



## A Boy and a Jaguar

*Alan Rabinowitz, Catia Chien (Illustrator)*

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Alan loves animals, but the great cat house at the Bronx Zoo makes him sad. Why are they all alone in empty cages? Are they being punished? More than anything, he wants to be their champion—their voice—but he stutters uncontrollably.

Except when he talks to animals...

Then he is fluent.

Follow the life of the man *Time Magazine* calls, "the Indiana Jones of wildlife conservation" as he searches for his voice and fulfills a promise to speak for animals, and people, who cannot speak for themselves. This real-life story with tender illustrations by Catia Chien explores truths not defined by the spoken word.

## A Boy and a Jaguar Details

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Author : Alan Rabinowitz , Catia Chien (Illustrator)

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## **From Reader Review A Boy and a Jaguar for online ebook**

### **Tasha says**

This is a stellar autobiographical picture book written by and about a wildlife conservationist. Alan was a boy who could not speak clearly. He battled stuttering all of the time except when he talked with animals. When he visited the great cat house at the Bronx Zoo, he could whisper fluently into the ears of the cats. He also spent a lot of time with his pets at home, speaking to them and telling them that if he ever found his own voice, he would serve as their voice since they had none and would keep them from harm. Alan became the first person to study jaguars. In Belize he felt at home in the jungle. He worked to protect the jaguars and eventually had to speak for them in front of the President of Belize, hoping to save their habitat from destruction. But can he speak clearly in the short 15 minutes he's been given?

This book is made all the more compelling by the fact that it is true. It gives readers a glimpse into the world of a child struggling with a disability, one that mars every verbal interaction he has. And thanks to his ability with animals, readers quickly see beyond the stutter to the boy himself and to the gifts that he has to offer. Even better, once Alan becomes an adult, readers get to see a man who is taking advantage of his uniqueness to make a difference in the world and for the animals he cares for so much.

Chien's art is rich and varied. She moves from backgrounds of wine red to brilliant yellow to the deep greens of the Belize jungles. She shows an isolated boy, alone that contrasts beautifully with the man working happily alone in the jungle – so similar and yet so very different.

An extraordinary autobiography, this book shows readers not to judge anyone by how they speak but rather by what they do. Appropriate for ages 4-7.

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### **Erika says**

My biggest takeaway from this book is all stutterers do NOT grow up to be serial killers, despite what Criminal Minds has taught me.

Also - if you ever come across a jaguar - just kneel down and look it in the eye. Best way to say "thank you" respectfully and avoid getting eaten apparently.

I have tremendous respect for Mr. Rabinowitz and the work he does with animals. I think I'm probably the only cold hearted ass hole who didn't love his book.

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### **Patricia Pappas says**

I got this book from the Notable Social Studies Trade books for Young People 2016. This is a true life story of an animal activist. The narrator has a severe stuttering problem in the classroom, but speaks openly and freely at home. One day, he tells a Jaguar he will be a voice for the animals in the zoo. As he gets older, he

focuses his energy on advocating for jaguars and other animals, and eventually is able to set aside land for a jaguar preserve. The pictures in this book are vivid with green for the vegetation, and a brightly colored background and full of emotion to match this tale. The characters are pretty stereotypical and white, and all the animals are light in color. You can truly understand and follow the life journey of this author, while enjoying the ride. I would certainly read this and share this with my students so they can hear a powerful story of activism and goodness, while also hearing a biography.

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### **Skip says**

A moving story of how the author connects with animals in the Bronx Zoo -- the only times he doesn't stutter. He promises that if he can beat his stutter, he will help them, and grows up to work with jaguars, speaking to governmental officials in Belize to establish a protected sanctuary. The illustrations by Catia Chien are beautiful, but the insets don't always work seamlessly, leading to some choppiness. On the back jacket flap, there is a short, helpful Q&A with the author, some of which added important context to the books (e.g., it's a true story.) Thanks Alan, for letting us know of the important work of Panthera.

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### **Lynn says**

Exceptional story that is movingly told. Lovely illustrations. I don't believe I've ever seen the subject of stuttering in a picture book before and I especially value Rabinowitz's direct honesty which children will recognize. The story of his love of animals and work to preserve them adds so much to the book.

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### **Juliana says**

What a beautiful children's book.

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### **Tammy Haberer says**

An autobiographical story about a boy who stutters, but finds his voice when he talks to animals. As a thank you to the animals for helping him with his speech, he dedicates his life to wildlife conservation.

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### **Kathryn says**

What a powerful story. A little boy who stutters, who just happens to be the author when he was small and his closeness to animals. I loved this book.

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### **Sandra says**

This is the story of Alan, a boy who is a stutterer and struggles to relate with other kids because of that. He only speaks fluently when he whispers to the animals he loves so much. This love for the animals, specially jaguars, will help him to go over his stuttering challenge when he needs to talk to give "a voice" to his beloved suffering friends. He finally feels complete for the first time in his life.

Based on the author experience, this story is about love friendship, respect for the environment, and how to see our difficulties as gifts that help us to move forward.

Age range: 6 to 8 years old.

Check out more children's book reviews in my [Reviews in Chalk Blog!](#)

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### **Edward Sullivan says**

A wonderful autobiographical story beautifully illustrated.

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### **Natalie Mayur says**

A Boy and a Jaguar is an autobiography that would be a wonderful read aloud story for first, second, and third graders. Alan Rabinowitz shares when he was a boy, he liked to communicate to animals due to the fact that he was a stutterer. Since he had trouble at school due to this issue, he relied on communication with his pets as well as animals at the zoo; he really enjoyed speaking to a long jaguar, where he could whisper to her fluently.

