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AMERICAN SCHOOL'S FAVORITE AUTHOR
— CHRISTOPHER PAOLINI —

Some students go on to college after they graduate from high school; others enter the job market. Instead Christopher Paolini, who graduated from the American School in 1998, wrote a fantasy novel, *Eragon*, which ended up on the New York Times bestseller list for over 100 weeks. The second novel in his trilogy, *Eldest*, was released this past summer and promptly landed at the very top of the same bestseller list.

Recently, in an exclusive interview from his home in Montana, Christopher talked about the importance of learning, the American School, and his novels.

Christopher stressed that for him learning is “one of the most important things in the world.” It has played a major role in both his life and his novels.

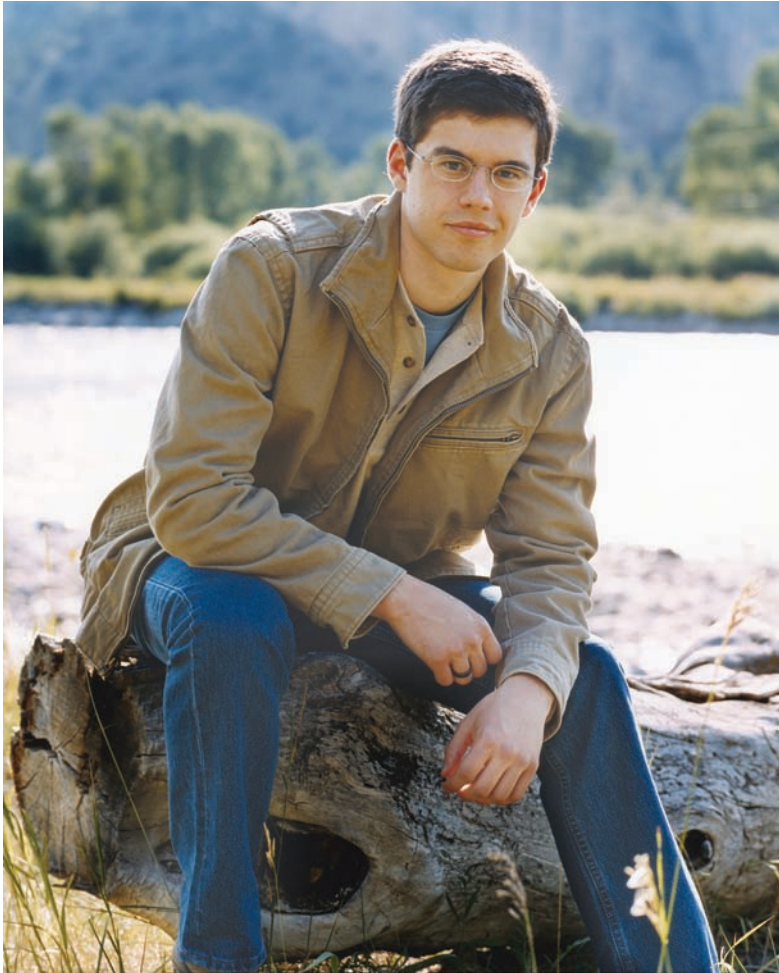
Home schooled from the beginning by his father and mother, a trained Montessori teacher, Christopher and his sister Angela entered the



American School when they reached high school. Initially attracted by the reasonable cost and the accreditation of the American School, Christopher describes his experience with the American School as “wonderful.” It not only allowed him to work at his own pace, but it taught him the self-discipline to learn on his own. He describes it as something of a “breakthrough” when in the middle of working on his American School course materials he realized that he had the ability to walk into a library, pick any subject and teach himself. This “incredible experience” of learning how to teach himself, Christopher feels, helped give him the discipline to write his books.

Not surprisingly, two of Christopher’s favorite subjects with the American School were English Literature and American Literature, which he credits with helping to deepen his love of language by exposing him to so many different writers and styles of writing. Out of this love grew his interest in developing his own languages for the elves and dwarfs in his novels. Other courses which Christopher enjoyed were Drawing Animals and Drawing People. (Christopher draws some of the illustrations for his novels.) Geometry was also a favorite because of its visual nature. Not such a favorite were English grammar courses, but in hindsight Christopher said that he did not, at the time, appreciate how much he “was going to need that later on in my own writing career.”

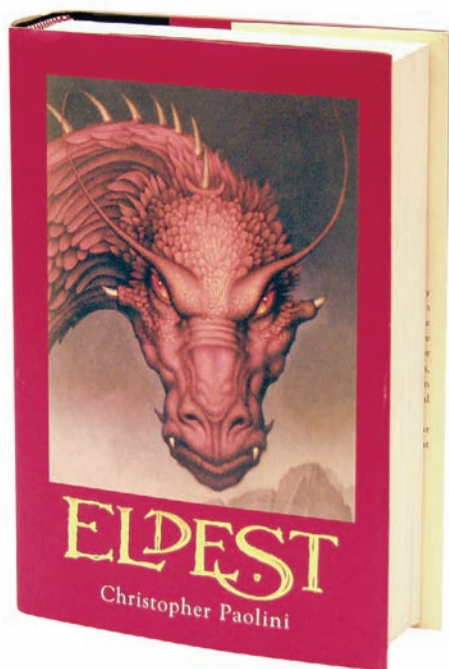
Christopher’s novels definitely reflect the importance of learning. The hero of his novels, Eragon, is “a young man who never stops asking why, he never stops asking questions. . . . really the series is about Eragon’s education and his growth into an adult.” During the first novel, Eragon “. . . becomes intricately linked with this brilliant sapphire blue baby dragon named Saphira and together they go on a series of adventures,” which include duels, battles, villains and romance. *Eldest* deepens and expands both the world and characters around Eragon. In the midst of the fast-paced action there are many practical and moral choices Eragon and other characters in the novels must face, including the issues of trust and loyalty. This grows out of Christopher’s interest in “people’s relationships with their friends and family.”



CHRISTOPHER PAOLINI

Photo credit: Perry Hagopian

To other young writers who hope someday to get published, Christopher gives four pieces of advice. First, “write about what you love the most because writing a book is very hard to do” and caring about your subject matter makes it easier. Secondly, “learn everything you can about the English language because that’s the tool of the trade and the more you know, the less pain you’ll have in editing.” Thirdly, and very importantly, Christopher urges young writers to find someone who can look at their work and provide constructive feedback. Finally, he says, “And never give up. And never ever, ever give up.”



Christopher reports that his whole family is “very, very grateful that American School was available....” Without it, his circumstances would have been quite different and he states “I probably would never have written *Eragon* or *Eldest*.”

These days, while working on the third novel in his trilogy, Christopher still pursues his interest in learning by listening to many college courses on tape. Occasionally he pulls out his old American School textbooks and gains more insight into what he was being taught. His recent trip

to Europe to promote his novels not only led to many questions about home schooling and the American School, but the chance to absorb the feeling of history there “built up in the walls around you.” This sense of history is something he wants to convey through *Eragon* in his third novel.

We at the American School wish Christopher all the best as he completes the third novel in his trilogy. We look forward to seeing the movie based on *Eragon* coming out next year!

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