



Meet Frank Beddor!

Frank Beddor is the author of *The Looking Glass Wars*, the first book of three that follow Alyss Heart, the princess of Wonderland, on her action-filled journey to save her homeland. Here, he chats with Girls Inc. about where he gets his inspiration, what writing a novel is really like, and advice for aspiring authors.

Q: Why did you pick *Alice in Wonderland*? What inspired you to write this book?

A: Well, she picked me! My background is in the movie business, and a few years ago I went to London for a European premiere. I had a day off and went to the British Museum, where they had this remarkable exhibit of ancient cards. What caught my attention at the very end of the exhibit was the only incomplete deck. They had images that reminded me of *Alice in Wonderland* but were much darker.

A friend introduced me to an antiquities dealer who specialized in selling and trading these kinds of cards. I asked the gentleman if he knew anything about the incomplete set. He not only knew about them, he owned the remaining cards and invited me over to see them. He was very eccentric, and told me, "This is not a fairy tale, it is a story of murder and revenge and betrayal." He opened up the box, took out the cards, started to tell me this story, and that became the inspiration for the *Looking Glass Wars* trilogy.

Q: This is your first novel. What were your challenges in bringing these characters to life?

A: When I set out to do this, I was pretty insecure, so I decided it was best not to discuss it with anybody but my girlfriend. I did not think I could have handled the pressure of any expectations coming from the outside. I felt the need to write it, but I didn't have that much experience.

I had been writing for a long time, but to write something this big in scope was daunting. So the biggest challenge that I faced at first was creating this parallel world. There are logic and rules and backstory that need to make sense so the reader can suspend disbelief. So I spent the first two years world creating — just writing backstories of characters and figuring out the logic.

There were days when I just wanted to toss the whole thing. And then there was a moment during the tenth chapter when it was as if it were happening to me. Then it was just a matter of having the discipline and focus to finish. So the first book took five years while the second took only 18 months.

Q: *The Looking Glass Wars* is the first part of a trilogy. Without giving too much away, can you give us a preview of the sequels?

A: Several of the characters, such as Homburg Molly, are small characters in book one, but become much more significant in book two. Book two is more of a cliffhanger. Book one had more of a nice, tidy ending, while book two and three go hand in hand.

Q: What were your favorite fairy tales growing up? Was *Alice in Wonderland* one of them?

A: I liked a lot of the Grimm's fairy tales, but my favorite adventure was *Treasure Island*. There was also something about the big, bad wolf from Red Riding Hood that I liked. I was always drawn more to adventure stories, and I did not like *Alice in Wonderland* as a kid. I often tell people this was my revenge for being I was forced to read it. My grandmother's name was Alice, and it was her favorite book.

Q: What advice do you have for girls who want to be writers?

A: My advice, and the simplest advice, is that you need to write to be a writer. One of the best tools you can use is journaling, because you are writing about something that happens to you that you know a lot about. You need to look for where the inspiration is and follow that. Write something you are really passionate about.

Q: The mission of Girls Inc. is to be strong, smart, and bold. How does Alice as a character fit with that?

A: Alice is very precocious at the beginning of the story but then faces adversity. She is exiled to our world and loses everything, but she has the strength to endure and to adapt. Even though she has lost her imagination, she finds other ways in our world — like through her journal, which she creates to keep the images of her home and her past alive.

When a very repressive society like Victorian England tells her to fit in and be like everyone else, they succeed for a while. Later, when she is reunited with the queendom, she has no confidence at first. She has lots and lots of doubts, but her strength lets her win over those pressures. I think that is a really strong message, that it is not about trying to be like everyone else, but it is about finding who you are and being authentic and truthful to that.