

From Puffballs to Published

A presentation by Glenn Somodi

Duration: One hour long presentation (plus time to set up and break down)

Audience: Middle school children interested in reading or writing or science

I am going to present how I took a childhood experience (finding puffball mushrooms) and turned it into an award-winning published book. The presentation will be interactive with many activities involving student volunteers. At the end of the presentation, I will have a Q&A session.

Some schools purchase book one to hand out to students (\$10 each / discounted cost). I usually donate/give books to my volunteers if the school is not purchasing a book for all. I donate some copies to the library/media center at no cost.

Takeaways:

You can write a story; You DO have an imagination—you just need to find your inspiration; You can have fun with research; You can learn how to brainstorm an idea; You can learn how to use a writing process;

All of these will be highlighted by my experience writing the Olly & the Spores book series and through activities with student volunteers, videos, slideshows, and a short playing of a scene from my audiobook.

Activities during presentation:

- They're alive! We will listen to plants make music – 1-2 student volunteers will help
- Amazing facts I've learned while writing the book (with a slideshow and videos)
- Fun with brainstorming – a group activity – a student volunteer will help
- The writing process – a group activity – a group of student volunteers will help
- Q&A session at end
- For volunteers only, or all if books purchased: Handout of signed, limited edition copy of book one, *Olly & the Spores of Oak Hill*, with a special mushroom bookmark

Setting:

I will have an intro movie running (looping) as the kids enter the room. Movie will tease some of the fun things we will discuss during the presentation (subject teasers like zombie ants, glowing mushrooms, weird mushrooms, mixed with art from the book). Music from my PlantWave (connected to a plant) will be playing in the background.

Timeline:

2 minutes	General introduction (I will supply you with a short bio)
5 minutes	Who I am and what I want to show you today. Anyone can write a story!

15 minutes	You DO have an imagination. Where I found my inspiration: Puffballs; Research and fun facts I've learned along the way (with videos and a slideshow)
5 minutes	ACTIVITY: They're alive! Plant music with PlantWave – two volunteers
15 minutes	ACTIVITY: Fun with brainstorming – a group activity, single volunteer
10 minutes	ACTIVITY: The writing process – a group activity, 10 volunteers
Remainder	Q&A session

If books are purchased: As the students leave they would receive the book with a special mushroom bookmark attached. Inside each book will be a flyer announcing book two, *Oily & the Spores of Sapphire Creek*, which just launched (on The Day of the Mushroom, April 16th).

Content to be shown:

- Intro teaser movie
- Slideshow
- 30-second video: Puffballs (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHuan8E5EKc>) 1:15 – 1:45
- 3-minute audiobook clip: Chapter 12: A little pinch will do it – read by Ben Hauck, actor from NYC
- 2-minute video: Zombie Ants (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vijGdWn5-h8>) :53 – 3:00

I will need these items in presentation space:

- Microphone/amplifier (if group size/space is too large to hear me)
- Proximity to electrical outlets
- A large erasable whiteboard (or digital board) and a few good dark-colored dry-erase markers (and eraser)
- Wireless access or Ethernet connection with enough bandwidth to play online videos
- A podium to hold my laptop
- A video projector/projection screen
- Cables to connect a Macbook Pro to your projection unit (HDMI or USB-c) – I will bring what I have as backup
- Two 8-foot tables – one in front of the presentation screen to hold plants and mushrooms for the PlantWave demonstration and presentation aids; one near the exit to hold some of the framed artwork from the book, a display of book 2, and the 165 books with flyers with mushroom bookmarks that kids can take when leaving
- Someone to take photos and video of the presentation. I may set up my ipad to record myself as I present, too.

I will bring:

- Extension cords

- Colored paper and big sharpies for writing activity
- Items for display table near exit (framed art, sculptures, book 2)
- 165+ books with mushrooms and flyers inserted
- Macbook, iPad, iPhone
- PlantWave Device
- Plants and mushroom blocks for PlantWave demo
- Speakers/cables for the PlantWave
- Water bottles for the PlantWave experiment