

The Petit Proust Questionnaire

from Owlkids Books

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Meet author Stephen W. Martin

STEPHEN W. MARTIN is a genre-filmmaker, specializing in blood, gore, and whimsical storytelling. *Robot SMASH!*

is Stephen's first children's picture book. He is a proud Newfoundlander who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. Visit his website at www.stephen-w-martin.com and find him on Twitter as @stephen_W_M.



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Robot SMASH! is a book about a robot who likes to... SMASH! Joyful destruction takes center stage in this fun, unique play on what it means to suffer your first crush.

When you were a kid, what was your favorite thing to do?

My favorite thing to do as a kid was something we called "The Days before Time." Basically, on a Saturday morning we would wake up at around 5:00 am and then walk to each of our friends' houses, gathering up everyone... throwing rocks at windows if we had to, until we had everyone in our posse. Then we would start the trek from Mt. Pearl, the small little city where I grew up, to the waterfront in St. John's. Along the way, we would usually debate about which X-Men character we were most like or who could beat who in a throw down and, of course, we made sure to stop at a different corner store every time for junk food and soda. We called it "The Day before Time" because at the beginning of our journey it felt like time had stopped and we were seeing the world as if no one else was moving; time was frozen. But then, ever so slowly, we would begin to see people and cars on the street; slowly time was catching up to us. By the time we reached the harborfront, it was lunchtime, and the world had returned to normal. There, we would spend the rest of the afternoon reading comic books or eating fast food before somebody's dad came to pick us up.

What did you most dislike doing when you were a child?

I had a love/hate relationship with my paper route. It brought me money and so much pain, especially in the winter, where I became a walking target for all the little kids with their snowballs.

As a child, where did you dream of living?

New York City! For me it was the center of the pop-culture world. So many superheroes all living together in harmony... Well, sort of... Plus, it's the city where you're most likely to spot a giant ape, or see turtles who are ninjas, or be exploded in an alien attack... It had it all!

What did you think you were good at as a kid?

I was really good at telling stories. We used to play a Star Wars-themed RPG (role-playing game) when we were



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young, and I always played the DM (dungeon master), so that meant I got to make up all the stories and adventures for all my friends. It also meant that I got to play the bad guys, which was pretty fun as well!

When you were a kid in school, what did you look for in a friend?

Someone who didn't like hockey. I was not a sports kid, so if your Friday night meant Hockey Night in Canada and not TGIF, we could not be friends... Well, maybe, but only if you could tell me who would win in a fight, Batman or... the answer is Batman!

What did you most want to be when you grew up?

Besides wanting to be a superhero, I always wanted to work in the movie business or write books. I grew up on a steady diet of Jumbo Video popcorn, Reading Rainbow, VHS Friday and Saturday nights, the Universal monsters and the Hoot Club! Honestly, a job where you got to make your imagination come to life seemed like magic!

What was your favorite book as a child?

When I was really young, I LOVED anything and everything with a spooky or Halloween theme. One of my absolute favorites was The Berenstain Bears book *The Spooky Old Tree*. It was like a combination of all your favorite episodes of Scooby-Doo mixed in with some awesome art that really gave me the creeps!

What is your favorite pastime now?

Still reading!! Reading! Reading! Sadly, there are no more Saturday morning cartoons, so every weekend I like to get up really early and sit on my sofa near the window and read comic books for the first hour of my day before I get to work.

What do you find an absolute chore?

Shaving! It's the worst! When I was a kid, I always thought growing a beard would be cool—it's like playing Halloween with your face... But now, 30 years later, I still can't grow a beard! Now every morning I have to wake up and shave off my patchy, patch, half-and-half, quasi-facial hair, where I usually cut myself, and if I don't shave that morning I know that by evening I will be itching like I have chicken pox. Trust me kids, shaving is not cool... well, unless you can grow a beard... Then it's cool. Actually, I take that back...It's not cool.

If you could live anywhere, where would you go?

That's a funny question, because my wife and I are making that decision now! We are going to pick the city where we will probably live for the next foreseeable while. Right now there are two cities in the running—LA and New York City. But right now we are leaning towards LA (better tacos).

What is the one talent you wish you had?

I'd love to be able to draw! When I look at people like Juan Carlos Solon and see what he can do, it just amazes me. It's something that I envy and I'm in awe of at the same time! To me, artists are like alchemists: they can take something like a few words or lines of dialogue and turn it into gold.

What makes a good friend?

Somebody who will wait for you to tie your shoes while it's raining.



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If you weren't an author or illustrator, what job would you have?

Probably an international jewel thief or secret agent. Actually, a retired international jewel thief that is now a secret agent!

What children's books have caught your attention lately?

SOOOOO MANY!!! I read a crazy amount of children's books! We have hundreds in our house, and we don't have children yet. When we do have children, we are going to be so ready. Right now, I just finished *The Book with No Pictures* by B.J. Novak, which is awesome, especially if you get someone to read it to you!!! Also, if you are looking to impress your friends with something indie and European, I would 100% recommend *The Hole* by Oyvind Torseter. What he does with design and storytelling is amazing!!! Finally, I'm also super-excited to read *Wild Ideas* by Elin Kelsey and the super-talented Soyeon Kim (love her art!!!). I'm also on a big early-chapter-book kick, so that means a slew of old favorites like *Nate the Great* and Dori Hillestad Butler's *The Haunted Library*, which is super-fun!!!

If you had to have a motto, what would it be?

Always order dessert! Even if you don't want it now, you can take it home and eat something delicious later.

