

Young Authors - Miles and William Rabun

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Frequently Asked Questions for Miles and William Rabun

1. Can you describe *My Grandma's Backyard*? What is your book about?

My Grandma's Backyard is a book about the adventures two young African-American brothers, Miles and William Rabun, take in their grandmother's backyard. My brother and I wrote the book when we were seven and five years old in anticipation of our summer visit to our grandmother's house. We are now eight and six years old. The book includes colorful illustrations by Atlanta artist, Tony Moore. We love the pictures because they look exactly like our grandmother's backyard we play in every summer. The book also includes a fun activity section for kids to explore and talk about their own adventures. *My Grandma's Backyard* even has vocabulary words, reading comprehension exercises and games with an answer key. The book is designed for young readers but will be enjoyed by all based on the pictures, true adventure story, activities and theme.

2. Can you kindly give us a summary of *My Grandma's Backyard*?

My Grandma's Backyard explores two brothers' favorite things to do and see in their grandmother's backyard that they visit every summer. These things include identifying plants, admiring animal statues and the pond, and playing on the bridges and crossings named after the boys. My brother and I also express our excitement about the activities we do in our grandmother's backyard like skipping rocks, reciting poems, making up plays and discovering new things.

3. What are words that best describe *My Grandma's Backyard*?

young authors
young readers
adventure
exploration
fun
nature
family-oriented
outdoor arts
educational tool
fun-reader

4. Who or what inspired you to become young authors and write a book?

At the end of the school year in 2006, our Mom and Dad (Dereck and Yolanda Rabun) shared with our grandmother (Kappitola Williams) that we received really good marks in reading and writing. Our grandmother then challenged my brother and me to write a book so we could teach other kids to love reading as much as we did.

My Grandma's Backyard

ISBN13: 978-1-4257-4268-3 (Picture Book)

ISBN: 1-4257-4268-8 (Picture Book)

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5. Is *My Grandma's Backyard* based on a real place you brothers visit?

Yes, my brother and I have written about our grandmother's backyard that we play in every summer in Atlanta, Georgia. The pond is real! The bridges exist and there really is a shiny blue ball on a pedestal. We are credible authorities on the book's subject because the story we wrote is all about the real adventures my brother and I did when spending summers with our grandmother, who is an environmental specialist for the state of Georgia and a natural born nature and outdoors person.

6. What is the central topic of *My Grandma's Backyard*? What are the main themes and/or ideas?

The central topic of *My Grandma's Backyard* is based on the summer experience of two kids who explore the exciting things found in their grandmother's backyard. The book is a glimpse of two brothers' everyday summer fun in Atlanta, Georgia with family and friends. The themes revealed in the book relate to the boys' [1] adventures in their grandmother's backyard like skipping rocks, doing plays on the stage in the backyard and having friends over to play, and the [2] discoveries of frogs, plants, insects, and garden accessories, plus [3] reading activities like rhyming word matches, story reflection questions, flower identification and vocabulary words.

7. Why do you think kids should read *My Grandma's Backyard*?

My brother and I wrote *My Grandma's Backyard* because we wanted a book that kids would want to read or a book that would inspire non-readers to want to learn to read. Reading is key to the future for everyone and children should start as early as possible.

8. How long did it take you to write *My Grandma's Backyard*?

The initial writing time for *My Grandma's Backyard* was only about two months, however the editing and publishing stages altogether lasted about a year. We released a preview copy of *My Grandma's Backyard* in 2006, in our grandmother's backyard, and soon thereafter did another round of edits and added activities to the book for the current publication. We also reviewed the galleys for the book and made corrections and reviewed the authors' copy.

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9. Are you guys involved in any extra curricular activities at school or otherwise?

We attend Pleasant Union Elementary School in the Wake County Public School System. Miles is in the 4th grade and William is in the 2nd grade. We also attend a non traditional, year round school. This means my brother and I are in school throughout the entire year with a 15-day break after 45 days in school. Miles is involved in the academically gifted program and the Kids for Character Club and William is an active 2nd grader. Outside of school, we are a part of the Carolina Eagles Track Club in field and track events, the Cub Scouts, and theatre camps. My brother and I have also appeared in several local and national commercials, as well as industrials.

