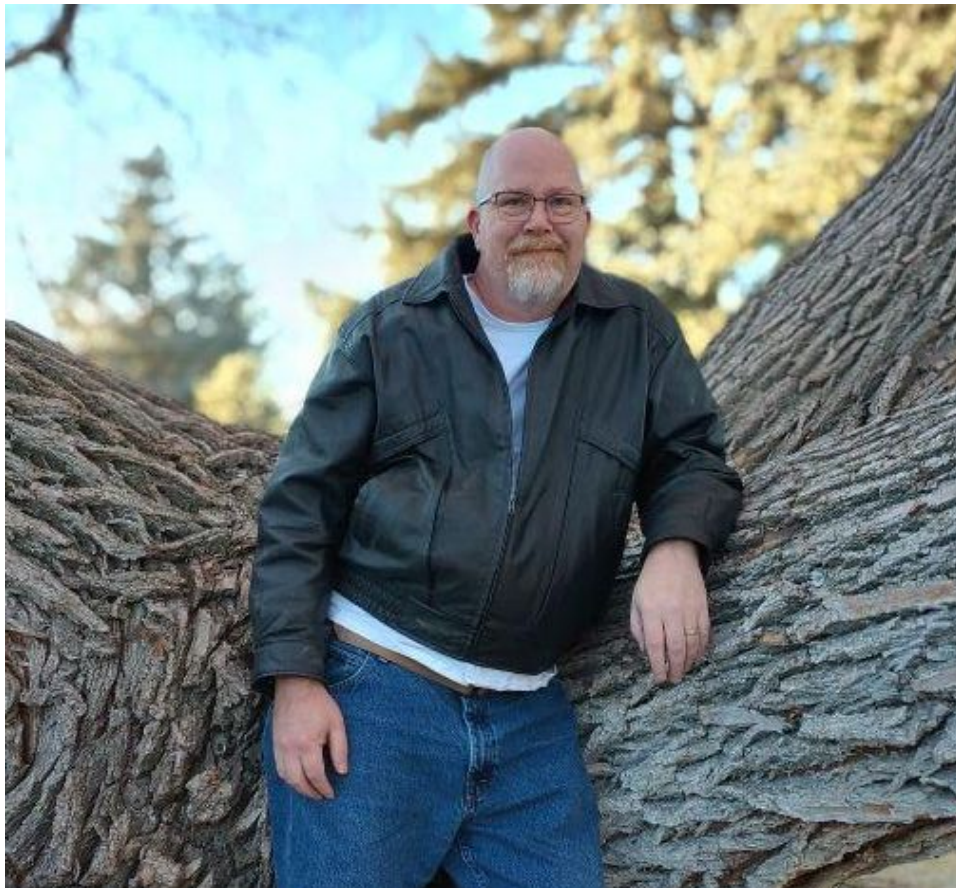




Getting to know our members! Interview with Jason Mohler!

Every month I am interviewing one of our members. Our Montana region is so wide, we don't get many opportunities to get to know one another, so this is my method of getting us introduced. This month I had the privilege of interviewing the writer Jason Mohler! I hope you enjoy the interview as much as I did!



Can you tell us about yourself as a creator? What kind of art do you create? How did you get to this point?

I am a young adult writer. I remember writing stories back in the sixth grade, but it wasn't until college that it really took off. I'd write stories that we'd call flash fiction these days for myself, mostly. I'd submit the occasional piece, get rejected, and move on.

And then 2019 happened.

I'm bipolar and hit a manic phase. Very manic. So manic, in fact, that I wrote a fifty-four-thousand-word novel in three weeks. My longest story up to that point was fifteen thousand words. And, a few weeks later, I entered NaNoWriMo and pumped out another fifty-two thousand words. Over the next two years, I started a dozen more stories, usually hitting the twenty-to-thirty thousand word mark before writer's block would hit, or I'd lose focus and move on to the next idea. They were all rough drafts, and I didn't know anything about *being* a writer, so I never bothered submitting them.

And then 2021 happened.

My mother was Dr. Zurroff (formerly Dr. Mohler), a teacher in the education department at Carroll, and her favorite class to teach was Children's Lit. When she died, I discovered she'd named me the beneficiary for her retirement account. After considering my options (a new truck, a new camper, and so on) I decided I'd honor her memory by getting my MFA in creative writing. A little more than two years later, and I've got two classes left before I dive head-long into my thesis. With luck, I'll be publishing my first book, *The Crown Jewels*, the end of next years.

What are you hoping to get out of SCBWI?

A sense of community, mostly. It's hard to find other people who know what it means to be a writer, and what a writer's challenges and successes look like.

What is the most important thing you have learned as a creator so far?

That you have to be your own advocate. It doesn't matter if your traditionally or independently published, you have to get your name out there, otherwise your art will languish as you wonder why it's not selling.

What is the thing you struggle with the most in your creative journey?

Being my own advocate. I am not a sociable person, so putting myself out there requires real effort on my part. Throw in a good dose of imposter syndrome and, yeah, it's a challenge.

Who are the creators you look up to?

I've never been one to look up to people. Like most creative people - and in spite of my self-doubts - I know I'm the best writer out there. What I can tell you is whose autographs I have: Jim Butcher's, Anne Hillerman's, and David Gerrold's (on a copy of the script for *The Trouble with Tribbles*, no less).

If you could only read one picture book for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?

The picture book that sticks with me the most is *Arrow to the Sun*, by Gerald McDermott,

mostly because of the memories associated with it. As for a picture book I'd actually read, it would probably be *Thibault's The Academy of the Sword*. I've studied historical fencing for the last 35 years, and Thibault's mystic circle is a style that can take a lifetime to master.

If you were given an all-expenses-paid trip (including travel, housing, and meals cooked and delivered to your doorstep) to any artist's retreat in the United States—where would you go and what would you do while there? (Let's say, this was a 7-day retreat, you had absolutely no book project deadlines to meet holding you back, and your kids/spouse were going to have as much fun as you do while you're gone—so you'd not be worrying about "other stuff.")

This is a tough one. Like I said, I'm bipolar, so I either set aside an hour or two to write, or I write all day, so what I'd do at a retreat would either be spend my days sightseeing or holed up in my room, writing until I fall asleep. As for where, that's a tough one, too. I love the area around Anchorage, but Port Aransas is beautiful, too. Then again, I've never been to Hawaii, and the southwest's nice, too. Okay, so I'm not only bipolar, I'm indecisive, too.

Aside from writing or illustrating, what is your next go-to for a creative outlet?

I play guitar. I don't play it well, but I'm good enough to avoid writing for an hour or two when I feel like it.

Where do you get your ideas?

Everywhere. It's where I flesh them out that's consistent. It takes me a while to fall asleep at night, so I'll walk through scenes as I'm laying in bed, trying to find what works, and what doesn't.

Finally, if you could ask just one thing of the next person who is going to be interviewed, what would it be?

Do you have a ritual that helps you get in the mood to create?

Where can we find more of your work/ follow you/ get in touch with you?

The main way to find out about what I'm up to is my website: www.jasonmohler.com. You can also find me on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), and [Threads](#).

Or you can contact me directly at jason@mohlermedia.net

Thank you so much Jason for letting me interview you! I hope that you, my dear reader, enjoyed learning about another member of our community! Please reach out to Jason to get to know one another and help us build this wonderful region!

Cheers,

Jeanne Bowman
Montana-IC

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