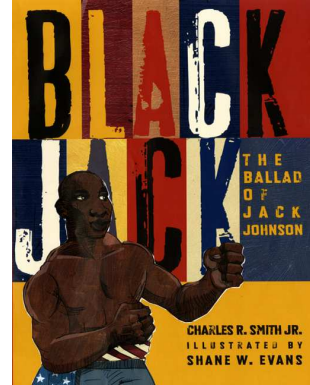


Q&A with Charles R. Smith Jr. and Shane Evans
Author and Illustrator of BLACK JACK



When did you first learn Jack Johnson's story?

Charles R. Smith Jr. (Author): I first heard about Jack Johnson years ago when doing research on a book about Muhammad Ali. A documentary by Ken Burns was airing on PBS and I was fascinated by his story once I saw it. **Shane**

Evans (Illustrator): Interestingly, I knew some of the story but it is from this book that I started to truly know all that he was about. He was a complex and colorful person and that energy helped to spark the images for this book. He has been an understated figure in our history and it is time to celebrate someone who was forward thinking and a true CHAMPION!

What inspired you to write about Jack Johnson?

Charles R. Smith Jr. (Author): His individuality and fearless approach to life. The turn of the century was not an easy time period for a young black man but his bravado would be something to see even in this day and age.

What is your favorite part about illustrating children's books?

Shane Evans (Illustrator): One of my favorite parts is getting to actually visit schools all over the world and see how books affect the lives of children directly. They are engaged in the art and story and it is an inspiration to see what creative learning can do.

Describe your creative process.

Charles R. Smith Jr. (Author): I have a variety of approaches in general when it comes to creating a book, but detail wise, I do as much research as I can on a subject to understand it inside and out. This would not only include book research, but video, music and anything else that gives me a three-dimensional representation of what I'm working on. I read a great deal but more than anything I take inspiration from everything around me.

Describe your technique.

Shane Evans (Illustrator): I often do my research first, especially with a book like this. I will look at other books or video that shed light on topics so deep with information. For *Black Jack*, the art was sketched out in a series of drawings that was then redrawn with collage and oil paint.