



**Episode 510:**

**Guest: Connor Boyack**

**WOODS:** *The Tuttle Twins and the Creature from Jekyll Island* is such a good idea, and I have to say in listening to how you're planning to pitch this and just looking at some of the materials that you're going to be using, I just am more impressed by your work and your instincts all the time. There are a lot of people with great ideas, but terrible instincts for how to promote them or for design or for ad copy or whatever. And what impresses me about you is you've been working with me for a long time doing indispensable web work for me, but you're so much more than that. You can do the web work when necessary; you can do the design; you can write ad copy; you can write books; you can give speeches; you can do marketing. So you're the kind of guy I'm trying to be myself, so I'm really glad, and it's fun, it's thrilling to talk to somebody like you, honestly.

**BOYACK:** I was just going to say, that's the benefit. I have diverse interests, and a lot of other people do, but they don't have the competence in those different fields where their interests lie. I've been very fortunate where I've become kind of a jack-of-all-trades, master of some, and it's nice because if I want to do something, I don't have to hire it out. I don't have to hire a bunch of people. I can kind of bring that in house and try and manage it a lot more to really execute on some of these projects. And they're fun. But even I, myself — I mean, the Tuttle Twins books would be nothing without Elijah. It would be just a simple story read on a paper, and okay, gee whiz, those are a dime a dozen. But the illustrations, as you know, really make these stories come alive. It's been a lot of fun working with Elijah on these.

**WOODS:** Now of course with me, I don't have the skills you do, so when I need a lot of things done, I do have to outsource them. But it's convenient; I can outsource them all to you, because you can do everything.

**BOYACK:** (laughing)

**WOODS:** (laughing) All right, enough of that, enough of that. I want people to know how highly I regard you as a person and all the work you do. Now, I've had you on in the past. We've talked about a bunch of your projects before. This one I like the most, the Tuttle Twins series. And this is something that doesn't matter if you have children or not. This is an interesting project, and the way you're going to be pitching it is very interesting. Let's hold off on *The Creature from Jekyll Island*. I'm sure most people get

the reference, but just in case you don't, the reference to Jekyll Island and the creature from Jekyll Island comes from where?

**BOYACK:** The Federal Reserve was a project hatched at a resort at Jekyll Island, it's an island in Georgia, in the year 1910 by some bankers and politicians. And so G. Edward Griffin in his book called it *The Creature from Jekyll Island*, and so we kind of used that nickname. I should note Griffin is very aware of this book. He loves the concept and loves the early samples that we sent him. It's been a lot of fun getting his insights and feedback on the book as well. But yeah, the creature from Jekyll Island is ultimately a nickname for the Federal Reserve or more generally, as we take it in the book, just central banking generally.

**WOODS:** So this is a children's book that's going to explain to them, well, not the dual mandate of the Fed or anything like that, but the basic idea of the Federal Reserve in terms of the effects that it has on the general public. So that's what I want to talk about today. I want you to set the stage by telling us briefly about the two other books in this series. The Tuttle Twins series, which you can find at [TuttleTwins.com](http://TuttleTwins.com), is and is going to continue to be a series of children's books covering a lot of topics in the spectrum of liberty.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, so our first book is *The Tuttle Twins Learn about the Law*, and it's based on *The Law* by Frederic Bastiat. Elijah, the illustrator, and I when we were reviewing all the different subject matter that we might want to cover in the book, we asked ourselves if we could only do one book, if the market doesn't prove itself, if this becomes more of just a hobby than a business, what one book would we want to create. And for both of us, *The Law* by Bastiat was so instrumental in our intellectual development that we wanted that to be the book for our own children, even if no one else took any interest, we wanted to bring that book into existence. And so that became our first, but the response was phenomenal.

