

Dickens, Thurber, Andersen, and London by Jay Dubya

As far back as I can remember my mind has always thought and learned by association. My brain fancifully connects things like computer terminals and bus terminals, Indian reservations with plane ticket confirmations, and carpetbaggers with ruthless rug stealers. Don't ask me why, but I think I get bored with ordinary human communications and then out of sheer depression lapse into my imaginary fantasy association world, finding that mental paradise much more fascinating than the nightly news, soap operas and talking head yakety-yak cable tabloid shows.

Because my cerebrum delights in working by making bizarre associations, whenever my mind thinks of Charles Dickens, the great English author is filed and classified in a "mental cabinet" along with James Thurber, Hans Christian Andersen, Jack London and surprisingly, the mythical ancient Greek hero, Perseus, all of whom had to give somebody "the dickens" at one point in their lives. All of those marvelous personages had to also overcome obstacles, challenges, trials, tribulations and adversity. They elevated themselves above grief and ridicule, stayed focused on their goals and in their individual lives and exploits were not defeated by an abundance of public criticism and rejection. I admire each of them because all five were motivated by failure.

Charles Dickens' (1812-1870) father had great financial difficulties. The boy had a rather miserable childhood and the lad spent much of his time in cheerless poorhouses and workhouses. Did poverty overwhelm Charles Dickens? Was his cruel negative environment to blame for an unproductive and fruitless life? No, it wasn't. Dickens retreated into his secret imaginary world and incisively wrote about the need for social reform in what later became such immortal literary classics as *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*.

James Thurber (1894-1961) ranks as one of America's most popular humorists. The author is most renowned for his classic short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," who was a meek absent-minded hen-pecked character who daily suffered the sharp-tongued ire of a dominant bossy wife. Thurber's hilarious stories and self-drawn cartoons appeared for over thirty years in the reputable classy *New Yorker* magazine. James Thurber had been blinded in one eye in a childhood accident and then he unfortunately lost vision in his other eye in later life. Despite those difficult and encumbering hardships, the determined author still continued his unique storytelling pursuits and he even appeared late in life as himself in a popular Broadway play *The Thurber Carnival*.

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) was born in a small fishing village in Denmark. (If a last name ends in sen, the person is probably from Denmark; in son, probably from Sweden). At age fourteen Andersen journeyed to Copenhagen to diligently pursue either an acting' or writing career. Hans auditioned as an opera singer, was a humiliating failure and spent the next three years anguishing in abject poverty. Much to his utter disenchantment his first plays and novels received little acclaim. Was Hans Christian Andersen soundly defeated by rejection? If he had been, poor Hans Christian and his delightful fairy tales would have remained wallowing in obscurity, his literary work undiscovered, his reputation hiding in the giant anonymous void that history so aptly calls "the masses."

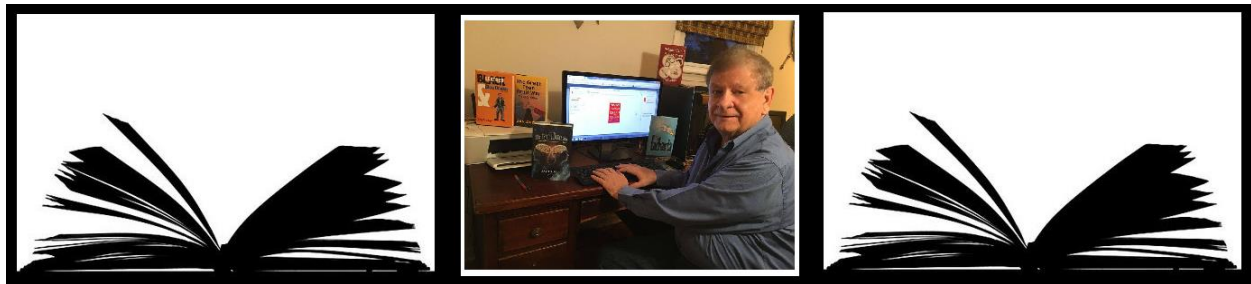
Jack London (1876-1916) has to be one of my favorite authors in American literature. He certainly is a source of inspiration whenever I feel depressed. London was born into grim poverty, had little formal education, and was definitely heading toward a criminal life. As a teenager he was an oyster pirate on San Francisco Bay and spent several years roaming the city as a hobo. But Jack London loved going to the library and reading books, so much so that he decided to endure what he had possibly hated most, formal education. Consequently, Jack became a "student of life." London managed to finish high school and then eventually enrolled into the University of California.

I admire men such as Charles Dickens, James Thurber, Hans Christian Andersen, and Jack London. I find inspiration in considering the fact that formidable negative social and economic environments had not overcome the spirit of any of the four great authors. Each man elevated himself above mediocrity through sheer determination and tenacity. Failures and handicaps made them tougher, more resilient, and more adamant about achieving success. They didn't blame society for the bad cards they had been dealt. These great authors were motivated at being shunned by the literary establishment. The stellar writers refused to be mere products of their environments. Instead, the admirable men' transcended adversity by having faith in their dreams and then being able to subsequently define themselves, find a reading audience and ultimately shape their environments.

