

This will be posted at Kids Bookshelf.com very soon.

1. What inspired you to write Birdwing?

Who can really say where ideas or inspiration come from? This is part of the mystery of writing. Somehow, the idea came into my head – “Hey? What happened to the youngest brother in the Grimm’s brother’s tale of the Six Swans, the one who is left with a swan’s wing, instead of a left arm? What’s his story?” As I thought more about it I began to see that that wing was very important, a metaphor for all the things that make each one of us unique. I began to see that that boy’s story was really, potentially our own story. Each of ours. For the question life asks each of us is “Can we accept ourselves deeply enough to find our way to wholeness, just as we are?”

2. How does Birdwing relate to identity issues that kids experience today?

The story of Birdwing and of its lead character, Ardwin, the young man with the wing, can remind kids that the very things that can make them feel most alone, different, isolated, even strange, may be the very things that will heal them in the end, and not only them, but the kingdom. That is, that each one of us, and our unique differences, all have a purpose and are needed. Especially now, when the pressures on young people toward brand-recognition and conformity are so terribly strong, I think BIRDWING can remind not just them but all of us, that our individual uniqueness may be the source of our greatest strength.

3. There are many fairy tales. Why did you choose "The Six Swans" to elaborate on?

I chose it because I liked it, and because the story spoke to me, and also because it is my wife’s favorite fairy tale. But actually, if I’m going to be really honest, and accurate, I would have to say that I didn’t choose the story at all. Instead, it chose me. I wasn’t looking for a fairy tale to extend and elaborate. I just wasn’t that clever. I simply liked stories, read a lot of them, really liked that one, and one day it began to speak to me and say it was ready to for something new to happen, and it would be my job to do it.

3. After somebody reads Birdwing, what do you want them to walk away with?

I hope they’ll feel less alone with who they are, and more willing to follow the path that will lead to their own wholeness and happiness, no matter how unconventional it may be. I hope that readers, too, will feel reaffirmed in their determination to persist courageously through disappointments, difficulties, and times of aloneness, and remain true to themselves, so that they, like Ardwin, can discover that happy endings can indeed become mysteriously possible. In short, I hope they’ll feel glad that they haven’t cut off their own wing.

5. Why is oral tradition important? And do you feel like storytelling is a lost art?

In telling and hearing stories we reaffirm the mystery and power of the creative imagination. Words are just sounds on the air when spoken, squiggles on a page when written. Yet, through them, we can live through and test out every possibility, and find what is best in our common humanity. Is storytelling a lost art? I'm not sure. Oral traditions are threatened. Yes, that's sadly true. But gossip, conversation, and storytelling remain at the heart of all human experience. To be human is to like stories. In addition, the performance aspect of storytelling has been undergoing a significant revival in this country, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere for the last 30 years. That is, there is a definite movement afoot among literate performers to revive the art of the told-tale. Who knows how this will evolve, and what the future will bring? My sense is that good stories will always be around. Though the contexts for the stories may change dramatically, we will always need meaningful tales, ones that remind us that courage, compassion, good-humor and respect for life remain the keys to happiness. Who knows? New forms for telling stories may yet come along to astonish us all. I certainly hope so. In the meanwhile, we should do what we can to share and pass on the stories we love and that speak to us.

An Interview with Rafe Martin:

Rafe Martin Q.What inspired you to write "Birdwing?"

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Q.How does Birdwing relate to identity issues that kids experience today?

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unique differences, all have a purpose and are needed. Especially now, when the pressures on young people toward brand-recognition and conformity are so terribly strong, I think BIRDWING can remind not just them, but all of us, that our individual uniqueness may be the source of our greatest strength.

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humanity. Is storytelling a lost art? I'm not sure. Oral traditions are threatened. Yes, that's sadly true. But gossip, conversation, and storytelling remain at the heart of all human experience. To be human is to like stories. In addition, the performance aspect of storytelling has been undergoing a significant revival in this country, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere for the last 30 years. That is, there is a definite movement afoot among literate performers to revive the art of the told-tale. Who knows how this will evolve, and what the future will bring? My sense is that good stories will always be around. Though the contexts for the stories may change dramatically, we will always need meaningful tales, ones that remind us that courage, compassion, good-humor and respect for life remain the keys to happiness. Who knows? New forms for telling stories may yet come along to astonish us all. I certainly hope so. In the meanwhile, we should do what we can to share and pass on the stories we love and that speak to us.

Below is a list of Rafe Martin books:

Birdwing
The Boy Who Lived with the Seals
The Boy Who Loved Mammoths
The Brave Little Parrot
Dear As Salt
The Eagle's Gift
Foolish Rabbit's Big Mistake
The Hungry Tigress
The Language of Birds
The Monkey Bridge
Mysterious Tales of Japan
One Hand Clapping: Zen Stories for All Ages
The Rough-Face Girl
The Shark God
A Storyteller's Story
The Storytelling Princess
The Twelve Months
Will's Mammoth
The World Before This One: A Novel in Legend

All of these books can be purchased at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)