



# An Interview With Donn Swaby

**Q1. What are your earliest memories of books and reading? For example, did you have a favourite or inspirational book?**

My earliest memories of books and reading would be reading Dr. Seuss books, of course, which I loved. One of my first favorite picture books was *The Five Chinese Brothers* by Margaret Mahi. I loved how each brother seemed to have a superpower that saved them from death. Little did I know that book was the precursor to my huge love for X-Men comic book series as a teen. In elementary school, I read all the *Romona Quimbly* books by Beverly Cleary, the *Pippi Longstocking* series by Astrid Lindgren, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* series by Roald Dahl, the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and the *Lord of the Rings* series.

**Q2. What inspired you to become an author?**

I imagine I'd been subconsciously influenced as a child by the books I'd read, and the TV shows and films I'd already seen had inspired me to begin creating my own stories. According to my Aunt Peggy, I had once drawn pictures on small pieces of paper I'd folded into a little book, and I had told her a story by explaining the pictures I'd drawn. So that would be the first time I had attempted to be a storyteller. By the age of thirteen, I'd written poetry, created a comic book with seven different comic strips, a short story I'd crafted into a physical book, complete with my own illustrations, all for the state-wide Young Authors Book Festival, a scary Halloween short story that had won the school contest, and a one-

act play about the life of the first female Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O'Connor to celebrate Women's Day. So by that age, I'd already become what I am now, a multi-genre writer.

**Q3. For you, what makes a successful book?**

A successful book has a story that's emotionally engaging and grabs your attention, with characters that are so dynamic, they leap from the page. For picture books, it's the perfect marriage of the right words and right illustrations that, together, tell the story. For novels, it's the perfect balance of dialogue, action, exposition, inner emotional landscape and characters' thoughts.

**Q4. Do you have a specific audience in mind when you write your books?**

Not really. My first goal is to realise the story wanting to be told to the best of my ability. Usually, though, I know if it's a picture book story, it'll be for young kids, a middle grade novel for middle graders, of course, a feature film script, rom-com or suspense-drama will be for adults while my sci-fi TV drama series I've been developing is for the whole family.

**Q5. What future do you think the physical book has? For example, do you think the electronic book will replace the physical book?**

Though e-books have become more popular, they will never entirely replace physical books. I think as long as there are people with eyes to read and hands to hold books, there will be physical books. For us, there is that visceral experience of actually holding the book and turning the page that is an integral part of the reading experience.

**Q6. Are you a book collector? Is there a special book you'd love to own?**

I used to collect books more. I used to have a 6-shelf bookcase with my collection of all kinds of books, both fiction and non-fiction. Though I've since donated many to local libraries, I still have my collection of books by Charles Bukowski and Anne Rice, two of my favourite authors. I also have all of my books by the late American comparative mythologist, Joseph Campbell. These days, see myself reading books from the library, like those of one of my favourite middle grade authors, Sarwat Chadda.