

I Am Brad Meltzer

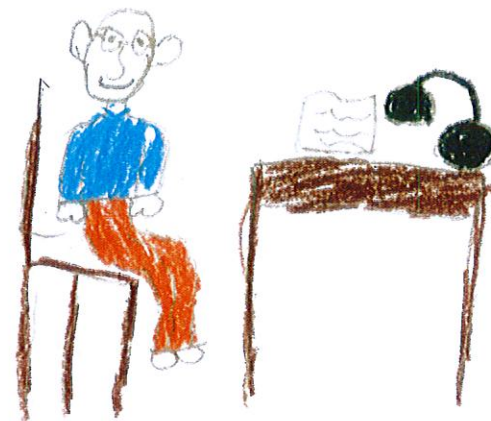


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Here's a story I never tell anyone that I want in my biography. So I was on the playground, probably in 4th grade, and there was this bully. He was just a bully. And there was this kid who had a ball. The other kid was a little heavy and couldn't run that fast. And the bully just took the ball, just to be mean, just to be a jerk. And I saw that, and it broke my heart.

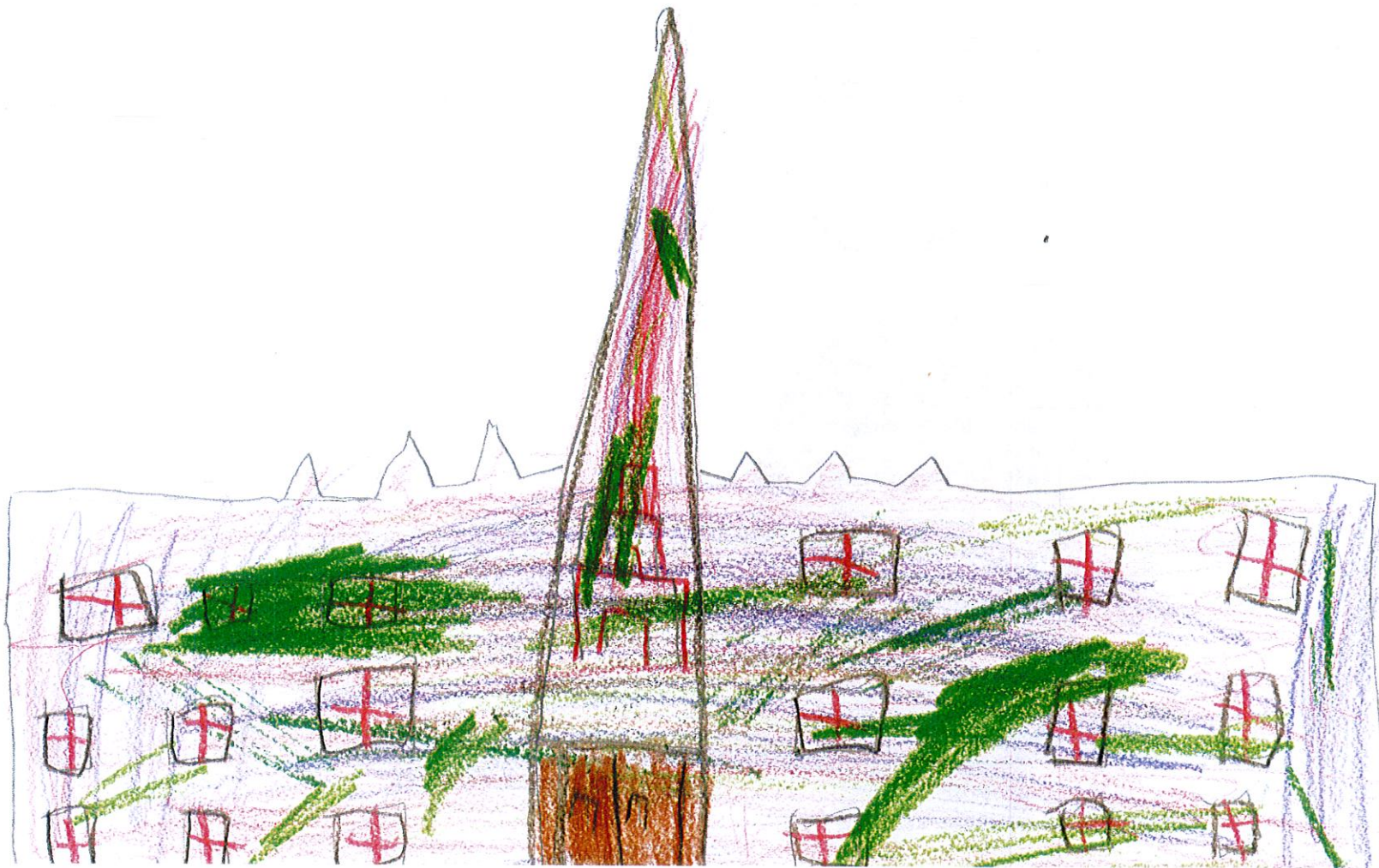


So I went up to him and said, "Give him the ball back." And he said, "No, I'm not giving the ball back." And I said, "Give him the ball back." And I grabbed the ball out of his hands and gave it to the boy who had it in the first place. We got into a little fight, which we shouldn't have, but it felt so good to get that ball and give it back to this kid.



I got a letter from that kid after we were grown up thanking me. It's one of the greatest things anyone ever wrote to me.

So then I grew up and graduated from the University of Michigan and moved to Boston. I wrote for *Games* magazine and worked on a novel. Then I went to law school, but I kept writing. Finally I had a novel to send to publishers.



By then I was living in Washington, D.C. "Here we go," I murmured. I was about to answer the call that would tell me my first book would get published. I picked up the phone. "Hello," I said calmly. "Hello," the publisher said in a deep voice. "Your book has been denied. We don't like it." I put down the phone. I was crushed. But I decided not to waste any more time fussing and to send the book to other publishers. It was probably just that one publisher who didn't like my book, right?



I sent my book out nineteen more times, and they all said no. The odd thing is, there were only twenty publishers at the time, and I sent the book to all of them, and got twenty-four rejections! Four publishers said no twice just so I got the point. Well, I thought, if you don't want my book, I'll write a new one. And I did write a new one, which was called *The Tenth Justice*. It's a thriller that also got rejected many, many times. But one person accepted it and made my dreams come true. For so many dreams you have in your life, it takes just one person to say yes.



Your job in life is you have to find that one person who dreams like your dream, so keep looking for that person.

So there I was writing books for adults. But then I had a son. I wanted him to have real heroes, not reality TV stars, people who actually make a difference, so I wrote *Heroes for My Son*. Then I had a daughter. One day I was searching for clothing for my daughter, but all I could find were pink shirts with princesses on them. I knew there were better heroes to give my daughter, too. So I wrote *Heroes for My Daughter*. Any parent would want a real hero for their daughter.



When I finally had the ability to write books, I was very happy. I felt like people were happy with what I was giving them. I felt happy to share my gift with the world. At first it was challenging, but then I got used to it. But what should my next book be about, I thought, staring at a blank piece of paper. For a moment I stopped thinking about the book and looked at the newspaper.

