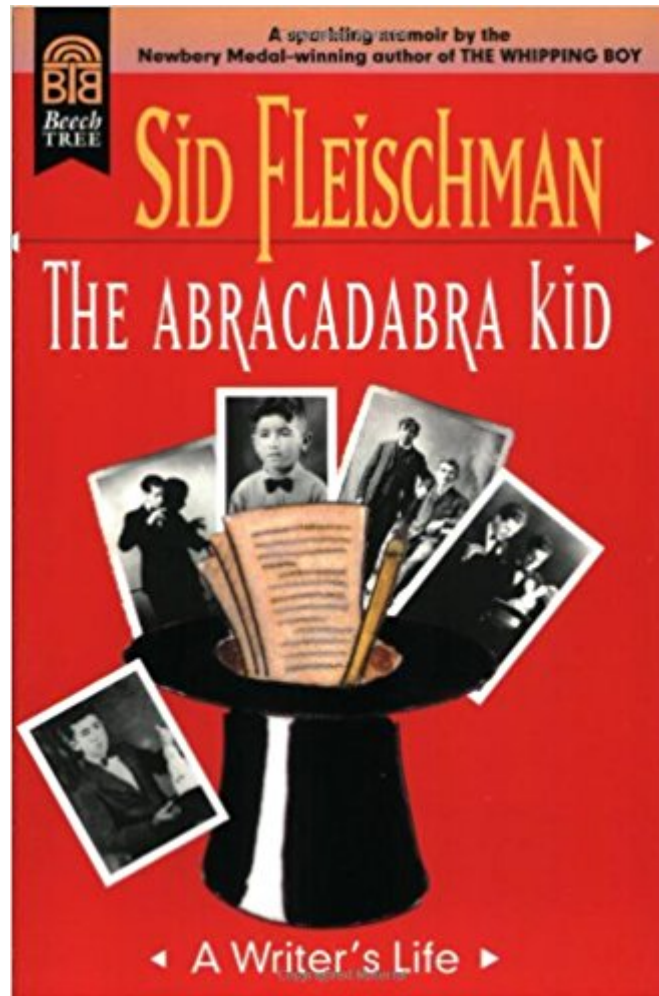




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# The Abracadabra Kid: A Writer's Life



## Synopsis

The man with the spats rolled up his sleeves and proceeded to pluck a polished red billiard ball out of thin air. Presto! It vanished. Abracadabra! It reappeared. It turned white. it blushed red again. VoilÃƒfÂ¡! Suddenly there were four billiard balls between this amazing man's fingers. I was stunned. All of this was happening right under my nose. And there was more. He flipped the deck into falling waterfalls of cards, spun them into fans, and thrust a sword through a shower of cards to impale the seven of diamonds -- selected a moment before. I was dazzled. The moment he finished his act and ushered us gawkers back onto the sidewalk, I knew what I wanted to be. Someone else could be president of the United States. I wanted to be a magician.

## Book Information

Age Range: 12 and up

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Biographies > Literary #186 in ÃƒÂ Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Literary

## Customer Reviews

Sid Fleischman, who started out life as a magician, has pulled off a truly magical feat with *Abracadabra Kid*; he has crafted a captivating and instructive book for kids about what it is like to be a writer. A prolific author and the winner of the Newbery Medal in 1987 for *The Whipping Boy*, Fleischman tells in engaging brisk style how he worked his way from boy magician to Hollywood scriptwriter to award-winning writer. His experiences and his dozen tips all combine to provide useful and inspiring fodder for aspiring young writers. --This text refers to the Audio Cassette edition.

"In this funny, poignant, insightful and thoroughly entertaining autobiography, [Fleischman] proves himself an effortless raconteur, possessed of a rapid-fire wit," said PW, in a starred review of the

Newbery Medalist's memoirs. Ages 10-up.-- proves himself an effortless raconteur, possessed of a rapid-fire wit," said PW, in a starred review of the Newbery Medalist's memoirs. Ages 10-up.  
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First, let me say this: The *Abacadabra Kid* is not just for magicians. Although Fleischman is a Newbery Medal-winning author of children's books, screenplays, novels, instructional magic books, and a kid's bio on Harry Houdini, he goes into some detail about his early days as a travelling magician, he writes about his earliest published work, his service in the United States Navy on a destroyer escort during World War II, and the origin of his career as a writer. Throughout the book, a relatively quick read because of its humorous, conversational tone, Fleischman plants little gold coins that reveal where he got many of the ideas for some of his bestselling stories—ideas that formed long before he was a professional writer. And he tops it off with valuable advice and tips for aspiring writers. Whether you're young or old, magician or non-magician, writer or reader, you'll enjoy this autobiography by a man whose life and work have entertained and inspired both children and adults for more than 70 years.

