

# Prairie Wind

Newsletter of the Illinois Chapter of SCBWI



Fall 2018



Illustrator in the Spotlight >

## From the Editor

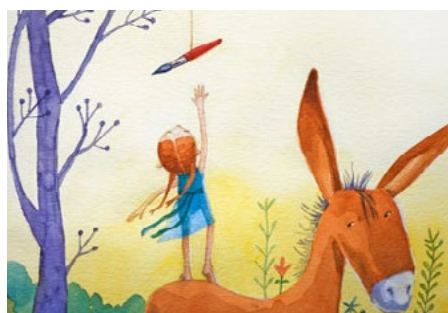
Somehow fall back-to-school always puts me in the mood to start a project. The problem is I don't always have a project to start. Our issue is full of material that will perhaps inspire you and, I hope, get you started.

What better place to start than with our two illustrator articles full of gorgeous artwork. Our [Illustrator in the Spotlight](#) is **Diana Sudyka** who tells us... >



### Hello, Wonderful SCBWI-Illinois Friends

SCBWI has burrowed itself into my heart," says **Sara Shacter**. >



### A Picture-Perfect Story via SCBWI

"I always say I used to be a border collie in a previous life. I'm good at organizing other people" says **Terri Murphy**. >

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### Tales from the Front

**John Sullivan** took 30 years to publish his first book...



### News Roundup

**Kelly Darke** compiles events, award-winning books and grants...



### Season's Crop

**Alexandria LaFaye** has the Fall 2018 crop...



### Don't Miss

**PWID Take Flight:** October 27  
**Wild Wild Midwest:** May 3–5, 2019



### Writing Tips

**Patricia Hruby Powell's** writing tip concerns metaphors and similes...



### Illustrator Tips

**Andy Prahin** uses **Ludwig Bemelmans' Madeline** to help overcome self-doubt...



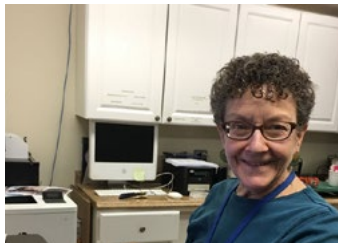
### Writer's Bookshelf

**Jennifer Kaap** reviews *The Creativity Project* by **Colby Sharp**...



### Book Look

**Katherine Ryan** looks at two recent pictures, *Circle Rolls* and *The Rabbit Listened*...



### The Inside Story

**Carol Coven Grannick** has left her day job...



### Perspectives

**Eric Arnall's** 8-point plot formula works best for him...



### Illustrator in the Spotlight

**Diana Sudyka** tells us how the birth of her daughter sparked her career...



### Voices of Change

**Susanne Fairfax** writes that diversity initiatives benefit not only the marginalized...



### Classes

Visit [illinois.scbwi.org/area-classes-retreats-and-workshops/](http://illinois.scbwi.org/area-classes-retreats-and-workshops/).







## From the Editor

Somehow fall back-to-school always puts me in the mood to start a project. The problem is I don't always have a project to start. Our issue is full of material that will perhaps inspire you and, I hope, get you started.

What better place to start than with our two illustrator articles full of gorgeous artwork. Our [Illustrator in the Spotlight](#) is **Diana Sudyka**, who tells us among other things how the birth of her daughter sparked her career. "I have always wanted to illustrate picture books, and now I was getting a real education in what was out there from reading them all with our daughter."

And have you ever noticed that **Ludwig Bemelmans's** *Madeline* has different-colored hair on different pages? **Andy Prahin** has and uses it to help overcome self-doubt in his amusing [Illustrator Tip](#). (And see if you agree with Andy's agent that the image he doesn't like is his best. I do.)

**Patricia Hruby Powell's** [Writing Tip](#) concerns metaphors and similes. She shows how even clichéd similes can be refreshed and used effectively and how a metaphor can carry a whole book.

**Katherine Ryan's** [Book Look](#) looks at two recent picture books, *Circle Rolls*, written by **Barbara Kanninen** with illustrations by **Serge Bloch**, and *The Rabbit Listened*, written and illustrated by **Cori Doerrfeld**. The first is a concept book, while the second has a traditional story arc.

For [Writer's Bookshelf](#), **Jennifer Kaap** reviews *The Creativity Project* by fifth-grade teacher and book and creativity advocate **Colby Sharp**. Jennifer writes that this book can spark the creativity of an individual, a class, or a critique group. "The *Creativity Project* is a collection of prompts and responses from forty-four children's book creators including **Kate DiCamillo**, **Linda Sue Park**, **Dav Pilkey**, **Gary Schmidt**, and **Lemony Snicket**... This book gives you eighty-eight prompts to stretch your imagination and develop your own material."

Our [Tale from the Front](#) comes from **John Sullivan**, who took thirty years to publish his first book, *Kitten and the Night Watchman*. He writes about what that experience taught him about the meaning of happiness: "publishing a first book [brings] a great feeling of relief, but it doesn't last for long."

Next **Carol Coven Grannick** gives us a momentous [Inside Story](#). Carol has left her day job! "It was the right time to leave the extraordinary early childhood center where I

worked. Even though I miss the children, the faculty, and my boss and friend, the principal, I knew that I needed to leave the day job that I loved." Now she will turn that love to her writing.

**Eric Arnall's** [Op-Ed](#), "On Your Way to Being Published," is about plot. What do you do if you have voice, characters, but no plot? Eric test-drives the various approaches that others have devised and he concludes that the "8-point plot formula" works best for him. He provides resources so you can see which approach works best for you.

**Susanne Fairfax's** [Diversity Initiatives](#) column is titled "Voices of Change." Susanne writes that diversity initiatives benefit not only the marginalized but also the mainstream: "I can tell you that my engagement with this work has enhanced my life and improved my writing."

