



# Life of the STORY

Children's author shows elementary students tricks to crafting a tale

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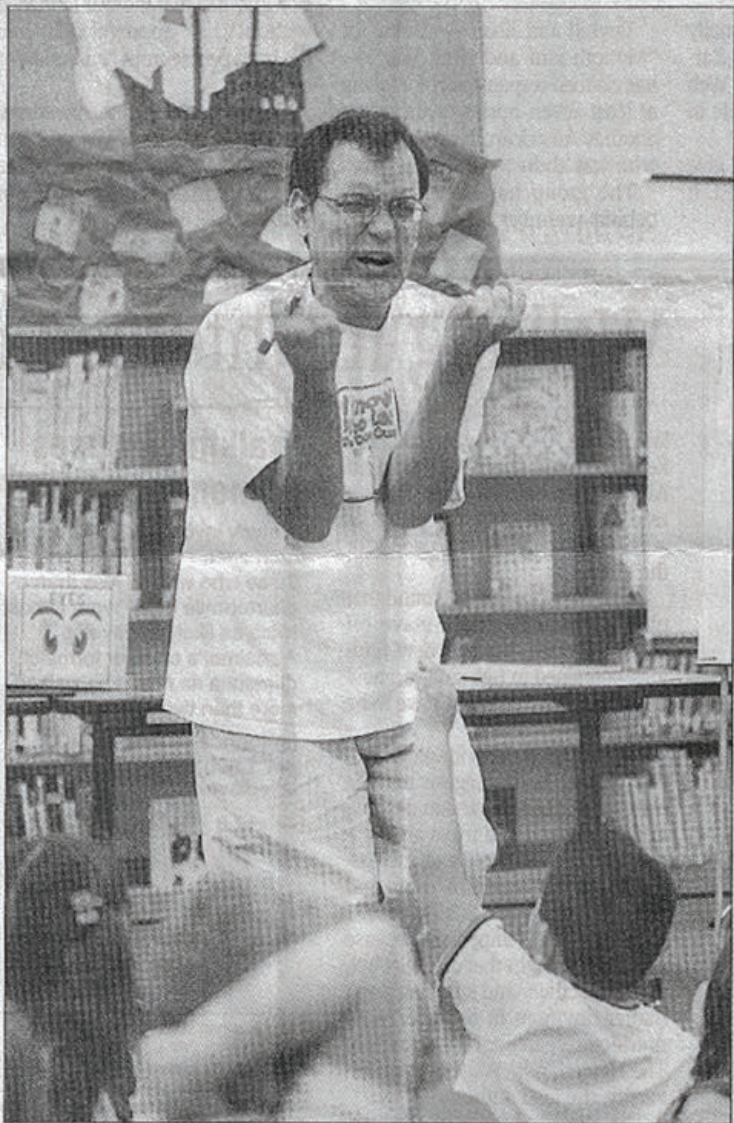
**R**ocket Megabyte, the first robot dog to explore Texas, and his creator, author Chris Espinosa, landed at Center Point Elementary School Tuesday with a two-fold mission — to promote both Texas history and an interest in writing.

Espinosa is the author of "Rocket Megabyte's Texas Adventure," a history book that combines adventure, illustrated characters and a robotic dog to interest elementary school students in Texas history and geography.

"If we can break their ideas that it's boring, we can teach them something," Espinosa said.

Espinosa spoke to Center Point second, third, fourth and fifth graders, delivering two separate presentations. With the second graders, Espinosa shared his Story Window writing method, an improvisational writing workshop. Starting with a simple writing prompt, the five senses and the students' imaginations, Espinosa guided the kids through the process of creating their own story.

Espinosa's idea is to start simple, and nothing, he said, is more basic than your five senses. He started by taking a round of Mad-Lib like



**Top left: Children's author and illustrator Chris Espinosa acts out a portion of the story he helped create with Center Point Elementary School students. Above: Espinosa works with students Tuesday morning to create a story.**

suggestions from his audience of co-writers, asking for a list of emotions, candies and colors to start off. Then Espinosa, with the help of his student volunteer Justin Tinnin,

gave coherence to a bunch of seemingly random ideas to create a thrilling adventure story about

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dinosaurs, spaceships and Hershey bars.

The program, he said, makes the writing experience fun, which might be all that is needed to inspire the love of writing in a child. Espinosa encouraged the children to take ownership of the story they authored, telling them to add to it by using one of their other senses.

"Take this story back and make it yours," he told the second graders. "Use your imagination and add to it or rewrite it."

Espinosa's story window method has been so successful, he said, that he has been invited to speak this weekend at the Kindergarten Teachers of Texas Conference.

"I'm not a teacher," Espinosa said. "I wanted to make this fun, and put it all in a way kids can get excited about."

With the third and fifth graders, Espinosa transitioned from storyteller to gameshow host, engaging the students in a sort of quiz-bowl. His original

gameshow, "3-2-1 Blast Off," was based on his book, "Rocket Megabyte's Texas Adventure."

The book, which chronicles Rocket's travels as he visits many important cities, landmarks and historical places unique to Texas, was designed to make history fun and accessible to kids, he said.

"The book has become so successful that schools have ordered entire class sets to use as supplemental texts," Espinosa said.

Before testing students, Espinosa took his contestants on an adventure via a 30-minute slide presentation in which Rocket guided the students on a tour of Texas. At the end of the presentations, Espinosa let the students see Rocket, the robot dog, in action.

"When I was a kid I always thought that getting to visit these places would make it more exciting," Espinosa said. "If kids have their own guide, like Rocket, they're more eager to go."

For more information about Espinosa and his future projects, visit [www.rocketvilletexas.com](http://www.rocketvilletexas.com).