

I'm so sorry I can't be with you in person to accept this honor. I could not be more thrilled that the readers of Kentucky chose SWINDLE. These are truly the awards that mean the most, since they are chosen by the readers themselves.

I should set the record straight from the outset that the story is not autobiographical. SWINDLE was born while I was doing research for my adventure series. I kept coming across these great books and movies about robberies, which started me thinking about writing a good old-fashioned heist story for a younger audience. The problem was always the same: Robbery is a crime. How can I expect readers to sympathize with kids who are engaged in a criminal enterprise? The reason for the heist had to be so compelling that people would forgive my characters for breaking the law. That's a tall order – unless the protagonists aren't so much stealing something as stealing it back. Presto – kids who have been conned out of a million-dollar Babe Ruth baseball card by an unscrupulous collector launching an elaborate operation to take it back.

By the way, that connection to the good old-fashioned-caper stories we remember from our own childhoods has stuck as SWINDLE has grown into a series. ZOOBREAK, the sequel, is essentially a prison break with zoo animals. And FRAMED - brand new this fall - is a classic "wrong man" story. It has been so rewarding to watch the legions of SWINDLE fans embracing the further adventures of Griffin, Ben, Luthor, and company.

In the spirit of SWINDLE, it would probably be more appropriate for me to break into KRA headquarters and make away with the award under cover of darkness, but I guess that's not such a great idea. So I'll just say how honored, how flattered, and how grateful I am to accept the 2010 Kentucky Bluegrass Award.

**Thank you,
Gordan Korman**