Thank you to **Alexandria LaFaye** for compiling [Season's Crop](#), to **Kelly Darke** for [News Roundup](#), to **Sallie Wolf** for updating us on [Food For Thought](#), and to **Jenny Wagh** for [Don't Miss](#). Finally we have two farewells, from **Sara Shacter**, who is retiring as Assistant Regional Advisor, and from **Terri Murphy**, who will no longer be serving as Illinois Illustrator Coordinator. "I will keep supporting SCBWI-Illinois. How could I not? From my first position as Chicago Network Rep (a frighteningly long time ago...), to Program Chairperson, to Assistant Regional Advisor, SCBWI has burrowed itself into my heart," says Sara. "I always say I used to be a border collie in a previous life. I'm good at organizing other people. Stepping down from the posts I held at SCBWI will allow new talent into the mix, and time for me to more effectively organize myself," says Terri. Read their eloquent goodbyes here.

Finally, thanks to Amy Alznauer, Cedric Gliane, and Jenny Wagh for making this issue possible.

**Susan Tarcov**, Editor

**Amy Alznauer**, Managing Editor

**Jenny Wagh**, Editorial Advisor

**Cedric Gliane**, Webmaster



# Greeting

## *Hello, Wonderful SCBWI-Illinois Friends!*

Over the past nine years, as Assistant Regional Advisor for our chapter, I have been awed by your fabulousness. I have witnessed the talent, kindness, generosity, creativity, whimsy, hilarity, and strength that make our chapter the best SCBWI chapter in the world. (And because SCBWI is an international organization, I literally mean the world!)

I see the posts on Twitter, Facebook, and our listserv, congratulating friends when books are born, supporting one another when rejection looms large, and sharing opportunities to develop both craft and career. I am inspired by your selflessness and perseverance, and I am thankful for the legions of SCBWI-IL members whose volunteer efforts make the gears of our chapter spin.

You are the reason why it's hard for

me to say that on December 1, I will be stepping down as ARA. Family obligations, an uptick in my writing career, and a new venture working to end Chicago violence ([Help Heal Chicago](#)) all mean that something has to give.

But, as **Dylan Thomas** sort of said, "I will not go quiet into that good plot twist!" I'll tell anyone who will listen how my life has been enriched by the kind souls of Illinois.

One of those kind souls is **Jenny Wagh**. A longtime volunteer for our region, she will be stepping up to become SCBWI-Illinois' new ARA. Her brains, welcoming nature, and passion for our chapter's members are second to none.

I will keep supporting SCBWI-Illinois. How could I not? From my

first position as Chicago Network Rep (a frighteningly long time ago...), to Program Chairperson, to Assistant Regional Advisor, SCBWI has burrowed itself into my heart.

I would like to leave you with one thought: you too can get involved.

The more involved you are with our chapter, the more you will see your career – and your life – transformed. Contact Jenny, or one of our Regional Advisors (**Deborah Topolski** and **Alice McGinty**) to see what needs doing. Have a suggestion? Let them know!

You are the lifeblood of our chapter. Make the heart of SCBWI-Illinois beat.

Thanks for everything.

**Sara Shacter**

## *A Picture-Perfect Story via SCBWI*

By Terri Murphy



Art by Terri Murphy

### The Beginning

Once upon a time in the Land of Hopes and Dreams, an aspiring children's book illustrator walked into her local SCBWI writers' meeting and became the resident expert illustrator. She didn't feel like an expert. She was a beginner! After a few meetings, this thought came: *What if there are other "resident expert" illustrators at other local SCBWI meetings?* Would they want to form an illustrators group? So began my voyage of discovery fifteen years ago. Within two months, I visited all the local writers' meetings.

The answer was "YES!" Many illustrators wanted to meet! There was a hunger to emerge from the hovels



Chesterton Gallery SCBWI Illustrators show, presentation & auction

of our studios and learn more about the craft. We yearned to speak of our dreams and aspirations face-to-face and to see how others structured and balanced their careers. We recognized ourselves in each other. We found our tribe. The SCBWI Illustrators Network was formed and I became the SCBWI





Network Rep for the Chicago Area, and later the Illustrator Coordinator for Illinois.

## The Middle

Balancing family life and a professional one is a juggling act, and during those fifteen years, SCBWI and the responsibilities for the Illustrators Network kept me grounded and focused in my craft. Working closely with my co-reps, first the talented and wonderfully organized **Christine Thornton** and, following her, the skilled and knowledgeable **Janet McDonnell**, made the monthly planning easier. Most illustrators are comfortable in their studios, but stepping outside and into an SCBWI role is a mind-expanding experience.



*Patrick Girouard, Christine Thornton and Jeff Ebbler*



*Janet McDonnell and Terri Murphy*

Finding a core group of like-minded creators, we hit the ground running. Together we learned how to give and receive illustration critiques. Occasionally bringing writers into the fold, they read their picture book manuscripts and we gave our visual

impressions. We learned to rely on each other when panels were formed to discuss picture books, publishers or agents. Since practice makes perfect, we practiced public speaking, giving art demonstrations, presenting our newest books and painting and sketching outdoors. We learned how books are nominated for Caldecott awards by having our own mock Caldecott. One year was dedicated to learning how and what to submit to the annual Bologna Children's Book Fair in Italy by having bi-monthly focus meetings and critiques. We hired agent and editor speakers as well as experts on topics like licensing, website building, digital illustration, educational publishing, social media and promotion. Sprinkle in some field trips and it was a solid



*Larry Day gives an art demo*



*Brad Cornelius and sketchbook*

lifelong learning extravaganza, building deep friendships along the way.

As Illustrator Coordinators, Janet and I organized a charity auction of our members' donated artwork to benefit the victims of Haiti's earthquake. We learned how to host our own illustration



*Falecia Woods gets some tips from Jordan Kost, art director*



*Former Bologna Book Fair judge Jeffrey Garrett critiques*

conferences, with all that entails, as well as assisting with an illustrator's point of view in planning the PWID annual conference. We held our first twitter chat with two agents.