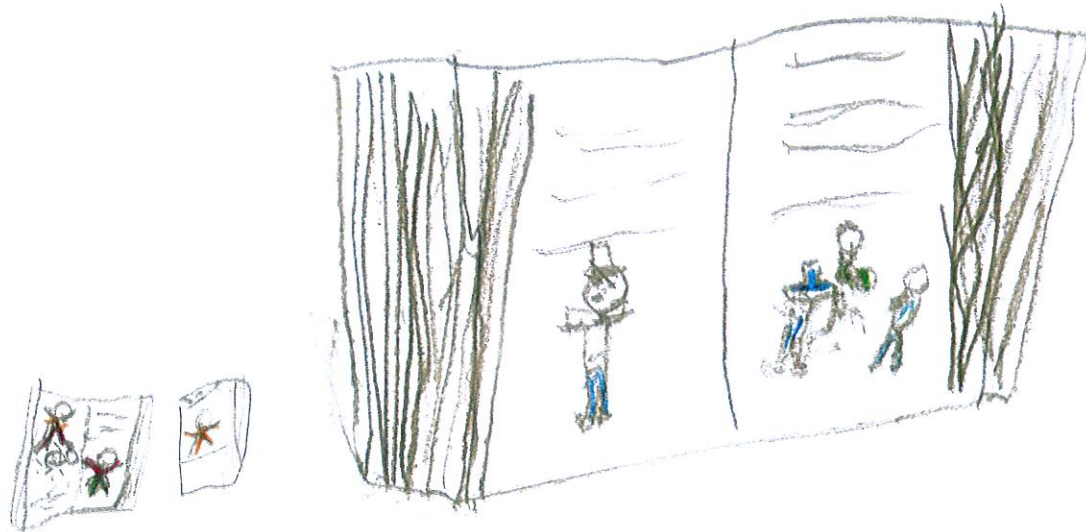


It had some fun kid stuff so I thought maybe my son will like to try. There were a lot of word searches and other fun stuff. But then I looked carefully and saw some information about people who lived in the past. One of these people was Amelia Earhart, and there was a whole paragraph about her. And then, it came to me, I knew what my next book would be about: Amelia Earhart, who started as a child figuring out how she could fly and who never gave up.



Crash and rebuild. Crash and rebuild, and that's when you take off.

So I started writing my *I Am* biographies with Chris Eliopoulos doing the illustrations. I do not find or just think of ideas. I do research. I think about what my children would like and what other children would like to read about, too.



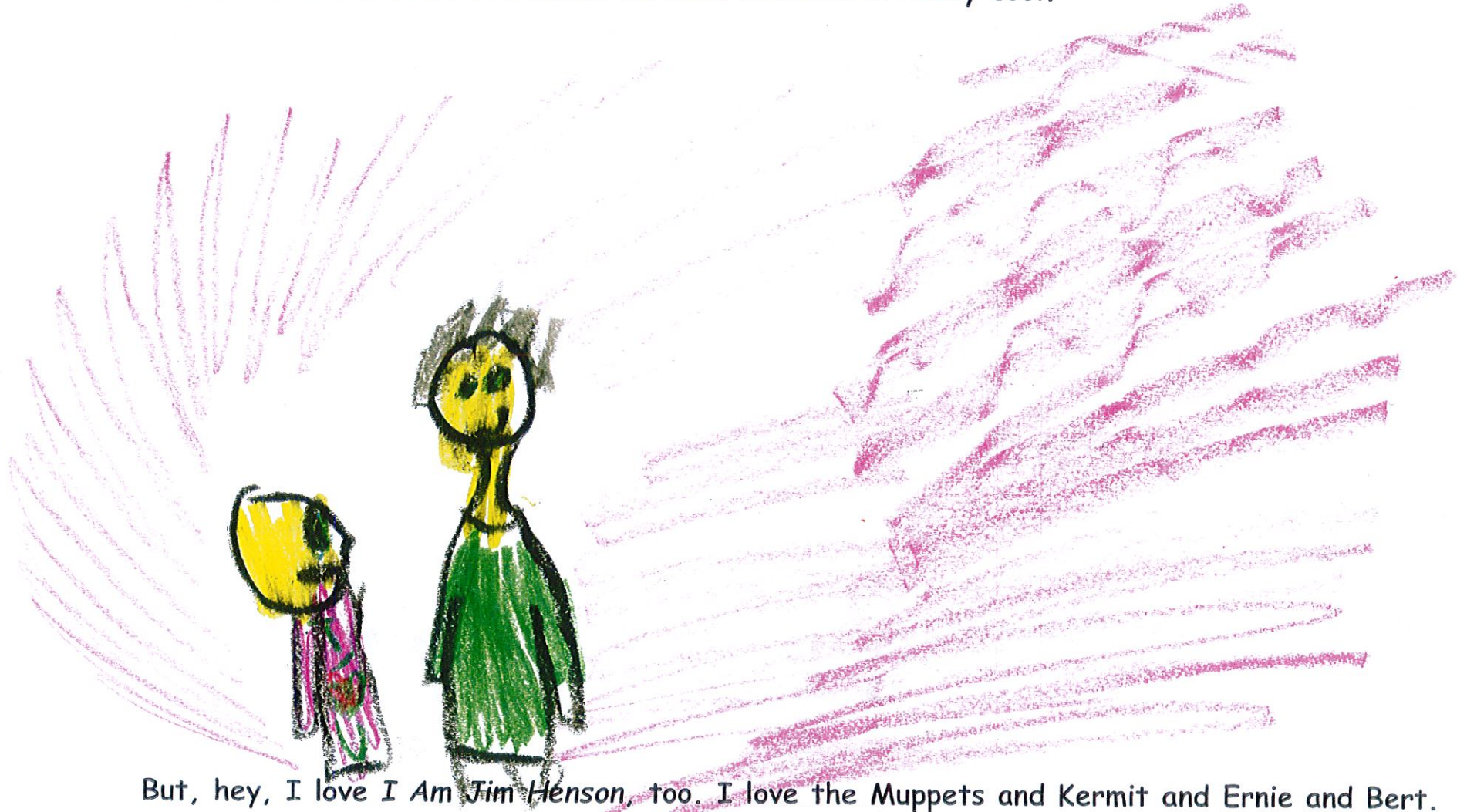
Which are my favorites? I love *I Am Abraham Lincoln* because of the story about him and the turtle and how he stood up to the local bullies.

