



Show Daily

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Brandon Mull Creates a New Fantasy World

Brandon Mull, author of the *Beyonders* and *Fablehaven* series, charts a new course with *Spirit Animals*, a seven-book, middle-grade fantasy series from Scholastic. Mull created the story arc for the series, which is written by different authors and linked to an online game, and also wrote its first installment, *Wild Born*, due September with a 500,000-copy first printing.

Spirit Animals is set in the world of Erdas, where children go through a ritual to determine if they have a "spirit animal," which represents a bond between human and beast that bestows each with great power. The story centers on four children from different cultures who undergo the ritual and discover they have been chosen for a greater destiny.

Mull was pleased to be asked to spearhead *Spirit Animals*. "I was flattered and excited," he says. "My head lives in the fantasy world, and I thought that this series would be an exciting way to build a new world. This was my first



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“My head lives in the fantasy world.”

—Brandon Mull

project where I didn't come up with the initial premise, though I had the freedom and the privilege to design the world and characters. It is also my first series collaborating with a team of authors.”

Mull has impressive authorial teammates. Subsequent books in the series will be written by Maggie Stiefvater, Garth Nix and Sean Williams, Shannon Hale, Tui T. Sutherland, Eliot Schrefer, and Marie Lu. Mull sees advantages to incorporating multiple writing styles into the series. "It can help keep each book fresh," he says.

After creating the story arc for the series, writing its first installment came quite easily to Mull. "I spent a lot of time developing the world and outlining the series, so once I started writing I felt like I was on familiar ground," he says. "It was a challenge to show the point of view of four diverse main characters, but I connected to each, so none of them tripped me up much."

The author praises the online game component, which partners kids with a kindred-spirit animal. "It seems inevitable to me that as kids have their own online adventures in Erdas, they will become more interested in that world and feel drawn to read the stories that happen there."

Attending BEA for the seventh time, Mull says, "With each passing year, I have more people to see here, and it gets more fun." He signs ARCs of *Spirit Animals* today, 1–2 p.m., at Table 19 in the Autographing Area. —Sally Lodge