

Conquering the Rumor Monster
By Michael Moorehead, age 11

Did you know that your teacher gets all of her homework ideas from the terrorists themselves? – NOT! That was a rumor. (Or for some of you it was just a *slight* exaggeration.) But what would happen if you believed that rumor. Some people might even go far enough to call the police or the CIA because they might imagine their teacher is interacting with terrorists. If the police or CIA believed the rumor then she might be thrown in jail for life!

Rumors are often lies or complete exaggerations. Some, if not all, are hurtful to others and can drive people away from you if you're the one who starts rumors. Think about it ... who wants to hang around someone who is always spreading rumors? Pretty soon, they'll be spreading rumors about you.

And, listening to a rumor and repeating it is as bad as starting it, because it makes you part of the rumor, and you will be partly responsible for whatever harm it causes others. Also, if you listen to a rumor about someone you don't know, and believe it, you might stay away from that person. Or, you might not sign up for art class, for example, since everyone says the art teacher is mean. And then it turns out the art teacher is really nice, and you missed out on art – your favorite subject – because you believed a rumor instead of making your own judgment about a person based on what's REAL – what you see with your own eyes, not what someone is telling you to see.

Rumors are as bad as poison and just a waste of breath. So why do people start them? Some do it because they think making someone else look bad will make themselves look better. And maybe it will at first, but in the end, everyone will know the truth about who started the rumor and why ... the ugly rumor monster!

To show people how rumors can affect them, I wrote a comical book called "The Student from Zombie Island" about a kid at school who is hearing tons of rumors about a new student that's coming to school after winter break. There are some really outrageous ones like he will make you play football with real feet, and he once ate an entire class for lunch. In the end, it turns out he's not bad, and it was all the rumors that made the new kid sound like a horrible person.

The story was as a gift for my second-grade teacher, Ms. Lujan, She inspired me to read and write more than anyone I know. She read to the class, lent me books, and even let me work on assignments past the due date because I had a lot more I wanted to write about to make the assignment really great. Then I thought maybe there was something in return I could give to her, so I wrote a story and illustrated it for her. She loved it so much that now she reads it to every class she has.

Several years later I read over my past work and I thought it may be worth publishing. So I asked my parents, and they said that if I was going to publish it I would need to spend some time editing it. That summer I edited my book and finally sent it in to some publishers. The first publisher that accepted it, hung onto it for a year then changed his mind and didn't print it. But I knew it was a good book, so we sent it out again. Little Five Star Publications loved it and printed it. Which goes to show that with the right amount of effort anything is possible – even for an 11-year-old.

Michael Moorehead, author of “The Student from Zombie Island,” is a sixth-grade student who lives in Tempe, AZ.