In fact, it was kind of funny. Our theory was that the greatest market would be libertarians who have read these original works and want to share them with their children in an accessible format that a 5-year-old or an 8- or an 11-year-old can understand and wrap their mind around. So we got a book at Freedom Fest, which is the annual libertarian confab out in Vegas every July, and it was really interesting. I mean, a lot of libertarians either don't have kids or whatever. We sold a lot of books; we had a lot of interest; it was fantastic, but then we started going to homeschool conventions, and I mean, it was like incomparable, the response and the interest and everything that we got, versus the libertarian conference.

Mind you, these homeschool moms — because usually they're the moms taking charge of curriculum research and everything — these moms had never heard of Frederic Bastiat, but by virtue of the fact that they're homeschooling, they're very independent-minded. They're always looking for new things for their kids. They believe in freedom, even though they don't understand necessarily what that means. And so they've become our hugest market. We do a lot of advertising in that space, and it does really well in that area.

So we said we've got to keep this series going. There's so much positive response to these books; they're selling really well. So our second book came out in December. It's *The Tuttle Twins and the Miraculous Pencil*, and so that's based on Leonard Read's famous "I, Pencil" essay, talking about economics and the miracle of the market, and how no one knows how to make a simple pencil; it requires the spontaneous collaboration of diverse interests and parties. And so that became our second book to teach young minds about the free market and why it's important, how it works.

This third one of course is teaching monetary policy and inflation, barter, savings, banking, and everything else. And so, as you said, this will continue to go on. We're hoping for about 8 to 10 books, and I mean, the wildly positive response that we've received is just fuel to keep it going, both financially, but even just the support base and the interest and how eager people are to get these books as fast as they can to give to their kids. It has been a ton of fun working on this project.

**WOODS:** Let me tell you why it seems to me this is such a great idea. The obvious thing is that parents need this. It's extremely hard to find books that are aimed at — give me the rough age range here.

**BOYACK:** About 5 to 10 is what we're targeting.

**WOODS:** Yeah, I mean, you can't find — you can find the *Uncle Eric* series by Richard Maybury you can find — you know what? Why don't I put that on the show notes. For older kids, you can find some books, and I've got my 12-year-old reading Peter Schiff's illustrated book, *How an Economy Grows and Why it Crashes*.

**BOYACK:** Yep.

**WOODS:** So you can find that. But for that age range, it's very hard to find. But the other reasons are a lot of times we as libertarians say that the principles we believe in, the basic principles can be understood by children, and they are the principles that you learn as children. You learn "keep your hands to yourself."

**BOYACK:** Don't hurt people.

**WOODS:** Right. But you also learn that "I had it first" is a legitimate moral intuition, that that's okay to think that way. And then secondly, "I, Pencil" encourages wonder in the children, instead of taking the world we see for granted.

**BOYACK:** Totally. Yeah, when we started working on that book it was a lot of fun, because we would sit down at a dinner meal that my wife had prepared, and rather than an idea that this meal just spontaneously came into existence in front of them, we were able to help them understand all the many people and processes that went into that bowl of chili or whatever was for dinner that night. And it turned into a game. We've continued it in our family, where we're constantly talking about, okay, the shirt that you wore today, who helped make that and how did we get it in our family? It does instill a sense of wonder.

For example, I took my kids to the printer that's producing our third book. They've done all of our books. I was able to take my children there last week to tour the facility and watch my book being printed. And my children right now are six and four, and it was phenomenal for them to see this massive machine with the rolls of ink and the paper shooting out at like five or six papers a second and all the different people who were there working on it and the cutting and the folding, and it was just eye opening for them to see that, okay, well, even the very book that teaches about the miracle of the market, here's how it itself is being produced and all the different people.

So really trying to open the eyes of these young children to the world around them, but again, through a fun story. This isn't like a textbook, like okay, here is what division of labor means or medium of exchange, but introducing these concepts in a very fluid format and a fun story so that the kids aren't even necessarily learning or they're not doing it to learn; they're doing it because it's a fun and interesting story, but along the way, they're being introduced to these concepts. And really, our retention rate is super high. You look at the families that buy every single book in our series, and then as we send out surveys and get customer feedback, these kids are reading these books over and over and over again. It's not just a one time read or anything. And so the kids are really learning the concepts and they're applying it to the world around them. And to me, I can't think of a better thing.