Now, how do I associate the mythical Greek hero Perseus with Charles Dickens, James Thurber, Hans Christian Andersen, and Jack London? Perseus had to overcome many obstacles in his pursuit of honor and glory. Kings and noblemen rejected his ambition. The hero was about to surrender to failure when the goddess Pallas Athene appeared to him and asked, "Perseus, which would you prefer to have, a soul

of clay or a soul of fire?” Obviously, Perseus answered a “soul of fire.” Translated, this awesome statement means that the hero intensely wanted to distinguish himself from the faceless masses, all of whom possessed souls of clay.

This exceptional quality is what Perseus has in common with Charles Dickens, James Thurber, Hans Christian Andersen, and Jack London. Success wasn’t given to them; they earned it by defeating challenges that only temporarily obstructed their achievements. They all realized how ephemeral human existence is and that every second counts. They made the most of their lives by seizing opportunity the moment it came their way, and when it didn’t come their way, their industry, their’ perseverance and their inner strength compelled them to create opportunity. The five would not accept “no” for an answer from anyone. Each man opened his own window of opportunity. Those great “heroes” of mine transcended the bitter sarcasm, the banality and the castigation that surrounded them. They refused to go through life satisfied being sheepish men having souls of clay. The four champions of literature (like Perseus) aptly demonstrated to the cynical world that they possessed “souls of fire.”



About The Author: Jay Dubya is author’ John Wiessner’s pen name. John is a retired New Jersey public school English teacher, having diligently taught the subject for thirty-four years. John lives in Hammonton, New Jersey with wife Joanne and the couple has three grown sons.

Counting London: Lashed, Lacerated, Lampooned and Lambasted, along with its companion books Twain: Tattered, Trounced, Tortured and Traumatized, Poe: Pelted, Pounded, Pummeled and Pulverized and O. Henry: Obscenely and Outrageously Obliterated, John has written and published thirty-seven total books. Pieces of Eight, Pieces of Eight, Part II, Pieces of Eight, Part III and Pieces of Eight, Part IV all contain short stories and novellas that feature science fiction and paranormal plots and themes. Nine New Novellas, Nine New Novellas, Part II, Nine New Novellas, Part III, Nine New Novellas, Part IV, One Baker’s Dozen, Two Baker’s Dozen, Snake Eyes and Boxcars and Snake Eyes and Boxcars, Part II are short story collections all written in the spirit of the Pieces of Eight series.

Other Jay Dubya adult-oriented fiction are the works Black Leather and Blue Denim, A ’50s Novel, and its exciting sequel, The Great Teen Fruit War, A 1960’ Novel. Frat Brats, A ’60s Novel completes the action/adventure trilogy. Jay Dubya also has produced two irreverent Biblical satires, The Wholly Book of Genesis and The Wholly Book of Exodus. A third satire Ron Coyote, Man of La Mangia is a parody on Miguel Cervantes’ classic novel, Don Quixote published in 1605. Thirteen Sick Tasteless Classics, TSTC, Part II, TSTC, Part III and TSTC, Part IV are satirical works that each corrupt thirteen classic stories from American and British literature and from Greek mythology. Fractured Frazzled Folk Fables and Fairy Farces and FFFF & FF, Part II satirize and corrupt famous children’s literature stories. Mauled Maimed Mangled Mutilated Mythology is an adult-oriented satirical/parody work that pokes fun at twenty-one famous classical myths. Finally, Shakespeare: Slammed, Smeared, Savaged and Slaughtered and Shakespeare: S, S, S and S. Part II lampoon the famous works of the great playwright.

The author has also penned a young adult fantasy trilogy: Pot of Gold, Enchanta and Space Bugs, Earth Invasion. The Eighteen Story Gingerbread House is a collection of eighteen new children's stories. And last but not least, two Jay Dubya non-fiction works are So Ya' Wanna' Be A Teacher and Random Articles and Manuscripts.

Jay Dubya's books are available in hardcover and paperback formats at Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble.com and Booksamillion.com. Kindle versions are available at Amazon.com. Jay Dubya's e-books are available at Amazon Kindle and at Barnes and Noble Nook.

Jay Dubya (John Wiessner), author of 56 books, gives a biography of his life.

Born in Hammonton, NJ in 1942, John had attended St. Joseph School up to and including Grade 5. After his family moved from Hammonton to Levittown, Pa in 1954, John attended St. Mark School in Bristol, Pa. for Grade 6, St. Michael the Archangel School for Grades 7 and 8 and Immaculate Conception School, Levittown, Pa. for grade 9. Bishop Egan High School, Levittown Pa was John's educational base for Grades 10 and 11, and later in 1960 he graduated from Edgewood Regional High, Tansboro, NJ. John then next attended Glassboro State College, where he was an announcer for the school's baseball games and also read the news and sports over WGLS, GSC's radio station.