All this experience gave the beginning illustrator who walked into her first SCBWI writers' meeting the confidence to explore her own artistic style, to manage her career, and find opportunities from the connections and friendships formed. It was through an SCBWI lead that I connected with my first publisher, Bright Sky Press, and ended up illustrating two books for them. It was through another SCBWI friend connection that I landed my first agent. The public speaking that I struggled with got a workout at SCBWI meetings and was fine-tuned at an outside course I took. It allowed me to have the confidence to do school visits to promote my books. Just recently I was the featured speaker, showcasing my iREAD art posters to kick off the 2018 summer reading program for the Illinois Library Association.





*Art director John Aardema reviews our portfolios*



*Art Benefit Auction*



*Terri Murphy books*



*Day-long Illustrator conference with Matt Faulkner*



*Speaking at ILA Conference*

## The End

If you're a picture book creator, you know page 32 is the final page. It's the one that neatly wraps it all up. The "and it was still hot" page of "Where the Wild Things Are." Last year I stepped down as Chicago Area Network Coordinator for the illustrators group and handed the reins to the very capable **Rich Green**. Now it's my final curtain bow as Illinois Illustrator

Coordinator for SCBWI. I will pass the baton to the clever and accomplished **Cedric Gliane**, who will lead Illinois Illustrators in new and uncharted directions! I always say I used to be a border collie in a previous life. I'm good at organizing other people. Stepping down from the posts I held at SCBWI will allow new talent into the mix, and time for me to more effectively organize myself. I thank the SCBWI Regional team throughout the years

who have always supported a larger role for illustrators in Illinois, and especially Janet McDonnell, Illustrator Network Co-Coordinator, who always made planning events more fun than it was work.

Wanting to do one last thing before I hang my hat, I recall that beginning illustrator who first walked into her SCBWI meeting with hope in her heart and dreams in her head. I want to give her (or him) a leg up. With the full support of the SCBWI Illinois Regional Team, we are launching our first Illustrator Mentorship Award, which will be given to a promising illustrator on the verge of publication. The chosen artist will work hand in hand with a mentor, building on strengths and addressing weaknesses. This year, our mentor is the award-winning author/illustrator **Larry Day** ([www.larrydayillustration.com](http://www.larrydayillustration.com)), whose talent is surpassed only by his generosity. He has illustrated twenty picture books, both fiction and nonfiction, and has won the SCBWI Golden Kite award as well as three gold medals from the Society of Illustrators. You've most likely seen his "Little Lincoln" character in all its versions for our chapter publications and promotions. We are honored and thrilled to have him as our first mentor. You can find the requirements and application for the Illustrator Mentorship Award here: <https://illinois.scbwi.org>

And with that I close the book, say adieu, and...





# News Roundup

## Fall 2018

Compiled by Kelly Darke

### EVENTS

#### ANDERSON'S BOOKSHOP

Information is subject to change; some events require tickets. For more information on these and other upcoming events, visit [www.andersonsbookshop.com](http://www.andersonsbookshop.com) or call 630-355-2665 for ANDERSON'S Naperville (123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville) and ATDE (Anderson's Two Doors East, 111 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville) or 630-963-2665 for ANDERSON'S Downers Grove (5112 Main St., Downers Grove) or 708-582-6353 for ANDERSON'S La Grange (26 S. La Grange Rd., La Grange).

- **September 17 – Drew Daywalt & Scott Campbell**, authors of *Sleepy the Goodnight Buddy*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S La Grange. PB.
- **September 18 – Ginger Johnson, Steve Bramucci, Mary Winn Heider and Varian Johnson**, authors of *The Splintered Light* (G. Johnson); *The Danger Gang and the Pirates of Borneo* paperback (Bramucci); *The Mortification of Fovea Munson* (Heider); *The Parker Inheritance* (V. Johnson), 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. MG.
- **September 19 – Dylan Thuras**, author of *The Atlas Obscura Explorers Guide for the World's Most Adventurous Kid*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S La Grange. Nonfiction.
- **September 20 – Daniel Jose Older**, author of *Dactyl Hill Squad*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. MG.
- **September 24 – Laurie Forest**, author of *The Iron Flower*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S La Grange. YA.
- **September 24 – Trudi Truiet**, author of *Explorer's Academy: The Nebula*

*Secret*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. MG.

- **September 26 – Maggie Hall**, author of *The Ends of the World*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. MG.
- **September 27 – Loren Long**, author of *There's a Hole in the Bottom of the Lake*, 6:30 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. PB.
- **September 28 – Andrew Smith**, author of *Rabbit & Robot*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. YA.
- **October 2 – Young at Heart Book Group** discussion of *Lovely, Dark and Deep*, by **Justina Chen** (who will be attending this meeting!) at 6:30 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove.
- **October 2 – Melissa Savage**, author of *The Truth about Martians*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S La Grange. MG.
- **October 3 – Jennifer Holm**, author of *The Third Mushroom*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. MG.
- **October 4 – Andrea Beaty**, author of *Rosie Revere and the Raucous Riveters*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. PB.
- **October 5 – Lauren Oliver**, author of *Broken Things*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. YA.
- **October 9 – Kate Milford**, author of *Bluecrowne*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. MG.
- **October 10 – Marie Maranda Cruz**, author of *Everlasting Nora*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S La Grange. MG.
- **October 10 – Ruth Spiro & Holly Hatam**, author and illustrator of *Made by Maxine*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. MG.
- **October 11 – Megan MacDonald**, author of *Judy Moody and the Right Royal Tea Party*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. PB.
- **October 11 – Laini Taylor**, author of *Muse of Nightmares*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. YA.
- **October 12 – Benji Pasek, Justin Paul & Val Emmich**, authors of *Dear Evan Hansen: The Novel*, 7:00 p.m. at Community Christian Church, 1635 Emerson

Lane, Naperville. Tickets exclusively at [DearEvanHansenAndersons.brownpapertickets.com](http://DearEvanHansenAndersons.brownpapertickets.com). Presented by ANDERSON'S Naperville. YA.