I mean, you think of how many hundreds of millions of children are going to government schools right now and how they're being indoctrinated in statism. Why are we punting? Why are we allowing that to happen for two decades before we, as libertarians, reach out to these people and try and educate them. We've kind of defaulted to taking it for granted that children are going to be raised with these socialist ideas. To me I think we need to counter that, and that's kind of the overarching goal of the Tuttle Twins project, is to provide families and the children specifically with an alternative so that they can get that foundation of freedom from a young age. That way, we don't have to spend so much time educating so many people. The work will have been done 5, 10, 20 years ago when we target these folks as children and help provide them that intellectual base that they can build on, rather than having to unlearn everything they first learned before we can teach them correct principles.

**WOODS:** So let's get into this new title of yours, the one on Jekyll Island. One of the key characters in this book — and yes, indeed, I have read the book. Nothing wrong with this. Adults can read books too. And I of course wanted to be prepared for the episode. But the grandfather plays an important role here, and incidentally, governments, one thing they can't stand is older folks, and the reason — at least, revolutions can't stand older folks, because the older folks remember how society used to be.

**BOYACK:** Exactly.

**WOODS:** And a revolution wants to overthrow everything and create a new world. Well likewise, they can remember the old monetary regime, and that is annoying. So it's the grandfather who begins indirectly to get the kids thinking in the book.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, and that was intentional. You know, as you think about one of the most dastardly things that the Federal Reserve does is not just the present manipulation, but it's really the attack on those who have and depend on savings, which is your retired senior citizens largely. I think of my own grandparents, right? You're on a fixed income, and year after year, you see its value eroding, and so I wanted to introduce the grandma and the grandpa into this book and have the story centered around them and their problems.

Right off the bat, the grandparents take Ethan and Emily, who are the Tuttle twins, take them to see a movie, and immediately grandpa's like, oh my gosh, the tickets cost this much these days? They used to be 50 cents when I was a kid. And so immediately we're introduced to this concept that, well, wait a minute. Why have movie tickets increased in cost over 20 times since when grandpa was the same age as the twins? And so little by little we go on sprinkling these ideas before grandpa really opens it up and explains it a little bit more, so we tease it for the kids, and they can begin to understand that a candy bar hasn't always cost 99 cents. I mean, even when I was a teenager — and I'm a young guy; I'm only 33 — the candy bars were 24 cents. I remember I could go to the store and buy one with a quarter. And even now, I go to the grocery store, and you pay a full dollar to get a candy bar. So we want to help these young children understand that prices have gone up, because that becomes the problem that opens us up to what the solution is.

**WOODS:** Now of course, what somebody could say and that I used to think to say to my own grandfather was, yeah, I know all these things cost five cents in your day, but you probably earned \$10 a week, so it was more or less a wash. But the problem was when he was earning \$10 a week and setting aside 10, 20 cents a week for savings, the point is that he obviously can't retire on those savings, because by the time he gets to retirement, prices have risen so much, and yet his retirement share is so small over the years that he can't survive with that amount of purchasing power.

Now, this creature image that is invoke here by G. Edward Griffin in his original book is put to quite vivid use here in you children's book, because of course when a child hears "the creature from Jekyll Island," he doesn't think, oh, this is a reference to G. Edward Griffin's treatise on the Federal Reserve, right?

**BOYACK:** Yeah, we definitely wanted to have some fun with that, and this book of the three is a little bit darker and edgier. By no means is it scary, but we wanted to use the symbolism quite literally of the creature and help the children imagine, well, what if there was this actual creature that could change prices and was going around stealing people's money, pickpocketing grandpa and stealing his savings. And that's what these children understand when they're first being told that, oh, there's this creature from Jekyll Island that's stealing your grandpa's savings. They begin to envision this actual creature doing it.

