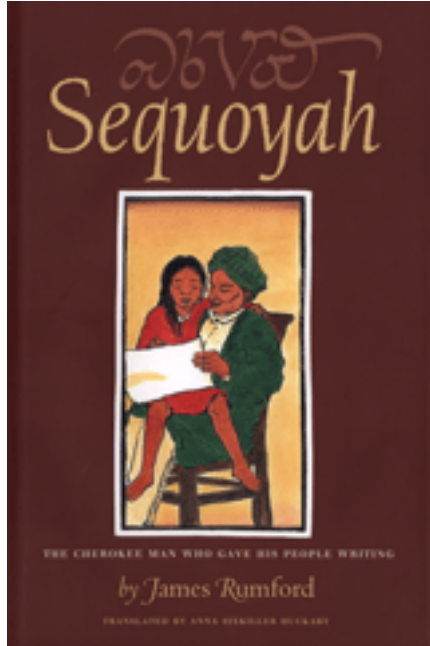


## Press Release



### Sequoyah

by James Rumford

- [About the Book](#)
- [About the Author](#)
- [James Rumford on his passion for creating books](#)

**2005 Robert F. Sibert Informational Honor Book**

### **About the Book**

---

The story of Sequoyah is the tale of an ordinary man with an extraordinary idea — to create a writing system for the Cherokee Indians and turn his people into a nation of readers and writers. The task he set for himself was daunting. Sequoyah knew no English and had no idea how to capture speech on paper. But with quiet, painstaking dedication, and ignoring the jeers and jibes of both his neighbors and friends, he devised a system that surprised the Cherokee Nation — and the world of the 1820s — with its beauty and simplicity. James Rumford's *Sequoyah* is a poem to celebrate literacy, a song of a people's struggle to stand tall and proud.

### **About the Author**

---

Master storyteller **James Rumford** combines his love for art and history in his picture books. Each of his books is vastly different in its content, design, and illustrations, but one aspect remains constant throughout his work: his passion for the subjects he writes and illustrates about. Rumford has studied more than a dozen languages and worked in the Peace Corps, for which he traveled to Africa, Asia, and Saudi Arabia. A year spent working in Afghanistan resulted in a unique opportunity to pursue his love of Arabic calligraphy under the tutelage of a master calligrapher. He draws from these experiences and the history of his subject when he is working on a book. James Rumford lives in Hawaii with his wife and son and runs the Manoa Press. *Sequoyah* is James Rumford's ninth book for Houghton Mifflin.

## James Rumford on his passion for creating books

---

"I love books. I like to write them, illustrate them, and make them. When I finish a children's book, I like to make a handmade book on a similar theme to which I add a touch of humor. I make the paper, set the type, and bind up about twenty or so copies.

When I finished *Traveling Man*, a story about a Moroccan traveler named Ibn Battuta, I started to think about what to do for the handmade book. Nothing came to mind until, one afternoon, I spied this calabash cat sitting on the Shelf of African Things, things we had collected when my wife and I lived in Chad and Rwanda.

The calabash cat was from a town across the river in the Cameroons. It was cut from a gourd and decorated with curious-looking designs burned into its yellow surface with a hot iron tool. I remember bringing the cat back with us across the river in a dugout canoe. But after that, I can't recall anything other than its always being on the Shelf of African Things — unnoticed until that afternoon, when a story appeared in my mind about a cat that takes off to find the impossible: the end of the earth.

The curious-looking designs seemed to come alive, and I began to imagine the other animals the cat would meet on his journey. I called the cat Ibn Bato — a play on Ibn Battuta's name and a common Chadian term for 'house cat.'

Then, when the little book was sketched out, an odd thing happened. I saw the story not just as a limited edition, but as a children's picture book."