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Robert Cormier

about this author

"I can't remember a time, really, when I haven't been a writer. . . . Reading and writing . . . were the two great escapes of my life and I suppose they still are." -- Robert Cormier

Robert Cormier (pronounced kor-MEER) has always lived in Leominster, Massachusetts, a small city in the north-central part of the state. He and his wife, Connie, also from Leominster, still live in the house where they raised their three daughters and one son--all adults now--and they see no reason to leave. "There are lots of untold stories right here on Main Street," Cormier says.

A newspaper reporter and columnist for 30 years (working for the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, and the *Fitchburg Sentinel*), Cormier is sometimes inspired by news stories. What makes his works unique is his ability to make evil behavior understandable, though, of course, still evil. "I'm very much interested in intimidation," he told an interviewer from *School Library Journal*. "And the way people manipulate other people. And the obvious abuse of authority." All of these themes are evident in his young-adult classic and best-known book, *The Chocolate War*. A 15-year-old fan of his said, "You always write from inside the person."

Although he's always lived in one place, Cormier loves to travel. He has visited nearly every state in the Union and many countries around the world. He felt particularly thrilled by putting his hand in the Indian Ocean

on a trip to Australia.

Cormier is a practicing Catholic who attended parochial school, where in seventh grade, one of his teachers discovered his ability to write. But he says he had always wanted to be a writer. "I can't remember a time when I wasn't trying to get something down on paper," he says.

Cormier has written 16 books--15 of them fiction, and one a collection of his newspaper columns. Though these books are sometimes described as written for young adults, in fact Cormier has readers of all ages. His themes of the ordinariness of evil and what happens when good people stand by and do nothing are treated seriously, and he doesn't provide the easy comfort of happy endings. Nevertheless, he believes in hope.

Recent books include, *I Have Words to Spend*, a collection of 85 essays originally published as newspaper columns about subjects ranging from his daughter's wedding to current events and the movies, and *In the Middle of the Night*, a chillingly suspenseful novel in which Cormier examines the consequences of a young man's rebellion against his father's past.

In *Tenderness* Cormier has dared to confront ultimate depravity in the tale of an 18-year-old serial killer, the 15-year-old runaway who becomes "fixated" on him, and an old cop who suspects more than he can prove. Their interlocking needs motivate a riveting story that moves inexorably to a devastatingly ironic conclusion.

In his recent book, *Heroes*, Cormier quietly, remorselessly, probes the nature of heroism as it is reflected through the remains of a young life forever shattered by a terrible act. Francis Joseph Cassavant is 18. He has just returned home from World War II, and he has no face. He does have a gun and a mission: to murder his childhood hero.

Frenchtown Summer, the author's newest book, is a lyrical remembrance, based on memories of his childhood.

An Interview with Robert Cormier

(Excerpted from an interview by Roger Sutton in *School Library Journal*, June 1991)

Q: What kind of a world do you think you portray in your books?

Cormier: Well, I like to call myself a realistic writer. . . .I take real people and put them in extraordinary situations.

Q: The darkness in your books has to come from some place.

Cormier: Well, I think a lot of it comes from my adolescence. On the surface it looked like a very pleasant, ordinary one. I came from a warm and loving family, really, and I went to parochial school. . . . But between the lines there is the fact that I always felt that I didn't belong.

Q: Do you think of the world as a malevolent place?

Cormier: The strange thing is that I'm an optimist. . . . I hate to talk in terms like "lessons" or "themes" because characters and plots must come first. Still, I was kind of surprised at the initial controversy about *The Chocolate War*, because to me there was the implicit lesson. . . . I thought I was portraying what happens when good people don't come to the rescue. Which didn't mean that was the way life is all the time, just in that particular situation.

Q: With all the controversy that surrounds your books, one thing that sometimes gets overlooked is that you're first a good storyteller.

Cormier: The story comes first. If it doesn't succeed as a story, no one is ever going to get to the theme. . . . The rest really is a bonus, that people can find things in my books to argue about. Or to teach or debate. Or even to be upset about. That's all an extra richness for me. I just want to tell a darn good story.

The entire collection of Robert Cormier's books is available from Bantam Doubleday Dell. For more information, click on the individual title.

[After The First Death](#)

[Beyond the Chocolate War](#)

[The Bumblebee Flies Anyway](#)

[The Chocolate War](#)

[Eight Plus One](#)

[Fade](#)

[Frenchtown Summer](#)

[Heroes](#)

[I am the Cheese](#)

[I Have Words to Spend](#)

[In the Middle of the Night](#)

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[Now and at the Hour](#)

[Other Bells for Us to Ring](#)

[Take Me Where the Good Times Are](#)

Tenderness

Tunes for Bears to Dance To

We All Fall Down

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