “Avi.”

“As a young adult, I was a reader of French literature, which has that one name tradition: Moliere, Racine, Anouilh, Gide, and so forth,” he explains. “Then too, Avi (which is not my birth certificate name) was given to me by my twin-sister when we were infants, and it stuck. Then my family was opposed to my becoming a writer because they considered my writing poor (which it was, then). By using my *own* name (Avi), I was having my revenge on family.”

Although he believes – and has the awards to show – that his writing skills have improved, writing still doesn’t come easily to him, despite having over sixty books to his credit. “I never studied writing in any formal sense. I taught myself to write by reading, and by imitating what I was reading,” he says.

The writing task may be tough, but the payoff is big. “To create, share, and support the gift of reading and literature, is to give young people the gift of many worlds, within and without,” Avi states. Then he adds, “Besides, writers don’t write writing. They write reading.”

Forty-three years after his first children’s book came out, for Avi it’s still all about the readers.

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