John had been primarily an English teacher in the Hammonton Public School System for 34 years, specializing in the instruction of middle school language arts. Mr. Wiessner was quite active in the Hammonton Education Association, serving in the capacities of Vice-President, building representative and finally, teachers' head negotiator for 7 years. During his lengthy teaching career, John had been nominated into "Who's Who Among American Teachers" three times. He also was quite active giving professional workshops at schools around South Jersey on the subjects of creative writing and the use of movie videos to motivate students to organize their classroom theme compositions.

John Wiessner was very active in community service, being a past President of the Hammonton Lions Club, where he also functioned for many years as the club's Tail-Twister, Vice-President and Liontamer. He had been named Hammonton Lion of the Year in 1979 and in 2009 received the prestigious Melvin Jones Fellow Award, the highest honor a Lion can receive from Lions International.

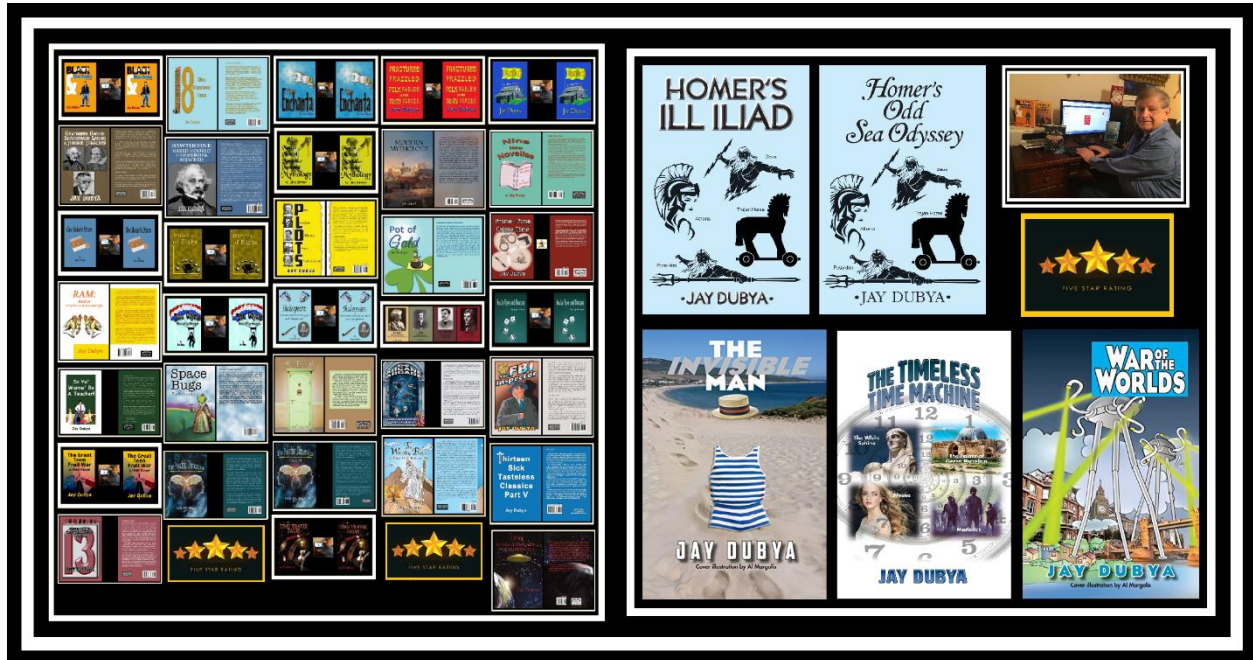
John also was a successful businessman, starting with being a Philadelphia Bulletin newspaper delivery boy for two years in the late 1950s in Levittown, Pennsylvania. After his family moved back to New Jersey in 1959, John worked at his grandparents and his parents' farm markets, Square Deal Farm (now Ron's Gardens in Hammonton) and Pete's Farm Market in Elm, respectively. He later managed his wife's parents' farm market, White Horse Farms (Elm) for three summers.

Also, in a business capacity, for 16 summers starting in 1967 John Wiessner had co-owned Dealers Choice Amusement Arcade on the Ocean City, Maryland boardwalk and also co-owned the New Horizon Tee-Shirt Store for eight summers (1973-'81) on the Rehoboth Beach, Delaware boardwalk. In addition, he was a co-owner of Wheel and Deal Amusement Arcade, Missouri Avenue and Boardwalk, Atlantic City. And then, for 18 summers beginning in 1986, John had been the Field Manager in charge of crew-leaders for Atlantic Blueberry Company (the world's largest cultivated blueberry company), both the Weymouth and Mays Landing Divisions.

After retiring from teaching in 1999, writing under the pen name Jay Dubya (his initials), John Wiessner became an author of 56 books in the genre Action/Adventure Novels, Sci-Fi/Paranormal Story Collections, Adult Satire, Young Adult Fantasy Novels and Non-Fiction Books. His books exist in hardcover, in paperback and in popular Kindle and Nook e-book formats.

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