So we have some fun with that in the book, and the kids can kind of, well, what if this creature could go and literally like scribble off prices on a sign at the county fair that they're at. So we have some fun with the imagery of the creature. Again, we're trying to take this, not from the academic, 50-year-old, like, let's understand what the Federal Reserve is and isn't, but from the mind of a six-year-old and say what could this creature do and how scary would that be. And so we do. We have a little fun with it, and again, it weaves into part of this fun story, so that the kids, yes, they're learning the principles and ideas, but it's a fun story along the way, so for them it's just easy reading.

**WOODS:** So the creature is responsible for making prices go up. They get that basic idea. And you've got different ways of trying to convey this lesson, explaining how it can be that prices rise because of this thing.

**BOYACK:** You know, that's the tough thing about these books, Tom, is that you're having to find ways to explain admittedly difficult and complex ideas. They have simple principles at their base, but they get kind of muddled down in the history of it and how things have unfolded. And so to try and reduce that down to the level of an eight-year-old has been admittedly difficult, but a fun challenge to say, well, if you're going to explain this, whether to an adult who's a complete ignoramus or a young child, it's kind of the same idea. How can you get at the very bare-boned concepts?

To me, the reason I love focusing on grandpa in this story is that it gets to Bastiat's that which is seen and that which is not seen or *Economics in One Lesson*, where Hazlitt expounded upon this idea that bad economists don't focus on the long-term unintended consequences. They keep out of sight the impacts that they can't calculate and quantify. And to me I think that's part and parcel of what central banking has done with those who depend on savings like Grandpa Tuttle, where his problems are very real and very specific and very keenly felt, but no one pays attention to that. When Janet Yellen and her Board of Governors are tweaking at the interest rate, they can't contemplate, they don't comprehend the impact it's going to have on very real people.

So towards the end of the book, we give other examples to help the children understand that the concepts that we're talking about have a very real negative impact. The twins' father — maybe it was the mother — shares that, oh hey, we had these neighbors that lost their home, and that's kind of why. The creature was able to make the prices go up, and then the prices fell, and they didn't survive that, and they lost their home, and that this causes very real problems.

And so by introducing these, we're trying to help counteract that effect of not paying attention to things that aren't seen so that the kids can understand there are consequences of these actions. It's not just should there be more money or should there be a central bank. It's, well, what is the actual effect. What is the creature actually doing? Not just is it good to have a creature, but how is it impacting the lives of everyday people, whether their own grandpa, their neighbor, or whoever.

**WOODS:** You also talk in here about the advantages of gold and silver. Again, if you can convey that on even a basic level to kids of this age, that's an incredible accomplishment.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, and it was fun to go into the history of money too, of course, with the barley and the seashells and other forms of money throughout history, so that we can help kids understand that it hasn't always been the Monopoly money that you see today. And so we do mention gold and silver. We highlight some of its valuable characteristics. We have this fun drawing — to me the best drawing is the one where you see the king and creature combining together to shave off the edges of the gold coins so that the king can steal gold and make new coins to give to his buddies and enrich the elite class. To me that is like the magnum opus of the Tuttle Twins series so far, is to see the fusion of those two processes. And so you do get into that, but then the kids learn, well, why do we have the bumps around the ridges of coins, and that became kind of a counterfeit protection measure for these coins.

And then we even introduce kids to other stuff. We talk about bitcoin in this book and how people are trying to introduce creative ways to get around the creature's tentacles, to stay away from its power and be able to trade with one another without being controlled by the creature, and so we talk about other products as well, rather than just bitcoin. But again, this is a very simple introduction. We can only pack so much into a 60-page book, but again, the idea is with kids reading this over and over, and then we have an activity workbook that they can do as well, we're trying to help children understand this stuff.

And frankly, the best part of these books becomes when the kids read these simple stories and then they ask their parents tough questions or they have a discussion in their family about, well, why does this work this way and how can we do this, and the parents themselves are now being challenged or at least having to think through these concepts and why do we have a Federal Reserve and is this okay; why shouldn't we be using gold; maybe we should change our savings from one based in dollars to something else. It becomes fun as we get feedback from families and see how this is actually changing their behavior and their lives. Rather than, oh, here's a nice book to teach you this idea, it fosters some important conversations that are getting people to really reconsider the way they do things.

