

STORYWORKS IDEABOOK

EDITOR'S NOTES

How Lauren Fell in Love with a Class From Texas

By Lauren Tarshis | October 24, 2016



A huge perk of my job is having the chance to connect with so many children and teachers. Almost every week, I Skype with a different class. All of my Skypes are wonderful experiences. But never did I imagine that a 30-minute Skype call with a group of fourth graders from Richmond, Texas could become, for me, a love story.

Teacher Kristin Cruikshank uses *Storyworks* for reading instruction, and her students read one of my *I Survived* books in their historical fiction unit. Mrs. Cruikshank wrote to us, and then told me, "Our school is a title one campus full of amazing kids!"

She wasn't kidding—the kids were amazing. What poise! What smiles! What insightful questions! All day I was aglow thinking about Mrs. Cruikshank and her students.

But it wasn't until after the call that things took an unusual turn.

I had told the kids that I was going to send each of them my latest *I Survived* book. I went on Amazon to place the order, and then wrote to Mrs. Cruikshank (I just love that name) telling to expect two boxes—one large, one small.

Three days later, she wrote to me:

"So.....I saw two Amazon packages this morning. There were two packages, one small and one large, just like you said. I opened the small box first and saw ten I Survived books! Then, I opened the large box, and saw an adult size giraffe costume (and no books!) We laughed hysterically as I put on the costume (which was way too small!!)"



(It wasn't until that night that I solved the mystery: My daughter Valerie had put the costume into my Amazon cart as a Halloween possibility. Lesson learned: Carefully examine what's in your cart before you send books to a school—imagine the horrifying possibilities!)

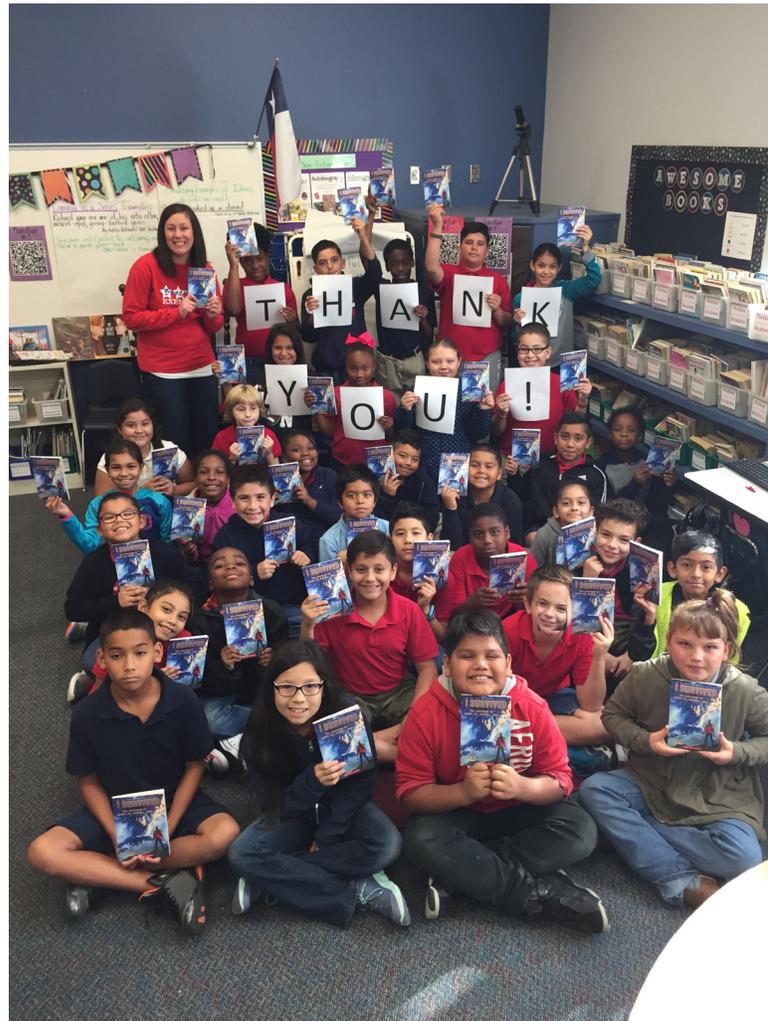
But the story goes on.

This past week, I was at the Tweens Read festival in Houston. This is a truly extraordinary event organized by the Blue Willow Bookshop. They bring in authors (32 this year) for a day of panel discussions and book signings. This year, more than 2,500 students came, mostly with their teachers and librarians. I had just done my first panel discussion (I must drop names here—the others on the panel: Adam Gidowitz, Jenni Holm, Margarita Engle, Barry Lyga, and Karen Cushman).



I stepped off the stage and THERE was Mrs. Cruikshank, her student teacher Megan, and her amazing students—in the flesh. Seeing them was like being reunited with beloved family members.

And this really is the joy of my work: that an email and a Skype can lead to a picture of an incredible teacher in a giraffe costume, a chance to meet her amazing students in person, and, for me, a heart filled with love and gratitude.



(Footnote: Mrs. Cruikshank brought the giraffe costume to the festival, but I made her keep it!)