

NC Author Alan Gratz Talks About His Writing

Israel Plyler

A geek at heart, pen in hand. When he was growing up in Knoxville, TN, he only hoped to write books for a living.

Now he lives in Bakersville North, Carolina, and he's the author of 14 novels and eight short young adult fiction books. Gratz is the author of "Prisoner B-3087" and "The League of Seven" series.

His young adult fiction has captured many hearts, and his website reads "Putting fictional kids in danger since 2006."

"I realized that in almost every one of my books, kids are danger somehow, so I just decided to own it," Gratz says. "I like writing thrillers. And nothing is more thrilling than when a person is in real danger."

That explains why most of his books involve peril and exploration young adults or newly teens.

Gratz has a fascination with retro-futures, such as steampunk and teslapunk cultures, which shows in his favorite book. "My favorite of my books is 'League of Seven,'" Gratz said.

"When I was developing it, I wrote down all the things I would have thought were awesome when I was 10-years-old — submarines, clockwork robots, giant monsters, ray guns, airships, brains in jars, and more — and pinned each of them up to a bulletin board...and the result was 'The League of Seven.'"

Besides writing, Gratz enjoys action figure collecting, watching baseball and building catapults.

A few of his books are about baseball, a sport he's rather fond of. "I've always felt that baseball lends itself to story," he said. It has the basic structure of a good story to begin with — leaving home, having and adventure, and returning home is one of the oldest stories there is, and if you think about it, that's exactly what baseball is. You leave home plate, round the bases, and eventually hope to return home."

He has written two fan fiction novels, as well. "I would do it again," he said. "I have a chance to write for an comic book

character I have loved sense a kid, and I'm really hoping I get the gig. Fingers crossed that I'll be able to announce something soon. But yes, I will continue to prioritize my own stories over telling stories with other characters—those books are all me."

And he does have more books coming. "Coming out later in 2018 is my new book, 'Grenade'. I got to visit Japan a few years ago, and while I was there, I met an old man who had been a boy on the island of Okinawa during World War II," he said. "The day the Americans invaded, the Japanese

army pulled him and all the other middle school boys out of school, gave them each a grenade, and told them to go off into the forest and not come back until they had killed an American soldier. That's the first chapter of my book, and what my main character does with that grenade is the end."

"Grenade" looks like it will be much like a 'based on a true story'

novel, much like "Prisoner B-3087"

Of course writing a book based on a true story is challenging, as he learned when writing. "Prisoner B-3087".

"Getting the truth was easy—Jack Gruener was alive when I wrote that, and I could go directly to the source to get more information," Gratz said.

"Making it dramatic for the novel was much harder, as you've guessed. What happens in real life is not necessarily what makes for a good novel. I had to add a few things here and there and subtract a few things here and there to make Jack's life into a good 'story.'"

"It's mostly true—everything that happens to Jack really happened—but I added things here and there to tell a fuller, more complete version of the Holocaust," he said. "It was the first time I'd ever written a book where the main character told me what he did and didn't do, instead of the other way around."

He grew up with a love of books. Now Gratz has become a contributor to the writing world himself, and now he can inspire the next generation of authors.

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Some Novels by Alan Gratz



Projekt 1065

World War II is raging. Michael O'Shaunessey, the son of the Irish ambassador to Nazi Germany, lives in war-torn Berlin with his parents. Like the other boys at his school, Michael is a member of the Hitler Youth. But Michael has a secret: He and his parents are spies.

League of Seven

Archie Dent's parents are members of the Septemberist Society, who protect humanity from giant monsters called Mangleborn. When his parents and the other Septemberists are brainwashed by a Mangleborn, Archie must assemble a new team of seven young heroes to save the world: the League of Seven.



The Brooklyn Nine

The Brooklyn Nine follows nine generations of kids in one family as they experience the ups and downs of baseball and American history.

Ban This Book

When fourth-grader Amy Anne Ollinger's favorite book is banned from the school library, she fights back—by starting a secret banned book library out of her locker.



Refugee

Three different kids, all connected by one goal: ESCAPE.

Summaries and book covers from www.alangratz.com

SPECIAL COLUMN

Dating & Tech: It's Different For Today's Teens

Adrianna Mancini

Dating has become a blurry topic. There is little guidance for the younger generations — it has become a regular thing to be "close friends" or "talking" rather than dating. Back when our parents were teens, generally the boy would ask the girl to the movies or possibly a dinner. Now, the normalcy of hanging out in groups has deteriorated the classy and meaningful sense of being with one another. Many individuals have been in a dating relationship while never actually going out on one date.

"Most people don't put in the effort to make one on one time, they just hang out when they happen to be in the same place," Paige Burney (21') says.

Is our generation lazy, or just socially awkward?

Most teenagers are unsure of how to act towards each other. Ben Burnham (20') addresses this issue.

"Since phones are a more prominent use of communication lately, I feel that girls don't always talk as confidently amongst themselves, which can make it harder to get used to each other in person."

When we hide behind our phones, we tend to act differently than when we're face to face. It's easier to be upfront with someone who can't react in person. You can ask more questions and talk about a wider variety of topics, which may seem like a plus side to socializing over social media, but then it can make it more awkward in person. time Just today I received some un-

wanted or warranted negativity from a teenage boy in the halls at school. He felt it was okay to comment "nice shorts skank." Now you may be thinking maybe my shorts were too short. Showed too much leg, even if the nearly 80 degree weather had warranted it. Regardless, would that have made his comment okay?

Our schools, parents, and society should try and better educate young individuals, male and female alike, on how to treat each other in general.

Netflix, social medias, and music have brought physical attraction to the front of the line when it comes to relationships.

"A large variety of people decide its more fun to snapchat and send photos of themselves rather than have a conversation." says Paige Burney (21'). It's like we

feel it takes too much time to open our mouths and speak instead of just looking at each other. People seem to feel that they should take more time making their appearance more presentable rather than making them selves a better individual or a person with more interests and substance to personality.

"Sure it may be someone's looks that reel you in, but nobody's going to want to stay unless you've got an appealing personality too," Burnham said.

Try taking the time to have a conversation and get to know each other. Show some effort, and take a special someone out to dinner or to see a movie, just the two of you. Maybe even make phone calls over texting a new habit. See where it gets you, you may find yourself surprised.