- **October 15 – Julie Kagawa**, author of *Shadow of the Fox*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. YA.
- **October 21 – Anderson's Bookstore Teacher Open House** for teachers, parents, educators and all those who love children's literature. Pre-K–grade 5, 2–3 p.m.; Grades 6–8, 3:15–4:15 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. Please RSVP to hold your place.
- **October 21 – Sharon Draper**, author of *Blended*, 2:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. MG.
- **October 21 – Angela DiTerlizzi**, author of *Add More Glitter*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S La Grange. PB.
- **October 23 – Anderson's Bookstore Teacher Open House** for teachers, parents, educators and all those who love children's literature. Pre-K, 4–5 p.m.; Grades K–5, 5:30–6:30 p.m.; Grades 6–8, 6:45–7:45 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. Educators, please RSVP to hold your place.
- **October 24 – Anderson's Bookstore Teacher Open House** for teachers, parents, educators and all those who love children's literature. Pre-K, 4–5 p.m.; Grades K–5, 5:30–6:30 p.m.; Grades 6–8, 6:45–7:45 p.m. at ANDERSON'S La Grange. Please RSVP to hold your place.
- **October 24 – Aaron Renier**, author of *Unsinkable Walker Bean and the Knights of the Waxing Moon*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. MG.
- **October 25 – THIS EVENT IS SOLD OUT! Sarah J. Maas**, author of *Kingdom of Ash*, 7:00 p.m. at Community Christian Church, 1635 Emerson Lane, Naperville. Tickets at: [SarahJMaasAndersons.brownpapertickets.com](http://SarahJMaasAndersons.brownpapertickets.com). Presented by ANDERSON'S Naperville. YA.
- **November 1 – Hena Kahn**, author of *Bounce Back*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. MG.





- **November 7 – Laurie Keller & Alan Silberberg**, authors of *Potato Pants* (Keller) and *Meet the Latkes* (Silberberg), 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. MG.
- **November 7 – Jennifer Armentrout**, author of *The Darkest Star*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S La Grange. YA.
- **November 8 – Julie C. Dao**, author of *Kingdom of the Blazing Phoenix*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. YA.
- **November 9 – Kenneth Oppel**, author of *Inkling*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Downers Grove. MG.
- **November 9 – Marissa Meyer**, author of *Archenemies*, 7:00 p.m. at a location to be determined. YA.
- **November 18 – Sherri Duskey Rinker**, author of *Construction Site on Christmas Night*, 2:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. PB.
- **November 30 – Ryan T. Higgins**, author of *Santa Bruce*, 7:00 p.m. at ANDERSON'S Naperville. PB.

## TEEN READ WEEK

**When:** Oct. 7–13, 2018.

**Details:** This year's theme is "It is written in the Stars: READ." Teen Read Week celebrates reading for fun and encourages teens to take advantage of reading in all its forms.

**For more information:** <http://www.teenreadweek.ning.com>

## ILA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**When:** Oct. 9–11, 2018.

**Where:** Peoria Civic Center, Peoria, IL.

**Details:** The Illinois Library Association (ILA) Annual Conference is attended by librarians, trustees, library assistants, educators, and others interested in libraries.

**For more information:** Visit <http://ila.org>.

## ANDERSON'S BOOKSHOP 15th ANNUAL YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE CONFERENCE

**When:** Oct. 20, 2018.

**Where:** Details to come.

**Cost:** TBA. (all-day conference includes author sessions, continental breakfast, and plated lunch); reservations required.

**For more information:** Click on the YA Conference tab at <http://www.andersonsbookshop.com>.

## SCBWI-ILLINOIS ANNUAL PRAIRIE WRITER'S & ILLUSTRATOR'S DAY

**When:** Oct. 27, 2018, 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

**Where:** Wojcik Conference Center, Harper College, Palatine, IL.

**Cost:** \$165.00 for members, \$205.00 for nonmembers (additional opportunities for writers and illustrators available for additional cost, see website for details)

**Details:** The annual conference for SCBWI-Illinois.

**For more information:** see <https://illinois.scbwi.org>

## 42nd DAY OF READING CONFERENCE

**When:** November 30, 2018, 9:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

**Where:** Tinley Park Convention Center, 18451 Convention Center Drive, Tinley Park, IL

**Cost:** Based on membership status and which events are attended; see website for prices.

**Details:** This conference, presented by the Secondary Reading League (SRL), focuses on literacy for grades 6–12. It is primarily for librarians and educators. Keynote speakers include Cris Tovani, Author of *No More Telling as Teaching*, and other essential literacy education texts.

**For more information:** <http://www.dayofreading.org>

## AWARDS

### BOSTON GLOBE–HORN BOOK AWARDS

#### Winners:

Fiction & Poetry:

- *The Poet X* by **Elizabeth Acevedo** (HarperTeen)

Nonfiction:

Photographic:

- *The Life of Graciela Iturbide*, written by **Isabel Quintero**, illustrated by Zeke Peña (Getty)

Picture Book:

- *They Say Blue*, written and illustrated by **Jillian Tamaki** (Abrams)

#### Honors:

Fiction & Poetry:

- *The Parker Inheritance*, by **Varian Johnson** (Levine/Scholastic)
- *The First Rule of Punk* written and illustrated by **Celia C. Pérez** (Viking)

Nonfiction:

- *A Hundred Billion Trillion Stars*, written by **Seth Fishman**, illustrated by **Isabel Greenberg** (Greenwillow)
- *The 57 Bus*, by **Dashka Slater** (Farrar)

