

Story Monsters Ink

NOVEMBER 2020

The Literary Resource for Teachers, Librarians, and Parents



ONE TO READ:
VICTORIA BOND

JIMMY DUNNE
COMPOSES A MAGICAL STORY
WITH A MEANINGFUL MESSAGE

BRENT GOLEMBIEWSKI
OFFERS YOUNG ADULT READERS
AN ESCAPE FROM REALITY

LINDSAY ANN FINK
CREATES A FEATHER-FILLED
TURKEY DAY TRADITION

A CASE FOR
EMPATHY



MATTHEW GOLLUB

CREATES MUSICAL STORIES FROM AFAR

PATTI CARPENTER
PENS A HEARTWARMING TALE OF LOVE AND LOSS

MARY ELLEN STOTTMANN
INVITES LITTLE READERS TO BAXTER'S CORNER

JUDY NEWMAN
THIS WRITER JUST WANTS TO HAVE FUN

Q&A WITH
CASSANDRA FEDERMAN

ALANE ADAMS
ON WRITING SERIES

THE BOOK BUG
LITA JUDGE ENCOURAGES
LITTLE READERS TO
FIND THEIR WINGS





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AUTHOR MATTHEW GOLLUB

CREATES MUSICAL STORIES FROM AFAR

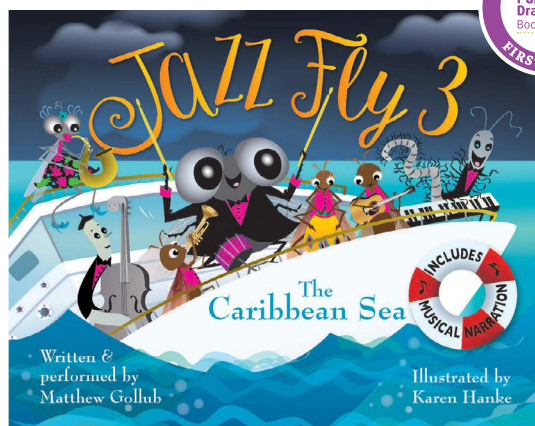
by Melissa Fales • photos by Star Dewar

There's quite a buzz about children's author Matthew Gollub's latest book, *Jazz Fly 3: The Caribbean Sea*. A Purple Dragonfly Book Awards first-place winner in the Picture Books Ages 6 & Up and Arts and Culture categories, *Jazz Fly 3: The Caribbean Sea* takes readers on an epic reading and listening adventure.

“It’s my latest story about a fly who speaks jazz (ZEE-bop, ze-BOING!),” says Gollub. “The fly and his band are playing on an international cruise ship. They hear phrases in Spanish and French, like ‘*Bonjour. ¿Cómo te va?*’ and ‘*Un, deux, trois!*’ His band turns these words into catchy jazz chants. All the insect passengers are having a blast, but things are about to go south in a hurry.”

Readers who have come to admire the Jazz Fly from the first two books in Gollub’s series tend to enjoy his cool, laid-back approach to life. “The Jazz Fly and his band really live in the moment,” says Gollub. “They bounce from one adventure to the next. The different rhythms and languages they pick up sometimes land them in tight spots. But they also use these languages and rhythms to get themselves out of trouble.” That’s a skill that comes in handy during *Jazz Fly 3: The Caribbean Sea*, which finds the Jazz Fly and his band in a brand new predicament. “Captain Cockroach loses control of the ship,” says Gollub. “I knew he shouldn’t have written that love poem to Nancy the Gnat! And then Les Jazz Bugs are stuck in a bottle during a storm! The book is a language and music-packed ocean adventure, and it comes with my narration set to a jazz septet.”

Gollub’s *The Jazz Fly* was released in 2000. “In the original *Jazz Fly*, the fly is buzzing around lost,” says Gollub. “He needs directions to arrive at his gig, and he picks up the



languages of a donkey, a hog, etc. In *Jazz Fly 2*, (released in 2010) he’s already successful. So he’s driving his band to their next gig until their limousine breaks down in the jungle.”

The illustrations for the *Jazz Fly* books are computer-generated artwork by Karen Hanke. “Her jazz-loving insects appear so cool, you may never want to squish a pesky fly again,” says Gollub. “I’ve worked with Karen for so long, we just get each other. We’re both really particular, but we can communicate our ideas with just a few words or scribbles. This working relationship is a joy.”

Gollub’s *Jazz Fly* books are a great introduction for children to the jazz genre. “Other features that shout ‘Jazz!’ about this

series are the be-boppin' music and the style of verse," says Gollub. "I've written traditional rhyming stories in a predictable AA/BB meter, but with *The Jazz Fly* stories, I veer toward 'jazz poetry.' Some lines rhyme, some don't. Some stop short to make space for the word's impact. Some lines contain internal echoes of consonants. Others may contain subtle alliteration. For example:

'Zappity-zip.

