

ADAM SHAUGHNESSY

on writing

The ENTIRELY TRUE STORY of the UNBELIEVABLE FIB

One of my favorite things about the story that became *The Entirely True Story of the Unbelievable FIB*—my first children’s book—is that it started as an interactive game I created for kids about fifteen years ago.

They say you should do what you love. Me? I love to create stories and I love to play games. Years ago, I sat down and tried to imagine how I might combine those two things into a job I’d also love.

I knew from the start that I liked working with kids (let’s face it—they’re much more fun than adults). So it seemed obvious that however I chose to combine stories and games, the final result should be something I could share with kids of all ages. It took a while (and I had help from some terrific people along the way), but I finally figured out a solution.

I created my own line of a special kind of story called an Adventure, which unfolded through a unique combination of storytelling and game-playing. I adapted or invented all kinds of games that I could put into my Adventures. I also created maps and codes (and a few other surprises) to fit every story.

I visited schools, libraries, and summer camps with my Adventures. Groups of kids signed up for my program and together we stepped into a make-believe world I had invented just for them. The kids were the heroes of the story, and instead of reading or listening to the story as it happened, they actually played the story.



Angela Chicowski Photography

ADAM SHAUGHNESSY

is an author and educator. He received his BA in English from Connecticut College and is currently pursuing his MA in children’s literature from Hollins University. Adam lives in Waterford, Connecticut. *The Entirely True Story of the Unbelievable FIB* is his first novel.

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AUTHOR INSIGHTS

Most of my first Adventures, and many of my favorites, were mysteries that involved mythology. In fact, I liked mythology and mystery so much that I invented a fictional detective agency for my Adventures that investigated myths from all around the world. I called my fictional detective agency the Fantasy Investigation Bureau, or the F.I.B., and I even invented a head detective who I called Fox. He was generally well meaning, if a little bumbling and paranoid.

Fox, with the help of some very clever groups of kids, investigated mysteries that involved characters found in myths from all around the world. But of all the F.I.B.'s investigations, my favorite was one called "The Eye of Odin." It dealt with Norse mythology, which features a wildly imaginative cosmology and cast of characters. I used a number of those characters in "The Eye of Odin," including Odin, Thor, and the trickster, Loki. I also included a lesser-known character who I personally think reflects the pinnacle of human imagination: Ratatosk, the insult squirrel.

Really. He's a squirrel who travels up and down a world-spanning tree to carry insults between an eagle at the top and a dragon at the bottom. It just doesn't get any better than that!

Ratatosk, whose role was played brilliantly by a supremely talented squirrel puppet (which I still own!), and all the other characters in "The Eye of Odin" were a hit with the kids who went on the Adventure. And with me, too.

So much so that years later, when I concentrated on books and writing, I found myself revisiting the F.I.B. and, in particular, "The Eye of Odin." After all, the two seemed like the perfect fit for each other. Loki is one of the most famous liars in Western civilization, and I'd called my detective agency the F.I.B.!

Add to that fortunate coincidence the reality that a child's world is often filled with truth and lies (both of which are told to them by adults, for a wide range of reasons), coupled with the popular notion in children's literature that magic and belief are profoundly linked, and I had a rich set of themes to play with—not to mention a title that jumped out at me right from the start: *The Entirely True Story of the Unbelievable FIB*.

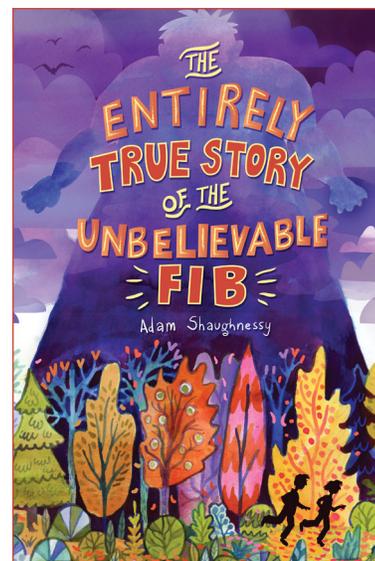
So, more than a decade after first investigating "The Eye of Odin" with a wonderful group of kids, I returned to the story and turned it into a book. A lot changed in the translation. The book gave birth to Pru, ABE, and Fay (none of whom appeared in the original Adventure). Fox became a different character entirely. But a lot about the story remained the same. The book includes Odin, Thor, Loki, and, of course, the unstoppable (and sometimes unquotable!) Ratatosk.

The squirrel puppet, sadly, is not included.

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