10. You appear to be very active kids. How do you find the time to write?

My brother and I keep writing and drawing notebooks in our parents' cars and we are known for coming up with a writing idea and jotting it down while traveling between school, family events or auditions. We also write in school and have been writing since preschool and kindergarten.

11. What has impacted your reading and writing more: your grandmother, your parents or your teachers?

Many people have influenced our reading and writing. Our parents tell us that from the time my brother and I were in our mother's tummy, our father (Dereck) read to us regularly. As we grew, William would also benefit from my (Miles') reading time as well as his own. Eventually, our grandmother and other aunts would send books for us to read and enjoy.

Our mother (Yolanda) also made up and shared bedtime stories with my brother and me. These stories inspired us to become storytellers and make up our own skits and plays. We also attended several theatre camps at Raleigh Little theatre where we not only acted out stories but also wrote them. Eventually in school, we began exploring writing challenges with our teachers.

Everyone has been a great influence on our desire to share our love of reading and writing with others.

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12. Describe your writing process. Was it fun?

We work in our writing journals on ideas that interest us. Sometimes we draw in our journals too. For ***My Grandma's Backyard***, we spent a few days jotting down the things we loved about our grandmother's backyard and eventually other things found in our grandmother's back yard. We also talked to our grandmother to relive and remember certain events in the backyard.

Eventually we chose to write about our favorite things like the bridges that have our names and the pond. We also like the turtles. William decided a rhyming story would be easy for kids to read and Miles helped William come up with rhyming buzz words based on the activities listed. We also engaged our mother, Yolanda, to type the rhymes and eventual story as we recited them. This process was done in a few nights. When the words were printed out, we then, begin to revise and edit, and then edit, edit. The process was fun most of the time. It was a lot of hard work.

13. Did you guys receive help writing ***My Grandma's Backyard***?

My Grandma's Backyard represents our thoughts and our writing! Our Mom, Yolanda, was our typist and editor. There were many times in the editing phase when our Mom would rewrite certain parts, but we would quickly spot the changes and scratch it out! We did receive feedback on our writing in general and in some cases we developed some parts more fully or cut certain parts to make sure the scope of the book was within our original plan (i.e., we wanted to be sure to spend time telling about different activities.)

14. How did you get the book published?

Our mom went to a lot of publishing companies and shared with them our preview book and then decided to self-publish it since it could be faster. She said self-publishing would also be a good opportunity for my brother and I to learn about investments and return on investments.

15. What advice would you give to aspiring young writers?

Read, Read, Read. Reading will give you an idea of what people have written that made you like their book. We have a shelf of books we call our library and it is filled with books we like to read. Our favorite styles of writing are reflected in our work. Young authors should also join or start a book club to talk about your ideas and see how others write books. Eventually, young writers should write, write, and write and get others to read it until they get good responses.

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16. Who are your favorite authors?

Miles' favorite author is C.S. Lewis and he especially has enjoyed the *Chronicles of Narnia* series and William's favorite author is Geronimo Stilton and William has enjoyed reading Geronimo Stilton's mouse tales because they are really funny!

17. How are you dealing with the attention you are receiving regarding your unique accomplishment?

Our mom says we are ordinary kids who completed an extraordinary task. We have done several book signings and know that with all of the fun, there is also hard work associated with promoting our book. We think it is cool to see ourselves on television or in the newspaper in stories related to our book. Our parents still make us complete homework, housework and help us to remain humble.

18. What do you aspire to be when you grow-up?

William wants to be a scientist and Miles wants to be a basketball star and then a hockey star, retire into writing, give money to charity, give books to charity, write an autobiography, write a biography, sew, play video games of when he was a sports star, become a preacher, invent something, preach again, and then be a writer again.

19. What's next?

Miles and William are currently working on a second picture book that will likely preview at Christmas 2007. Miles is also writing two stories regarding kids and hockey and two of his basketball idols and how influential they have been to Miles. William loves testing Miles' stories for readability.

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