



## **An Interview With *Simon and Barklee*® Creators**

### ***What exactly is Simon and Barklee®?***

The *Simon and Barklee* series is a dynamic instructional system for elementary school children. It is a platform to bring the world to the classroom. We've designed it as a combined language arts and social studies program that encourages critical thinking, discussion and reflection. While the stories are entertaining and interesting for kids as they read about the travels and exploration of the two main characters, the accompanying activities and teaching enrichments extend them and give teachers and parents plenty of additional material that encourages exploration way beyond the books alone.

### ***Why is it important?***

Two big reasons. First, there is the abysmal showing of American students in reading and geography achievement as indicated by The Nations Report Card. By a large majority, American kids are not even reaching proficiency level in reading. The geography scores are just as bad. Our books are high-interest, intelligent and stimulating for kids. Kids like them – and kids read what they like.

Second, major publishers of textbooks have been influenced to such an extent by pressure groups from both the right and the left that they have stripped books of important, educationally relevant content. It's all been sanitized. Publishers want to sell books. They don't want controversy. So, they've eliminated everything that could be attacked by anyone. What's left is pabulum. It's boring and lifeless. With *Simon and Barklee*, we don't whitewash. We do play fair, but we show the world as it is.

### ***What is happening in education that makes this so significant?***

Look at the test scores. Look at how textbooks are designed. Look at how they are selected. Look at what the average American child knows about the world. This planet gets smaller by the day and we're turning out a generation of children who know little or nothing about how the rest of the world thinks or perceives us. Not only that, but our kids don't really know what they, themselves think because they've never been exposed to anything that would require them to discuss or reflect on the world and how it is or how it got to be this way. They simply do not know how to think critically or question.

### ***Who can use Simon and Barklee®?***

Anyone can. It is written for elementary grades and is now in use from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through 7<sup>th</sup> grades in public and private schools. Lots of homeschoolers are using it. Grandparents and parents are getting the books for their families and they'r enjoying the stories right along with the kids. We frequently hear things like "I wish I'd read this before I went to England or to Mexico!"

### ***What adventure will be next?***

Next out will be *Simon and Barklee in West Africa*, to be followed by *Simon and Barklee on the Nile* – the story of East Africa. It's challenging to write because there is so much happening there now. But it's very important because a lot of US history is tied to West Africa and there is a large African-American population here. After that, we will write one or more adventures taking place in Asia.

### ***Is there anything to the Simon and Barklee program beyond books?***

Absolutely. We have designed classroom programs for children to teach writing skills, editing and the creative process. We want kids to write their own S&B adventures that they research and discuss and illustrate. We publish them on our website. We are working on the pilot stages of a Partner School program that will permit kids from different countries to communicate electronically, classroom to classroom, under the supervision of their teachers.

We also have programs for teachers that include professional development workshops and college-credit coursework through two nationally recognized universities.

And we are working on more. We plan to have *Simon and Barklee* tours. We're in the early stages of a television series.

### ***It sounds like you have big plans for Simon and Barklee.***

Indeed we do. There is no limit to where these two critters can go. In truth, *Simon and Barklee* are vehicles. Their role is to bring the world to children, but perhaps more importantly, to bring children to the world.