Picture Book:

- *When's My Birthday?* Written by **Julie Fogliano**, illustrated by **Christian Robinson** (Porter/Roaring Brook)

*A Different Pond*, written by **Bao Phi**, illustrated by **Thi Bui** (Capstone)

**For more information:** <http://www.hbook.com>





## GRANTS & CONTESTS

### GOLDEN KITE AWARDS

**What:** These awards for published books are given annually to recognize excellence in children's literature for fiction, nonfiction, picture book text, and picture book illustration. Available to all current SCBWI members who are renewed through at least 2/1/19

**Deadline:** Entries must be received by NOVEMBER 15, 2018 (for books published July–December 2018).

**For more information:** <http://www.scbwi.org/awards/golden-kite-award/>

### JANE YOLEN MID-LIST AUTHOR GRANT

**What:** The grant awards \$3,000 to midlist authors and aims to help raise awareness about their current works-in-progress.

**Deadline:** Entries are due by Nov. 1, 2018.

**For more information:** <http://www.scbwi.org/awards/grants/jane-yolen-mid-list-author-grant/>

### SID FLEISCHMAN HUMOR AWARD

**What:** Award for authors of published books whose work exemplifies excellence of writing in the genre of humor. Books nominated for the Sid Fleischman Humor Award are still eligible to receive the Golden Kite Award but must additionally be submitted for that award according to the guidelines.

**Deadline:** Books published July 2018–December 2018 must be received by November 30, 2018.

**For more information:** <http://www.scbwi.org/awards/sid-fleischman-award/>

### SCBWI MAGAZINE MERIT AWARDS

**What:** These awards are given to published, original magazine work for young people in the areas of fiction, nonfiction, illustration, and poetry.

**Deadline:** Entries must be submitted on or before Dec. 15, 2018.

**For more information:** <http://www.scbwi.org/awards/magazine-merit-award/>

### SCBWI ON-THE-VERGE EMERGING VOICES AWARD

**What:** This grant is given to two writers or writer/illustrators who are from an ethnic and/or cultural background that is traditionally underrepresented in children's literature in America.

**Deadline:** Entries must be submitted between September 15 and November 15, 2018.

**For more information:** <http://www.scbwi.org/awards/grants/on-the-verge-emerging-voices-grant/>

### SPARK AWARD

**What:** This award recognizes books self-published either through an established self-publishing enterprise or individually self-published. Available to all current SCBWI members who are renewed through at least April 2019.

**Deadline:** Entries must be received by Dec. 15, 2018.

**For more information:** <http://www.scbwi.org/awards/spark-award/>

### SCBWI NARRATIVE ART AWARD (formerly the Tomie DePaola Award)

**What:** Each year, a rotating panel of judges will provide an assignment and will judge the submissions. The theme and specific assignment will change year-to-year, but the general goal will be to show sequence and narrative. The prize is an all-expense-paid trip to the SCBWI New York Winter

conference. The winning illustrations will be displayed during the New York Portfolio Showcase (in conjunction with the conference). We will also have an online gallery displaying the submissions to the award for any member who submitted to the award and wants to participate.

**Deadline:** Submissions are due by midnight, PST, September 17, 2018.

**For more information:** <http://www.scbwi.org/scbwi-narrative-art-award/>

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*Kelly Darke is a mathematics educator and aspiring picture book writer. She blogs at [www.mathbookmagic.com](http://www.mathbookmagic.com) about math picture books that inspire wonder and joy.*



# Tales from the Front

## *Happiness, First Books, and Kitten and the Night Watchman*

By John Sullivan

It was 1988 when I first sent a picture book manuscript to a publisher. It is 2018 as I await the September release of my first book. In the course of trying to publish a single picture book, I grew old, literally.

A few months before Simon & Schuster accepted my story, I was working as a night watchman in a little guard shack. The foreman stopped by and, in the middle of the night, we talked about happiness.

I said that I would be happy if one of my manuscripts were accepted for publication.

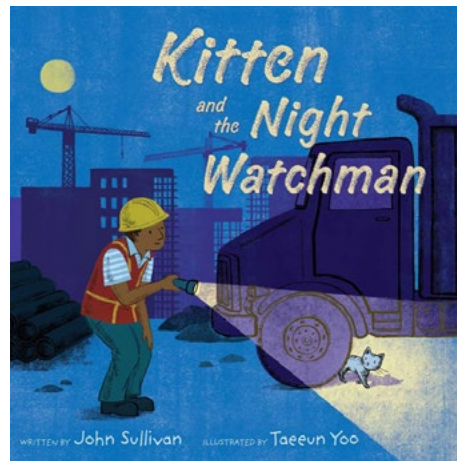
The foreman dismissed that notion, saying that a book would give me short-term satisfaction, not the substantial contentment of happiness.

When I got the good-news phone call from the publisher, my supposed happiness lasted for about four hours. Then the day turned into one remarkably like any other.

Two years later, after my next thirty manuscripts were rejected, an acquaintance, seeing how dejected I was, asked me if I regretted that my one story had been accepted. I told her yes, I wish it had never been accepted. My life had gotten much worse after its acceptance, since every subsequent rejection tended to prove that my one success had nothing to do with talent. It was simply a lucky accident, a fluke. It didn't mark a beginning to writing success; it marked an end to a dream.

Fast forward another year, when I saw what editor **Sylvie Frank** and illustrator

**Taeun Yoo** had done with the manuscript, and my mood dramatically changed again. Of course I'm glad I collaborated on *Kitten and the Night Watchman*, even if my debut book turns out to be my swan song. And it is a collaborative effort. Where would an editor or a writer or an illustrator be without the other two?



