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Classroom Visit Inspires Third Graders to Write and Draw By Laura Kuhn

What happens when a real-life author meets his readers face to face . . . and three generations inspire each other? Magic, of course.

This particular author visit occurred just outside of Nashville, Tennessee at Edmondson Elementary School in Brentwood. Jane Hartman's third-grade class invited Dr. Ronald Goldman, co-author of the *Sounds & Symbols Early Reading Program*, to read a story and answer questions. He also happens to be the father of Jan Eddleman, the parent reader, and the grandfather of Kimberly Eddleman, Jan's own daughter who is a third grader in the class.



Mrs. Hartman and her third-grade class

A loveable character

As a former remedial reading teacher, Mrs. Eddleman enjoys sharing the *Sounds & Symbols* stories with Mrs. Hartman's students. The main character, High Hat, "is the loveable character kids gravitate to," she explains. "He can present educational materials that are irresistibly fun to learn." She thought it would be a great idea to bring her dad, the co-creator of High Hat, to meet the children.

High Hat's appeal is real, according to Mrs. Eddleman. High Hat wins friends easily with his popping eyes and bottle-brush moustache. He always solves the problem of the day by pulling something wonderful out of his tall hat or deep pocket.

Instilling a passion for learning

Mrs. Hartman prepared her students in advance for Dr. Goldman's visit. For her, teaching is a mission. With 30 years of teaching experience behind her and two Teacher of the Year awards, she views "third grade as a magical year, because each day students learn something new about their world or about life." She adds, "It's an age of independence, when children want to discover and learn on their own."

More than anything, Mrs. Hartman believes educating is about creating an environment where children are challenged and able to develop the skills and desire to become life-long learners. "I want my students to be excited about coming to school, so each day I begin with the words, 'You picked a great day to come to school.'"

Meeting the author

Story hour happens every day in Mrs. Hartman's class. Before Dr. Goldman's visit, the children drew pictures of Hat Hat and wrote letters with their own questions for the author. In their letters many of the students asked why Dr. Goldman became an author, how long it took him to write a book, and how High Hat was created. They were definitely curious about the writing and illustration that went into the creation of *Sounds & Symbols*. [Click here to view students' letters.](#)

Mrs. Hartman and Mrs. Eddleman staged Dr. Goldman's visit as a "meet the author" event. When he

arrived, it was indeed a great day for the children to be at school. Dr. Goldman read Marty Mouse from the *Sounds & Symbols* storybook. Then he described how High Hat was created thirty years ago at Vanderbilt University to help children read and learn all the sounds. About 20 students participated in the event and had their picture taken with the author!

Inspiring new stories

Dr. Goldman definitely made an impression on the class. After his visit, Kimberly Eddleman was inspired to write and illustrate her very own High Hat story. She titled it, "Milky Moo," using the "m" sound. Her mother, Mrs. Eddleman, commented that when students finish reading all the High Hat stories, that's the perfect time to encourage them to write new ones.

Milky Moo

Written and illustrated by Kimberly Eddleman, age 8

One day High Hat was taking a stroll by the farm when he spotted his friend Milky Moo sitting down and crying. "What's wrong Milky Moo," asked High Hat?

"I stopped giving milk and my owners Matt and Mandy are going to turn me into meat."

"Don't worry. I have the most magnificent thing in my magic pocket. Here is a milk maker. All you do is attach it onto your tail and magically you will be making marvelous milk."

Milky Moo attached the milk maker on his tail and once again he was making milk. High Hat walked away merrily, because more than anything else he likes to make people happy.



The ideas keep on coming

As a former remedial reading teacher, Mrs. Eddleman has seen the High Hat stories spark creativity in many children. That's why she continues to use the *Sounds & Symbols* storybooks as a parent reader. She explained, "Back in the classroom I would dress up like High Hat and use the materials in unique ways to reinforce the core concepts." She would also post the particular character card of the week on the bulletin board and use the character cards in group games.

Recently Mrs. Eddleman wrote a High Hat story herself—about Mrs. Hartman and her class. "I thought the students would appreciate having a story written especially for them," she said. "It's just one more great idea for encouraging children to use their imaginations!"

You never know how High Hat and his fabulous stories will inspire you . . .



Kimberly Eddleman with her teacher, Mrs. Hartman

High Hat's Holiday Handbook and Helping Hand

By Jan Eddleman

Illustrated by Kimberly Eddleman

Dedicated to Mrs. Hartman's third-grade class. If you can imagine it, you can create it. So let your stories imagine all possibilities!

Horrified Hannah in Mrs. Hartman's class had a horrible headache. Feeling helpless she replied, "I have too much happening. I hardly know how I will complete all I have to do. Not only do I have handball, but also Mrs. Hartman handed me too much hard homework on the holiday, Halloween. Thinking about all my happenings hurts my head! This is a hazard to my health. I hope I don't have

to go to the hospital."

"I hate to hear this," said High Hat, handing Hannah a hanky. "How heartbreaking! We must put this horrible hassle to a halt in a hurry."

High Hat reached into his handbag and handed Hannah the Holiday Handbook for Mrs. Hartman. "Here," said High Hat, "hopefully this will help with your hassles." High Hat continued, "In the handbook it states that it is too harsh to have homework on a holiday." With that helpful hint, High Hat said, "we must get my friend Helping Hand to put Mrs. Hartman's homework to a halt." High Hat handed Helping Hand the Hotline and called Mrs. Hartman.

Holiday Handbook

Rule #1:
No homework on a holiday!

Rule #2:
All children must bring Mrs. Hartman one piece of her favorite candy from their Halloween loot!



Mrs. Hartman was happily eating ham in her hanging hammock when she received the heartbreaking headlines. "I hate to have you handle a problem on a holiday," said Helping Hand, "but Hannah and the rest of your class are not happy. They are all horrified that they were handed huge hunks of homework on a holiday."

Hearing the news, Mrs. Hartman was heartsick; she hurriedly headed to her homemade calendar to check the date. She said to herself, October 31st, what a mistake! Hearing how this would affect the children's holiday horrified her. But because she has such a big heart and is so loving and helpful, she said, "This can not happen! How horrible to have homework on a holiday. All homework assignments must come to a halt in a hurry. I will handle this hassle so my class will once again have harmony on this holiday. Helping Hand can you help? Call all the children on your Hotline in a hurry. Tell them homework on a holiday is not healthy and to come to my house for a Halloween party."

The children were as happy as can be. Mrs. Hartman the hip hero had helped make this a happy and harmonious holiday. High Hat placed his hat on her head, but the children thought she deserved a halo instead. Like High Hat, more than anything else, Mrs. Hartman likes to make her class happy.

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