

ARVID NELSON



“Creating is wonderful, and kind of living in a fantasy world . . .” says Arvid Nelson. When he writes his successful comic books, Arvid often puts imaginative twists on historical events. His *Rex Mundi* series has been translated into five languages. A screenplay is being written for a *Rex Mundi* movie with the involvement of actor and producer Johnny Depp. Arvid has also written comic books for publishers Dark Horse, DC, Marvel, and Dynamite Entertainment.

Growing up in Connecticut, U.S., Arvid loved books, including mystery and fantasy. In college, he studied creative writing, and after earning his degree in 1999, he worked as a production assistant for a movie by writer and director Woody Allen. Then he got excited about telling stories through comic books.

Though Arvid’s comics are for older teens, he wants to write for a younger audience, too. He’s working on a fantasy novel for kids about age 14 and up. “As I get older, I realize that the stories that I like the most are the stories that are truly [for] all ages,” he says. Arvid lives in Massachusetts with his wife, Robyn.

Q. What’s your favorite childhood memory?

There was a nature preserve near my house. I loved walking there . . . There was a big rock we liked to climb. My father knows a lot about geology. He said it was called a glacial erratic; that is, a glacier just dumped a big boulder in the middle of the woods, so we liked to climb that . . . There were duck ponds and marshes. It was very peaceful.

Q. What inspired you to become a writer?

For a long time, I thought I wanted to make movies. But the more I heard about making movies, the more difficult I saw that it was. Movies cost a huge amount of money. Even an inexpensive movie still costs millions of dollars to make.

So I had to reflect on what I really wanted to do, and I realized that for me, what’s important is storytelling and the story. I don’t really care if it’s a movie or a comic book or a song or a poem. What interests me is storytelling, and writing is just the easiest way to do that . . . To have done the stories I did in comics would have taken millions and millions of dollars [as films].



Left: Arvid, at about age four, with his dad. Arvid says, “I was very, very blessed to have loving parents, a stable environment.”

Right: Visiting the Bronx Zoo in New York, U.S., at about age nine

Q. How did your family encourage you in your career?

I am so blessed to have my mom and my dad. They were always supportive . . . They would read everything that I wrote as a child. They read to me when I was very young. They instilled [in] me . . . an appreciation of art and literature . . . every step of the way. They still support me . . . and I love them, and I’m so grateful to them.



Q. When you write a comic, what's your process like?

It really depends on whether or not I'm writing a story that I'm creating, or a story that a publisher has asked me to write. If it's a story that I'm creating, it's my idea. I'm a lot like the director/producer of a movie, where I make all the decisions, and I kind of have the final say on everything.

When I'm writing for a publisher, it's very different. I have to be cognizant of what they want and what their vision is . . . Not everything you write is great and wonderful at first, so I think part of being a professional writer is understanding what the concerns of the other people you're working with are, and trying to address them as best you can.

Q. Religion is a big theme in some of your comics.

What inspired you to explore that theme?

A lot of it was the Bahá'í Faith. It just totally blew my mind, reading about [it] and the prophecies surrounding it. Growing up Christian, I had one perspective on it, and the Bahá'í Faith just made everything kind of fall into place like a puzzle. Yeah, the Bahá'í Faith was extremely important to me . . . I just find religion in general really interesting, whether it's Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam.

Q. How has the Bahá'í Faith affected your career?

One of the best assets you can have as a writer is having something to say, having a point of view. It's really easy to be negative about the world and say, "Oh . . . I don't like that, I don't believe in this." But I think it takes courage and strength to take a stand *for* something and believe *in* something and be *for* something. So the Bahá'í Faith gives me that . . . I believe very deeply in the ideals of the . . . Faith, and I always try to transmit that in my writing.

Q. What advice do you have for kids who want a career in writing, especially in comics?

Definitely think about online comics. [They] have done really, really well lately . . . That and learning about technology is really, really important . . . One reason I've [had a] little bit of success with *Rex Mundi* is that I've really learned how to use graphic design software like



Left: Arvid visited the Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain, partly for research for a comic book project. He says, "I very much admire the architecture of early Islam . . ."



Above: At Comic-Con 2010 in California, Arvid signed autographs with director Joseph Kosinski. Arvid co-wrote a novella called *Oblivion* that Kosinski plans to turn into a film.

Q. How do you juggle so many projects at once?

Just willpower . . . If you're writing with a publisher, they set a deadline . . . You have to have it done by a certain time. If you don't, the publisher just is never going to ask you to write anything ever again. So you *have* to do it. When you write something for yourself, it's so important to do the same thing, to set deadlines for yourself.

Photoshop and Illustrator. And I've learned a lot about the technology of the web . . . It's fun to learn, and it's really useful . . . Learning proper grammar is really, really important . . . The most important thing is just to maintain your sense of awe and wonder about the world . . .