I love *I Am Helen Keller* because everyone said forget about her, she's never going to accomplish anything. But one teacher took a chance on her.



And I love her definition of love. She said that the whole world was like a rainbow that encircled her and brought us all together, and that's what love does.

And I love *I Am Jackie Robinson* because baseball is really cool.



But, hey, I love *I Am Jim Henson*, too. I love the Muppets and Kermit and Ernie and Bert. When I was growing up, I looked up to Jim Henson, Mr. Rogers, and my grandfather, who used to make up stories for me. They were all heroes.

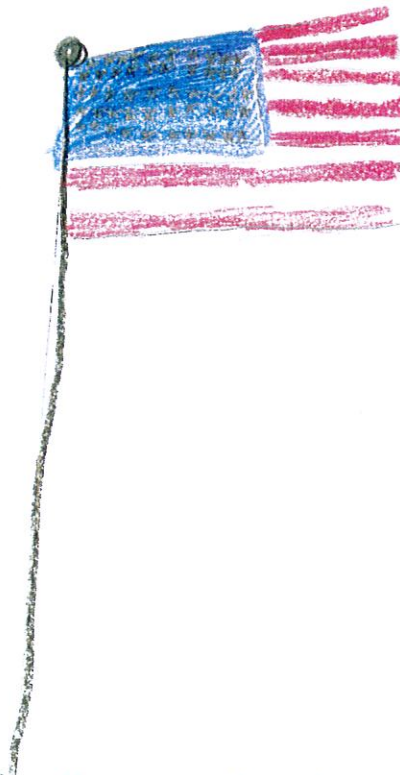
What are my work habits? I type the books that I make on my computer, but I write notes when I am not at my house. When I take notes, I usually write in cursive. Then when I come home, I organize my notes and type them on my computer. When I am at home I type on my computer right away.

Home

not Home



So here's something else I'm proud of. On September 11, 2001, on the Star of America yacht, there was an American flag flying. After the Twin Towers came down, three firefighters took that flag and raised it at Ground Zero. Then one day, it disappeared. So I made an episode about the missing flag for my TV show *Lost History*.