So what are the lessons? One is that if you're waiting for happiness to strike like lightning, you'll be waiting forever. Everyone has heard stories about lottery winners whose lives worsened after they won millions, or wealthy politicians who ruin their lives with needless scandal, or seemingly carefree people who end up as suicides. If there's a key to happiness, it's surely gratitude for whatever we already have. But while it's easy to get into the habit of thanking God every time we wake up, living a grateful life for the next sixteen waking hours is another thing. There is no path to happiness, as **Wayne Dyer** used to say. Happiness is the path.

At one point in the story, the watchman is too worried to read

because he doesn't know where the kitten is. When the kitten shows up, the watchman hugs it and it's clear that he loves it. But he loves it in the way that a human being loves a lovable animal. That's a little like publishing a first book. There's a great feeling of relief, but it doesn't last for long. And it sure isn't happiness. Happiness is more nearly like an adult bringing a kitten home as a first pet for his kids, one of the great joys in childhood and something the kids will always remember. And a custom the kids may carry on when they have their own kids. If you seek happiness for yourself, as the adage goes, you'll never find it. If you seek happiness for others, you'll find it for yourself.

It's after I look over the finished book and see those themes reflected that I think, maybe those were some ideas inside of me that wanted to come out. It's in the process of writing that ideas like those do come out, even though the writer may not be directly thinking about them at the time he writes his story.

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**John Sullivan** earned a master's degree in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago. His work has appeared in *Frogpond*, *Modern Haiku*, *Ladybug*, and the *Lee Bennett Hopkins* anthologies *Incredible Inventions* and *America at War*. His first children's book, *Kitten and the Night Watchman*, with Simon & Schuster, is scheduled for release on September 25. He has been a warehouseman, mail handler, laborer, and night watchman. He has been single all his life and currently lives with five cats, all former strays.





# Season's Crop

## Fall 2018

Compiled by Alexandria LaFaye

### Board Books – Fiction

- *Hide-and-Seek on the Farm*, by **Heidi Bee Roemer**, illus. **Tim Budgen**, Highlights, Aug 2018
- *Mine: A Counting Book about Sharing*, by **Caryn Rivadeneira**, illus. **Amanda Gulliver**, Beaming Books, Aug. 2018
- *The Twelve Days of Christmas in Illinois*, by **Gina Bellisario**, illus. **Jeffrey Ebbeler**, Sterling, Sept. 2018

### Board Books – Nonfiction

- *Baby Loves Green Energy!* by **Ruth Spiro**, illus. **Irene Chan**, Charlesbridge, Oct. 2018
- *Baby Loves Structural Engineering!* by **Ruth Spiro**, illus. **Irene Chan**, Charlesbridge, Oct. 2018

### Picture Books – Fiction

- *Crunchy, Not Sweet*, by **Amy Ward**, KWiL, Sept. 2018
- *The First Reindeer*, by **Susan Barker**, illus. **K. C. Snider**, Guardian Angel, 2018
- *The Gift of Words: How Do Children Learn to Talk?* by **Talmage M. Steele**, Book Baby, June 2018
- *It's Not Fair: A Book about Having Enough*, by **Caryn Rivadeneira**, illus. **Isabel Muñoz**, Beaming Books, Aug. 2018
- *Kitten and the Night Watchman*, by **John Sullivan**, illus. **Taeun Yoo**, Paula Wiseman/S&S, Sept. 2018
- *Made by Maxine*, by **Ruth Spiro**, illus. **Holly Hatam**, Dial, Oct. 2018
- *My Papa Is a Princess*, by **Doug Cenko**, Blue Manatee Press, Sept. 2018
- *No Frogs in School*, by **A. LaFaye**, illus. **Eglantine Ceulemans**, Sterling, Aug. 2018
- *Owls Are Good at Keeping Secrets*, by **Sara O'Leary**, illus. **Jacob Grant**,

Random House, Dec. 2018.

- *When God Gave Us Words*, by **Sandy Eisenberg Sasso**, illus. **Darcy Day Zoells**, Flyaway Books, Sept. 2018
- *The World Never Sleeps*, by **Natalie Rompella**, illus. **Carol Schwartz**, Tilbury House, July 2018
- *ZZZookeeper*, by **Dr. John Hutton**, illus. **Doug Cenko**, Blue Manatee, Sept. 2018

### Picture Books – Nonfiction

- *Otis and Will Discover the Deep*, by **Barb Rosenstock**, illus. **Katherine Roy**, Little Brown, June 2018
- *Struttin' with Some Barbecue: Lil Hardin Armstrong Becomes the First Lady of Jazz*, by **Patricia Hruby Powell**, illus. **Rachel Himes**, Charlesbridge, Dec. 2018
- *Through the Window: Views of Chagall's Life and Art*, by **Barb Rosenstock**, illus. **Mary Grandpré**, Knopf, Sept. 2018

### Chapter Books/Early Readers – Fiction

- *Camp Hero Double Trouble* (Ellie Ultra Series), by **Gina Bellisario**, illus. **Jessika von Innerebner**, Arch Books, Sept. 2018
- *Super Spooked* (Ellie Ultra Series), by **Gina Bellisario**, illus. **Jessika von Innerebner**, Arch Books, Sep. 2018
- *Rosie Revere and the Raucouc Riveters*, by **Andrea Beaty**, illus. **David Roberts**, Abrams, Oct. 2018
- *The Wrong Shoes*, by **Caryn Rivadeneira**, illus. **Graham Ross**, Beaming Books, Aug. 2018

### Chapter Books/Early Readers – Nonfiction

- *Jordan* (Country Profile Series), by **Amy Rechner**, Bellwether Media, Aug. 2018

### Middle Grade – Fiction

- *Because of Khalid*, by **Carolyn Armstrong**, Tiger Stripe, Sept. 2018
- *Courage*, by **Barbara Binns**,

