

Award-Winning Author Promotes Message Despite Being Shunned

When Arthur Mills wrote “The Empty Lot Next Door,” some neighbors and even family quit speaking to him; they didn’t want to acknowledge the local element of his true-life story of ghosts, suicide, and bullying, but that didn’t stop his new book from winning awards.

Winner of the 2010 Reader Views’ Literary Book Contest in the Teen/Young Adult Category, Best Teen Book Category, and in the Regional South Category. [Arthur Mills’ *The Empty Lot Next Door*](#) is the story of a true haunting and the bullying he experienced as a child growing up in Austin, Texas. Now released in a new edition with sixteen additional illustrations, for a total of forty-nine, readers can have an enhanced experience of [The Empty Lot Next Door](#) (978-0-9860166-4-6, Second Edition, [Branching Plot Books](#), 2012).

Arthur Mills knows firsthand what it is to be bullied and how bullying can lead to suicide. Arthur’s older half- brothers as well as older neighborhood boys continually bullied and tortured his brother, Richard. While Richard did not fight back, he released his frustration by then beating and bullying Mills. Eventually, Richard could no longer deal with being an outcast and being bullied, so he hung himself at the age of twelve. Mills has spent his life mourning his brother, trying to cope with the horrible memories of bullying, and trying to understand how dysfunction resulted in the tragic events of his childhood.

Because bullying has received more media attention in the last couple of years, Mills decided it was time to take his story public to raise awareness about bullying and suicide. While *The Empty Lot Next Door* includes Mills’ own true experience of a haunting by a ghost he knew as “Candle Face” during his childhood, many readers have found the bullying and suicide of Mills’ brother Richard to be the scariest part of the book.

With the success of the book’s first edition, Mills felt encouraged to produce a new edition of *The Empty Lot Next Door* with additional illustrations. Mills hopes the low price of the book will encourage more people to read his story so it will raise awareness about the detrimental effects of bullying and the warning signs of suicide. While the book’s controversy and horror elements have caused people in the Austin neighborhood where it takes place to be displeased, Mills has actively used the book to raise awareness and has spoken to schools and Boy and Girl Scout groups about the negative effects of bullying and the warning signs of suicide. The book’s recent wins of the 2010 Reader Views’ Literary Book Contest makes Mills hopeful that his message is being heard.

In *The Empty Lot Next Door*, Mills raises questions about why his brother Richard killed himself, and how bullying may have marred his brother’s understanding of reality until he felt the need to end his life. Readers have found the novel, which Mills says is only 20 percent fictionalized, gripping and compelling. While Mills appreciates that readers find the story compelling, he recently told Reader Views, “If my readers become more aware of the signs of suicide and learn to talk about them, then my book will be a success.”

About the Author

Arthur Mills has traveled the world, both literally and figuratively. In his military life as a Chief Warrant Officer, he was stationed in several countries the world over. In his life as a reader, he’s been able to visit hundreds more. And as a writer? He’s been able to create a world all his own.

Arthur is the creator of *Branching Plot Books*, a book series devoted to the art of double entendre and reader interaction. Aided by voice recognition software, Arthur has been able to pen novels to captivate people of all ages. Whether it’s the horror of *The Empty Lot Next Door*, or the interactivity of [The Crawl](#)

Space, Arthur's main goal in writing has always been to develop a deeper means of communication with the world—both real and imagined.

When not working on his latest novel, Arthur is a full-time husband and father. He and his wife, Yonsun, have two children, Arthur and Allen and live within the lush Washington landscape.