Later in life, Rabinowitz learns how to speak without stuttering, although he still feels broken. He decides to help jaguars in Belize live in a safe environment, helping to create the world's first jaguar preserve. Here, a jaguar meets him, and he sits quietly with the cat and thanks her.

This would be a great book to discuss individual differences with students and how important it is to treat everyone with respect, since Rabinowitz underwent a lot of scrutiny and heartache when he was a child due to his stuttering. Teachers could also invite students to share if they believe the jaguar at the end of the story is the one Rabinowitz actually spoke to as a child or if they feel it is a different jaguar since the author left this up to his readers to interpret. You could also discuss cause and effect and how Rabinowitz's character changes as the story unfolds.

I consider this book a WOW book because this exceptional true story shows young students they may overcome their issues and fears and still make an impact on the world. My favorite part of this book would have to be the end, where the cat is following Rabinowitz and they calmly sit together in the jungle. How magical and peaceful would an experience like that be!

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### **Chrissi Guarnieri says**

A Boy and A Jaguar by Alan Rabinowitz is a book about a little boy who loves animals and has a difficult

time communicating because of stuttering. Animals help him, because he sees them as misunderstood, just as he sees himself as misunderstood. The only time he can speak without stuttering is when he is speaking to animals. He promises his pets and the caged animals at the Bronx zoo that one day, when he is able to find his voice, he will be their voice. As an adult he begins studying Jaguars, and realizes the danger they are in by poaching. He is able to stand up for them, and convince this poverty stricken country to protect these magnificent beasts. The end of this true story is a beautiful conclusion to the rocky journey this author experienced as a little boy who couldn't speak fluently, felt broken, and grew into a man of his word.

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#### Notable Social Studies Trade Book

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#### **Joan says**

This is really a lovely book. I will have to keep an eye out for the illustrator: Catia Chien. This won the Schneider Award for ages 0-10. I don't know that I'd use it with preschoolers. I'm not sure it would keep their interest. But I would use it in a storytime for older kids in the primary grades, maybe even grade 5. The book is classed under 333 but I wish it had gone biography instead since I think it would reach more kids that way. Oh well. The author writes about the terrible stuttering problem he had as a kid. The only time he didn't stutter was when singing (which I have heard is often so) or when talking to animals. So naturally he loves animals. When he is an adult, he goes into Conservation and proudly lists his greatest accomplishment (so far). He gets Belize to agree to set aside a protected area for Jaguars! He still marvels that he was able to convince such a poor place to do such a great thing. He also finishes by telling about a final encounter with a jaguar face to face. What a striking illustration!

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#### **Jasmine says**

Big cats! I liked the distinction in the text, where the main character said he would always be a stutterer, but could learn in time to speak fluently—which he did with a lot of hard work and time. But it would always require hard work.

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#### **Roger Clarke says**

I think what I liked most about this book was the illustrations; you could really feel the emotion of the main character when he is first telling the reader about his stuttering problem and how serious it is for him. I actually dealt with a stuttering problem when I was younger and still occasionally stutter if I get nervous, so this story really hits home for me. I can also relate that I find animals much better company than most of the humans I meet, just like the boy. He seems like a really nice kid who just wants to help and be with animals since he doesn't have to talk as much and when he does talk, he doesn't stutter because he feels more at ease with them. As he grows up, the boy becomes an animal researcher and has to present his case for animal protection to people, of which he is terrified he will stutter during. In the end, he gets the protection the jaguars need and he thanks a big male jaguar for helping him overcome his obstacles in life.

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## **N says**

Rabinowitz has pushed through a lot of pain and sadness to have a great impact in the field of wildlife conservation. He told his heavy but equally uplifting life story rather beautifully in just 32 pages.

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## **Gina says**

The story arc feels a little abrupt, like maybe we missed some important steps, but there are some really neat moments and it ends up being good for jaguars, which is ultimately helpful.

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## **Laura says**

A young boy struggles with stuttering and learns that he doesn't stutter when he talks to animals. Though he feels broken, he finds that he feels at home studying animals in their natural environments. He travels to Belize to study jaguars and eventually convinces the office of the prime minister to create a protected area for the big cats.

I really enjoyed this book. The story has a lovely parallelism and Alan Rabinowitz captures his feelings about stuttering in a way that children will be able to understand and relate to. The artwork is also lovely -- I especially liked the page that shows the jaguars running through the world's first and only jaguar preserve.

But as much as I liked this book for its artwork, narrative, and message, it really needed some additional information or a biography of Alan Rabinowitz. For teachers or librarians interested in using this text with students, definitely take a minute to prepare some additional information.

<http://www.belizeadubon.org/protecte...>

<http://www.panthera.org/node/247>

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/adv...>

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## **Marisa says**

Can you imagine being attempting to answer a question and all that comes out is stuttering?

The boy in this book, struggles with stuttering and with communication with his family and peers. This frustrates and humiliates him. He can only seem to find his voice when he is among animals, which leads him to become one of the biggest voices in wildlife conservation. He finds himself in a political situation where he can either save animals or not... he "can't stutter or distract from the message" and he only has 15 minutes to convince.

The text was really deep and piercing. I could feel Alan's pain growing up and the pressure he felt as a front line advocate. This is a book that will definitely impact students and show them a different perspective. It has to be intentionally weaved in so that the conversations can be fruitful and enlightening. I recommend the use

of this book with K-5th.

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### **KC says**

Brilliant biography of one of the world's leaders in animal conservation (and one who overcame his stutter)

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