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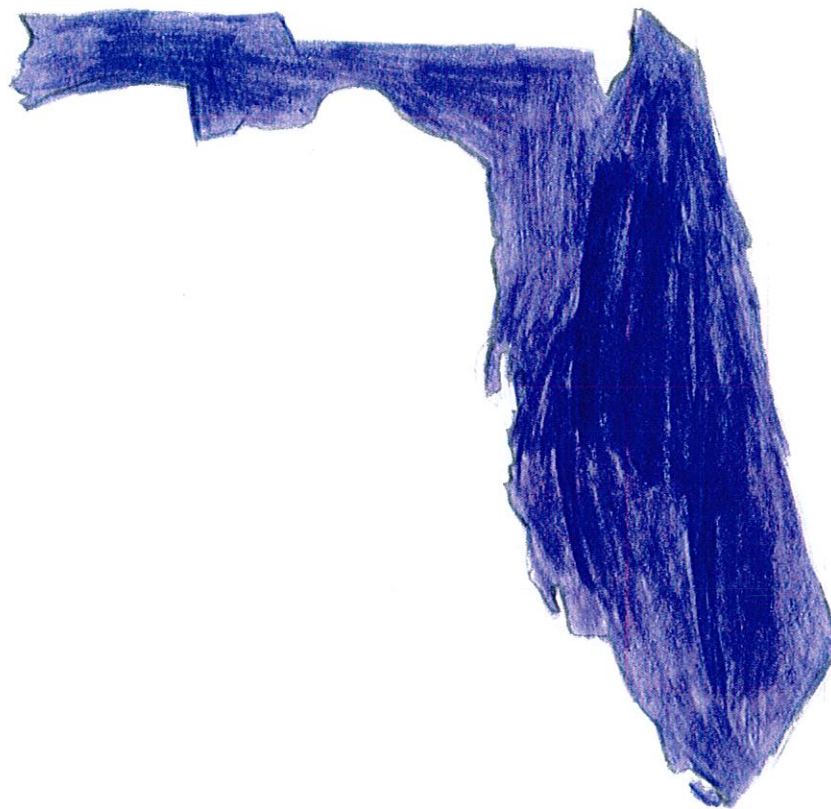
A former Marine who had the flag saw the show and returned it. That's how Ground Zero got the flag back. It is now on display at the 9/11 museum in New York.

I always ask, "What do you stand for?" I stand for letting children know that they are ordinary, but so was everyone else in the world. I stand for ordinary people. If you don't tell kids at a young age that ordinary people can change the world, then they will never change the world.

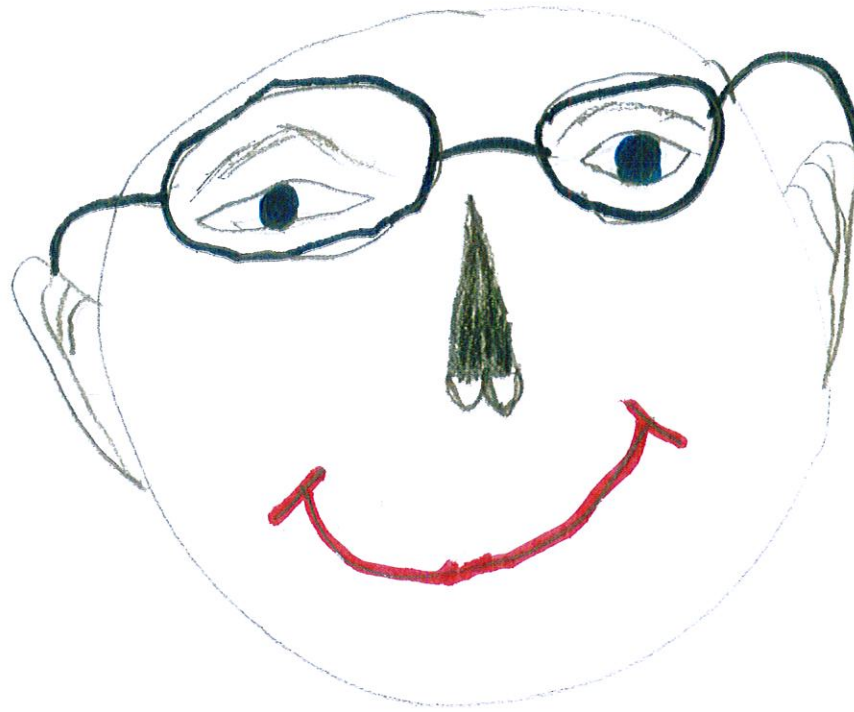


We are all ordinary. We are all boring. We are all spectacular. We are all shy. We are all bold. We are all heroes. We are all helpless. It just depends on the day.

My mother died in 2008, and my father died in 2011. No matter how far we come, our parents are always in us. I now live in Florida with my lovely wife. I've faced challenges, but I've always reached my goal. I hope your goal will be as much of an achievement as my goals have been.



I AM BRAD MELTZER.



Brad Meltzer was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1970 and grew up in South Florida. He writes books about heroes for kids. His newest book for kids is *I Am Jim Henson*. He also writes books for grownups. His newest book for grownups is *The House of Secrets*. He is a #1 New York Times bestselling author. His books have been translated into 25 languages. He also makes comics and TV shows and movies. As he says, "Every life makes history. Every life is a story."

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