My children go to a school where the "AR Points" they earn from reading dictate their ability to enjoy basic school time activities. Unfortunately, they're not able to acquire very many interesting books that have multiple "AR Points", so they're rarely able to amass the necessary levels of points to continually remain in the good graces of the school. However, I proactively dug around and found a tool that lets me find books that are AR compatible and the points they give. This book is on that list and it came highly recommended by a friend who reads nearly anything he can get his hands on. I ordered two books, so each will get the same review, but they both did a fantastic job because they were highly entertaining, taught a few things, and provided the needed points. Thank you!

I picked up *THE ABRACADABRA KID: A WRITER'S LIFE* based on the reviews I read here. It was well-worth the few dollars I spent for the hardbound edition. The life of Sid Fleischman is told in an unpretentious and humorous style, I imagine just like his novels for kids, which, I have to shamefully admit, I've never read. He tells us about his growing up poor in Brooklyn and San Diego during the Great Depression, his love of magic, his service in the U. S. Navy during WWII, becoming a cub-journalist for a local newspaper after the war, writing screenplays, and trying to be an honest-to-goodness author of children's books. There are also many photos of his parents and two

sisters, himself, his own family, as well as handbills he printed in High School Printing Shop class announcing the "See'n is Believ'n" magic shows he and a friend, Bud Ryan, performed for the public (in an effort to make some money during the lean years). They called themselves "The Ryan Brothers". Sid divides his book into 43 short chapters beginning each with a humorous excerpt from one of the many letters he has received from fans...all of them from kids. For example: "Please don't come back to my school. I hate to write letters." (p.45); "When did you start writing? When are you going to stop?" (p.98); "I'd like to be a writer, but my hand gets tired. Can you give me some advice?" (p.174). Fortunately, Sid does end his book with practical advice to anyone, child or adult, who wants to write. While the book is a stroll down memory lane, it is a trip only those who lived through the Depression and Second World War will remember taking. If you happen to be, like me, a "Baby Boomer" and nostalgic about growing up in the 50s and 60s, I recommend *THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE THUNDERBOLT KID* by Bill Bryson and *KNOTS IN MY YO-YO STRING* by Jerry Spinelli. If you want to learn the craft of writing, read *THE ABRACADABRA KID*.

I'm an instructor with the Institute of Children's Literature so I sought out this book when I heard that the Newbery award winning writer Sid Fleishman recently passed away. Another children's writer recommended it. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and have quoted some of his novel writing advice to my students. *The Abracadabra Kid* is entertaining -- well written of course, filled with photos of his life of magic, his family, serving in the Navy, writing, movie scripts and speaking. It's especially interesting to me since much of it is set in San Diego where we live. I wished I had heard him speak in person but reading *Abracadabra Kid* may have been even better -- like a personal conversation with him.

Mr. Fleischman, long recognized and awarded as a childrens' author (as well as a successful writer for a variety of audiences and media) tells his own story as fascinating as any story he created from his imagination. Fleishman's true to life biography rings with his conversational style like talking with that creative neighbor over the backyard fence. The author at times seems almost amazed that somehow the writing ideas kept coming and even paid the bills for his growing family. Enjoy the life of a gifted storyteller as he shares the factors and influences that shaped him and brought him deserved fame and made his stories memorable to generations of readers.

Fun autobiography with useful information for authors such as *It's the job of the hero or heroine to solve the story problem* and *The main character*

should be changed by the events of the story.â

Great autobiography of a fascinating man and writer. Recommended for kids, especially if they're interested in magic or writing.

The Abracadabra Kid is a fun read; wish it had more about Fleischman's actual career to becoming a writer and overall feels a bit dated in terms of writing style.

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