A cruising ship.

**The tropical sun blazed
hot on deck,**

**so the Jazz Bugs grooved
in the ballroom below.**

**Wa-buh-doo buh DEE,
skiddily-BOP-zee-BOING!"**

What sets Gollub's *Jazz Fly* books apart is the musical narration, which is an integral part of each story. "Remember, the *Jazz Fly* books are designed to be heard, not just read," says Gollub. "So load the audio onto your device, and enjoy chanting along in rhythm. If you're a teacher or librarian, just hold up the book and turn the

pages. Then, as you catch the spirit, you may want to read them in your own way." *The Jazz Fly* has been performed by professional musicians, including the Orlando Philharmonic Symphony Jazz Quartet, as well as amateurs all over the world.



Initially, Gollub intended to write adult fiction, but a trip to Mexico



changed the trajectory of his life. "In my late 20's, I traveled to Oaxaca to interview the Mexican painter Leovigildo Martínez," he says. "He's the one who actually suggested I try writing children's books. At the time, I had an agent in New York trying to sell a novel. But Leovigildo broached the idea of collaborating with him on a children's book and that sounded like a delicious challenge."

Gollub and Martínez created a book called *The Twenty-five Mixtec Cats*. "I tell students I wrote 25 drafts—one for each cat," says Gollub. "We ended up creating two more books set in Mexico: *The Moon Was at a Fiesta*, and *Uncle Snake*. And we became lifelong friends." All three





“TO WRITERS JUST STARTING OUT, I’D SAY DON’T BE AFRAID OF MAKING MISTAKES. BY WRITING STORIES, WE’RE JUST CONNECTING PEOPLE ACROSS TIME AND SPACE. IF WE FAIL, AT LEAST THINGS ARE RARELY IN DANGER OF BLOWING UP.”

books were published in English and Spanish. “And a publisher in Tokyo recently issued *The Moon Was at a Fiesta* in Japanese,” says Gollub. “They let me review their Japanese translation first. As we emailed back and forth about fine points, I smiled. These two cultures, two parts of my heart and mind, had converged.”

Gollub’s book *Ten Oni Drummers/Diez tamborileros oni*, featuring English and Spanish text, is a multitasking book. “It’s a rhyming, counting, bedtime story all in one,” says Gollub. “And it teaches you how to count in Japanese from one to ten.” It’s about a boy in Japan who dreams he’s on a beach where monsters are coming up from the sand. “In Japanese, these little guys are called *oni*,” says Gollub. “They romp around the beach playing their *taiko* (Japanese drums). And each time they play their drums, they get bigger. Finally, when there are ten of them, and they’re furiously pounding their thunderous drums, the boy discovers why they’ve appeared: it’s their job to scare away spooky dreams!” Tokyo native Kazuko G. Stone did the illustrations. “I thought she struck just the right balance,” says Gollub. “She managed to make the *oni* look formidable, yet funny.”

Gollub also collaborated with Stone on *Cool Melons-Turn to Frogs! The Life and Poems of Issa*, a collection of haiku translations combined with the

story of the poet’s life. Gollub studied Japanese in college and later lived in Japan where he worked as a translator for an advertising company. “I’d spend my days translating ads about things like toaster ovens. But for this book, it was 17-syllable meditations on life and the natural world.”

For Gollub, providing accurate translations was challenging. “One thing I discovered early on: Japanese words tend to have more syllables, so if you faithfully translate Japanese haiku, you usually wind up with fewer syllables in English,” he says. “It was great to closely collaborate with the illustrator. Kazuko has such a keen understanding of Issa’s work. She was able to help me grasp the nuances of each poem. We’d have long discussions in Japanese by phone to make sure I wasn’t misinterpreting the master!”

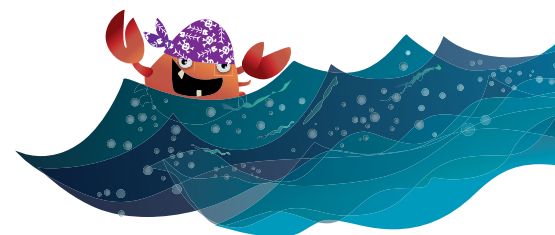
Gollub grew up speaking English only. “But to this day,” he says, “I’m still benefitting from my college experience at the University of the Pacific. I graduated from their International Studies program which emphasized interdisciplinary learning. I got a second major in Japanese and was fortunate enough to also study in Spain.”

Everything Gollub does creatively is aligned with this philosophy, or mantra: rhythm, language, color, life! An appreciation for rhythm and language are constants in all of his

books. “Color, to me, goes beyond an artist’s palette,” says Gollub. “It’s the quality that makes each of us a unique human being. I added life because there is something life-affirming about stories. To writers just starting out, I’d say don’t be afraid of making mistakes. By writing stories, we’re just connecting people across time and space. If we fail, at least things are rarely in danger of blowing up. Finally, since I’m in awe of the Earth’s life forms, including insects and sea creatures, I try to share some of that wonder and curiosity in my books.”