HarperCollins, July 2018

- *Ethan Marcus Makes His Mark*, by **Michele Weber Hurwitz**, Simon and Schuster/Aladdin, Nov. 2018
- *Field Tripped*, by **Allan Woodrow**, Scholastic, Aug. 2018
- *The Phantom Tower*, by **Keir Graff**, Putnam, Aug. 2018
- *Speechless*, by **Adam P Schmitt**, Candlewick, Nov. 2018

### Middle Grade – Nonfiction

- *Countdown: 2979 Days to the Moon*, by **Suzanne Slade**, illus. **Thomas Gonzalez**, Peachtree, Sept. 2018
- *Delores Huerta Stands Strong: The Woman Who Demanded Justice*, by **Marlene Targ Brill**, University of Ohio, July 2018
- *Melting Glaciers, Rising Seas*, by **Tara Haelle**, Rourke, July 2018
- *Turning Up the Heat*, by **Tara Haelle**, Rourke, July 2018
- *Thrilling Thieves: Liars, Cheats, and Cons Who Changed History*, by **Brianna DuMont**, Sky Pony, July 2018

### Young Adult – Fiction

- *All That I Can Fix*, by **Crystal Chan**, Simon Pulse, June 2018
- *Art Seen*, by **PJ Gray**, Saddleback, Nov. 2018

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**A. LaFaye** is the author of over a dozen books for young readers, including *No Frogs in School* (Sterling), which is in this Season's Crop. She also wrote the Scott O'Dell Award-winning *Worth* (Simon and Schuster). She is an associate professor of creative writing and children's literature at Greenville University and in the low-residency MFA in writing for children and young adults at Hollins University. You can learn more about her at [www.alafaye.com](http://www.alafaye.com) or [www.facebook.com/alafayeauthor](https://www.facebook.com/alafayeauthor) or on Twitter or Instagram @artlafaye



## Food For Thought

Food For Thought is occasional programming for published SCBWI members (both PAL and indie/self-published). It is usually scheduled on a Saturday morning, and we move the location around the Chicago area to try to give everyone a break on transportation.

Previous FFT programs have included a presentation by **Rachael Ruiz** on book trailers and one by an agent demystifying royalty statements.

Watch the List Serve and Illinois SCBWI.org website for future Food For Thought programs. Email [salwolf@comcast.net](mailto:salwolf@comcast.net) with program ideas.

## Don't Miss

### *Prairie Writer's and Illustrator's Day*



#### When

Saturday, October 27

Registration begins at 8:00, program runs from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

#### Where

Wojcik Conference Center,  
Harper College  
1200 W. Algonquin Rd.  
Palatine, IL 60067

#### Hankering for...

- sessions on craft and business?
- critiques and portfolio reviews from industry professionals?
- opportunities to mix and mingle with colleagues?
- manuscript and illustration contests?
- opportunities for both new and published writers/illustrators?

Then don't miss Illinois' 2018 annual conference!

#### Faculty

- **Russell Busse** – Associate Editor, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers
- **Adriana Domínguez** – Agent, Full Circle Literary

- **Barbara Fisch** – Co-Principal, Blue Slip Media
- **Esther Hershenhorn** – Author
- **Jim Hoover** – Associate Editor, Random House Children's Books
- **Michael Joosten** – Associate Editor, Random House Children's Books
- **Kelly Light** – Author-Illustrator
- **Claudia Guadalupe Martínez** – Author
- **Eileen Meyer** – Author
- **Sherri Duskey Rinker** – Author
- **John Sanford** – Senior Art Director, Cricket Media
- **Sarah Shealy** – Co-Principal, Blue Slip Media
- **Weslie Turner** – Assistant Editor, Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic
- **Deborah Warren** – Founder and Agent, East West Literary Agency

More details will be available at our chapter's website: [illinois.scbwi.org](http://illinois.scbwi.org). Hope to see you there!

### *Wild, Wild Midwest Conference*

Wild, Wild Midwest is an SCBWI, multi-chapter, weekend-long conference. Hold these dates on your calendar: May 3–5, 2019!





## Writing Tips

### Metaphors and Similes

By Patricia Hruby Powell

#### Metaphors

A good metaphor makes my mind leap, flies me over a landscape, then sets me down in a soft landing. Metaphors take “show-don’t-tell” to a higher level.

Consider **Nina LaCour’s** *We Are Okay* (Dutton 2017) (winner of the 2018 Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature). Marin, the protagonist, says, “It was terrifying, the idea that we could fall asleep girls, minty breathed and nightgowned, and wake to find ourselves wolves.”



If this were a werewolf story, this line would be clunky—prosaic. But it’s not a werewolf story, it’s realistic fiction. One day we’re children, then we fall in love, discover our sexuality and we become something wild and dangerous. Wolves. What a mind-soaring metaphor!

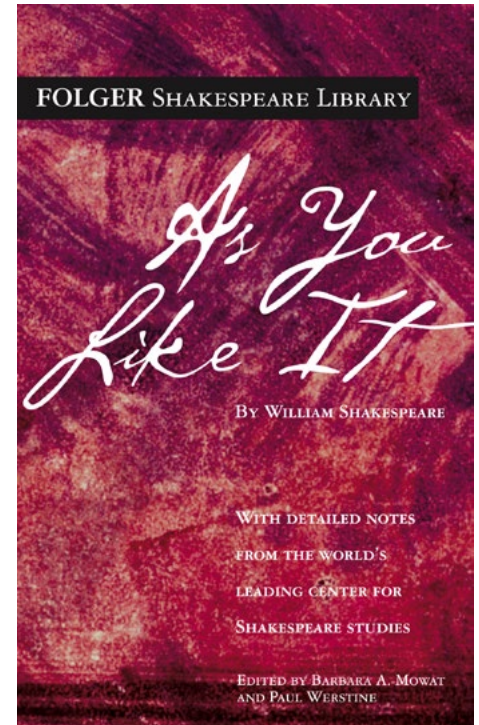
One dictionary defines metaphor as “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.”