**WOODS:** Connor, let's take a minute to say something about the illustrator, Elijah Stanfield — you mentioned him a couple of times in the beginning — who does such a tremendous and beautiful job illustrating this book. And I want to mention this in particular, because there's a phenomenon among libertarians and sometimes among Christians, where libertarians will do something, like, they'll make a movie and they'll say this is a libertarian movie. It's terrible. The production quality is terrible, the acting's terrible, the script is wooden, but hey, it's a libertarian movie, so you've got to go out and support it. So you know, you think maybe out of a grim sense of duty, maybe I'll go out and support it. Or there'll be a movie that Christians will make, and they'll say this is our Christian movie. And you watch it, and it's all schmaltz. But they say, well, it's a Christian movie, so open up your wallet.

In your case, you've taken the Tuttle Twins, and you've executed it in such a way that it's not just a good, libertarian children's book; it's a good children's book, period. It's good on the industry's terms and on its own terms.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, you know, I have colleagues, friends who have done children's books, and the illustrations are pretty juvenile. They're very simple. They look like they spent about 10 minutes per page. Elijah just shared with me, and I posted it on our Tuttle Twins Facebook page about a week ago, a video showing the process that's involved with starting from the very basic sketches, turning them into the refined pencil drawings, doing the first color layer, doing the texture layer — I was blown away by how long it takes. And I always feel bad, because I'm always pushing him — Elijah, we've got to get this book out; we've got to get it done. But when you see how much detail is put into these books — and what I love about Elijah is he's not just drawing what I tell him. He himself is very likeminded. He's also got kids, and so he's often giving me ideas and saying what if we included this and what if this character did this. It makes the story that much better. And I'll tease this: every book that Elijah has done, he puts in fun little Easter eggs into the drawings, and so a lot of kids really like trying to find — my kids just have a field day with this, trying to find every tiny little thing that Elijah put into the drawings that, at first read, you don't really notice, you don't see as there. It becomes fun to try and find those different things.

So it is great to have Elijah on board, because I can go out and get any illustrator and just pay him a fee and get it done, but for both of us, this is really a labor of love. I mean, my full-time job, I run an organization, a think tank called Libertas Institute — I know you know, but your listeners may not. And we spend all of our time trying to persuade adults to embrace liberty or persuade legislators to repeal this law. And we're very successful. We've had a lot of success. But imagine if we didn't have to do nearly as much as we do or if we were further down the road than we are, because 10 years ago, somebody had gone out to all the schools and given teachers free copies of these books, and these children had been exposed to these ideas 5, 10, 20, 40 years ago. We would be so much better. We would have a great strategic advantage today, because the population base of people exposed to or supportive of libertarianism would be that much greater.

And so for me I see this as an investment down the road to say not only is this going to improve your life, your child's going to understand better, your family's going to have some really fun conversations, but think of what the future of this movement is going to be, and now that these kids are being exposed to these ideas years before they get to adult age where normally people are getting exposed to your or to Ron Paul or Bastiat or whatever, to me, my imagination runs wild thinking of what the future of the movement is going to be by this contribution from Elijah and I. As I said, it's such a labor of love. We do it for our own children. They're really our customers. But it's so heartening to hear of all the different families that we're impacting, and I'm excited — again, that which is not seen. I have no idea what the consequences of this are going to be down the road, but my imagination does run wild at the positive impacts this is going to have for all of us.



**WOODS:** I want to have you say something about the promotion strategy that you were telling me about before we started, how you want to pitch this, and it's not just by saying, hey parents, here's a great book for your kids, although that's a perfectly respectable way of doing it. But you have a creative idea that I really like.