As a speaker, Matthew Gollub has performed at over 1,000 elementary schools. His lively assemblies, now virtual, include drumming, rhythmic storytelling and reading and writing tips. He performs his multilingual stories in English, Spanish, Japanese, and jazz, and these days, even *un peu de français*. He also provides literacy training for grown-ups in English, Spanish, or both at the same time.

For more information about Matthew Gollub and his books, visit matthewgollub.com. ●



MATTHEW'S TIPS TO SURVIVE DISTANCE LEARNING WITH KIDS

by Matthew Gollub

Let's face it. It's stressful that, on top of work worries, parents must now oversee our kids' distance learning. We fear that our children's education may slip. Kids feel the expectation to perform, but it's hard for them to focus on their teacher's screen image. We all miss our social outlets and activities. And everyone, on some level, is spooked by Covid19.



How is a frazzled family to survive? Take a deep breath. The good news is families have a chance to grow closer and discover things that may actually improve learning. For instance, we can try to observe each child's learning style and help them find ways to study that work best. Visual learners like to see information written. Auditory learners prefer hearing explanations. Kinesthetic learners do best with physical interaction—building and getting their hands on projects.

More tips to survive—and improve—distance learning:

- » try “recess” first before online learning to release excess energy or make your child alert;
- » agree beforehand on fun activities to reward learning effort;
- » help your child bond with their teacher by saying positive things;
- » give the teacher feedback and support—they are new at this too!
- » look into increasing your Internet speed if necessary.

Some Internet plans allow double the speed for as little as \$2 extra per month. And don't overlook obvious learning tools online. GoogleTranslate lets children see how words look in Arabic or Greek. Use GoogleMaps to take an instant trip to Japan!

Reading Soothes—and Builds Vocabulary

Another way to cope with the stress and uncertainty is to set aside time for your family to read for FUN—independently, side by side, or out loud together.

Reading aloud together soothes parents and children—even families with tweens and teens! With older kids, take turns reading pages or chapters aloud. People of all ages gain confidence with practice, and by talking over the content, parents and kids connect.

Studies show that when children speak with grown-ups, they use a vocabulary of around 1,000 words. (Think primary words like eat, play, run, school.) But by the end of fourth grade, they are exposed to 19,000 different words in writing. (Think more sophisticated words like blossom, slither, screech, request.) Reading is the best way to help kids master those extra 18,000 words.

All kinds of books have their place at family reading time: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, biographies, picture books, chapter books, YA (Young Adult) and graphic novels. Most libraries now offer downloadable books, and some allow drive-by pick-ups of printed books you reserve.

NOTE: It's advantageous for men in the family to participate in reading and online learning. This saves moms from bearing too much of the burden. It also sends a powerful message to boys, lest they grow up thinking that school work's not for them!

The Benefits of Recorded Books

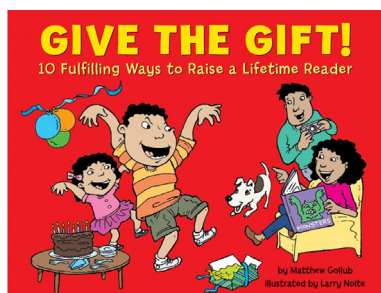
Recorded books (both audio books and readalongs with audio) can be especially beneficial with kids spending more time at home. They afford parents of young children the chance to shower and cook! Recorded books also promote reading skills because they

- » teach children to pronounce new words;
- » allow them to enjoy stories beyond their reading level;
- » model cadence and the expressive use of language.

Hearing good stories, read with expression, can even make kids more empathetic. It lets them experience how people, beyond their immediate community, talk and interact. Since a good narrator helps the listener grasp the writer's intent, in the end hearing recorded stories makes kids better readers.

So to survive, even thrive, during this time of distance learning, let's keep observing our kids and aim to gradually improve the learning process. And with a soothing, family reading routine, we might all emerge happier and more connected.

Matthew Gollub shares more practical tips and insights in his award-winning, illustrated book for parents, *Give the Gift! 10 Fulfilling Ways to Raise a Lifetime Reader*. More information at matthewgollub.com. ●



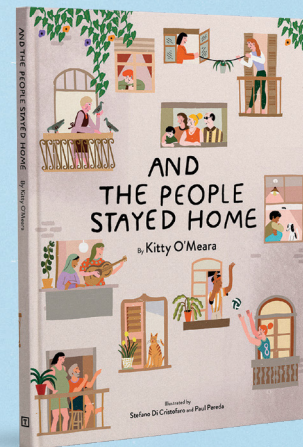
A hopeful, powerful message for now
and the future from Kitty O'Meara

AND THE PEOPLE STAYED HOME

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