**BOYACK:** So I'll share that one and then another really quick. Last night we were bouncing around different ideas. One is we're thinking we might go record a child actor or even try it with one of my kids speaking into the camera to Janet Yellen or to Ben Bernanke and saying, hey, listen up, what you're doing is wrong, and I'm going to explain to you why, and have a three-year-old or a six-year-old deconstruct the entire Federal Reserve and say I learned in this book that I read last week that what you're doing is evil and you're stealing my grandparents' money, etc., etc. So we think it might be fun to do a little bit of a viral video like that.

Another thing that my wife suggested we might explore doing here in the next couple of weeks if maybe you've seen on Facebook or wherever these videos where teenagers are given a rotary phone or they're given a typewriter. They're given these things that we're familiar with from decades ago, and they film their reaction to it, like what is this thing, how do you use this? You have to turn the knob in a circle to get this to work? And it's hilarious to see the reactions of kids. So we thought it might be fun to get some kids on film and show them a \$100 trillion Zimbabwe note and see their reaction, like, oh my gosh, I'm rich. Or maybe we offer them, would you rather have this gold coin or this \$100 trillion note and see which they choose, and just have some fun with the kids, getting their actual reactions to some of this stuff, and have that be a marketing pitch.

So we're looking for some creative ideas, because as I said, we can go out to all the people who've read *Creature from Jekyll Island* or who want to audit the Fed — I mean, really our Ron Paul population is kind of our natural base in terms of familiarity, but we're so confident in the impact these books can have, even just from our limited testing within the homeschool community, that now that we've got three books in the series, we're going to try to amp it up marketing wise and reach a really broader population, bring some new people into the movement. Rather than just have the second-generation echo chamber by going after the kids of people who already agree with us, let's cast the net widely, see where it leads. And so we're looking for some fun ideas that we can do that. Certainly if your listeners have any ideas, we're very accessible. TuttleTwins.com, there's a little contact link. We're trying to step up our game and increase the impact that these books can have.

**WOODS:** All right, so TuttleTwins.com is where people want to go to get these books. I'll have that link plus other things that we talked about. I'll have links relating to you and your work. I'll have those books that I mentioned for kids who are a little bit older, but even the older kids I think can still benefit from these, and they can also read them to the younger kids. I mean, there are so many things you can do with these. So we'll have all this up at [TomWoods.com/510](http://TomWoods.com/510). And best of luck with this. It's so great. Are you able to share with us — I don't want you to steal your own thunder,

so it's okay if the answer is no. Are you able to share with us any future ideas for the series?

**BOYACK:** Yeah, so we're trying to toy around with — this is a ton of work, to produce this book, and so if past is indicative of present and future, Elijah and I are going to kind of take a break from working on these. I ramp up all the marketing and production distribution and everything, but it is a ton of work, and so we'll probably take a little break from it. But we're thinking future books might include a book centered around the non-aggression principle and the Golden Rule.

We might do one where the Tuttle Twins — right now they're in a government school. If you remember the first book, they're sitting in class with Mrs. Minor. So we're thinking it might be fun to do a book where they tour the Sudbury school or an Acton Academy or something, and their parents decide to pull them out of school, homeschool them or unschool them, and introduce people to the problems with oppression model of education and why that's important. So we might do an education-centric book.

Let's see, what are some other thoughts that we had? We might do one where the Tuttle Twins go to Congress, and so they see some more of the inner workings behind what's going on. But anyways, we're debating lots of ideas. In terms of our next book, it'll probably be the one centered on the non-aggression principle. We've got some fun ideas up our sleeves that I don't want to give away quite yet, but our three books that we have right now are phenomenal. Again, we would love people to pick up some copies at [TuttleTwins.com](http://TuttleTwins.com), and Tom, thanks to you for helping spread the word. It's been a lot of fun seeing the impact these books can have, and we think we can take it even further.

**WOODS:** It's such a great idea. I'm so excited about it. I have the first two books myself. I have the other one in PDF so far, hint, hint, and I've been sharing them with my own children, so I'm really delighted to be able to play a role in this. Best of luck, and everybody check out [TuttleTwins.com](http://TuttleTwins.com). Thanks, Connor.

**BOYACK:** Thanks again, Tom.