There are famous, frequently quoted metaphors, such as **Shakespeare’s** “All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances . . .” from *As You Like It*. We enter at birth, play a child, a wife, a writer, a whatever, and then we exit in death. What kind of child? Writer? Whatever? It depends on your role. Because Shakespeare was a great thinker, this is still a great observation about human life.

#### Cliché or Dead Metaphors

There are cliché metaphors, such as “it’s raining cats and dogs.” Obvious advice would be, avoid those clichés. But that’s too simple. Speaking as a person who likes to bend rules, what if you have a character who speaks in lots of clichés because he’s annoying; or a character on the spectrum who is trying to make the nonliteral more literal. She piles up metaphor clichés. That’s sort of fun. And funny. She says, “I’m the black sheep of the family. My brothers eat sausage but I eat kale.” “I tried to sneak out of the party, but I stepped in the ice bucket and got cold feet.” “My dad ate so many kettle chips, watching TV, that he turned into a couch potato.”

Or you could play with those cliché or “dead” metaphors and say, “it’s raining rats and frogs.” Or you could develop a gufus or simply hypercreative character who gets clichés wrong and says, “I’m the purple sheep of the family.” “I got luke-warm feet.” “My dad is a couch rutabaga.” Old metaphors are fun to



play with to develop characters or show a character’s quirkiness, creativity, or humor.

#### Sustained Metaphors

Not only can a metaphor be a word or a phrase, it can be sustained in an ongoing passage. *Lilli de Jong* (Doubleday 2017) by **Janet Benton** is an adult book but could definitely be read as a young adult novel. Besides which the great **Richard Peck** (RIP) said, “We write by the light of every story we have ever read.” You’ve heard it before: Read everything—in and out of your genre. Read the best.

Anyway, Lilli (de Jong) is a young Quaker woman in 1890 Philadelphia who gets pregnant and is abandoned by her fiancé. She gives birth in a home for unwed mothers and is pressured to give



up her child and never look back. She says,

“I consider the lie that will underpin my own life... We each have our own version of that lie. It’s the currency with which we buy our return ticket to society.”

The lie is “currency.” That’s the metaphor. Then Lilli has an epiphany. She sees herself on the deck of a boat for which she has just purchased passage. A wave pulls her overboard. She can breathe underwater. She feels ecstatic. A lie would buy her passage into society, but when she’s washed overboard she envisions a different life path. This path has her consider keeping her child.

Several pages later, the lie becomes a simile, first cousin to the metaphor. “The lies spread like a layer of lard beneath my skin.” More about similes in a moment, but can’t you just feel that lie under your skin—its greasy distasteful existence enveloping you?

A metaphor can carry a whole book, as it does in my own *Josephine*:

*The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* (Chronicle 2014). In fact an earlier title was “Vive la Volcano: Josephine Baker.” In the end, I kept the sustained metaphor but not the title. On the first page, Josephine “erupted into the Roaring Twenties/—a VOLCANO.” When Josephine experienced rioters—whites against blacks—cross into her neighborhood...

Fear grasped hold of her heart  
and squeezed tight  
the core of a volcano.  
Anger heated and boiled into  
steam,  
pressing HOT  
in a place DEEP IN HER SOUL.  
Later she’d let the steam out  
in little poofs.  
POOF!  
a funny face.  
That used to be fear.  
POOF!  
She’d mock a gesture.  
That used to be anger.  
She’d turn it into a dance.  
AH, VERY WITTY.

That volcano metaphor runs through the story. “Deep-trapped steam FLASHED and WHISTLED.” She slid like “BLACK LAVA.” “Sparks flew.” In earlier drafts, I’d used similes instead of metaphors, saying Josephine was *like* a volcano. But in an SCBWI workshop, editor **Carolyn Yoder** of Calkins Creek suggested using metaphor to give the piece more muscle. She was right. (Going to workshops and receiving critiques is an important part of the learning process.)

### Similes

Using simile—a comparison of one kind of thing to another, using *like* or *as*—is pretty fun, too. I’ve often thought of similes as slightly prosaic metaphors, but they can be powerful ways to “show.”

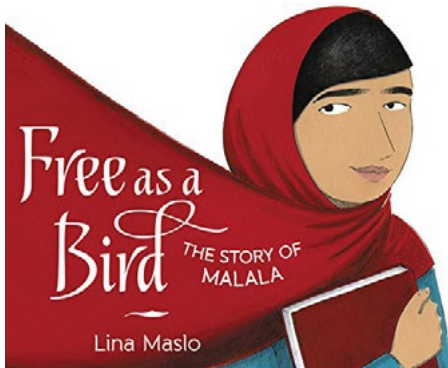
**Sheila Turnage** in her Newbery Honor book, *Three Times Lucky* (Dial 2012), has Mo say, “my stomach rolled like a dead carp.” Disgusting. Funny. Perfect. Or she describes a boy walking toward a pretty girl, “like he was sleep walking.” Can’t you see the smitten guy, too young to have learned to mask his desire, floating in puppy love? Many men never learn to mask their desire. Consider the hilarious *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine* (Penguin 2017) by



**Gail Honeyman.** About a 35-year-old man, Eleanor says, “He couldn’t take his eyes off Laura, I noticed, apparently hypnotized rather in the manner of a mongoose before a snake.” “In the manner of” is the “like” or “as” in this simile.

In the picture book *Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala* by **Lina Maslo** (Balzer & Bray 2018), the title is a simile. In the story Malala’s father says, “Malala will be free as a bird!” This, of course, is the story of the Pakistani girl whose government forbade education for girls. After recovering from the attempt made on her life, Malala has spoken around





the world for all girls (and boys) about their right to be educated. Her father's wish for her daughter came true. She is free as a bird.

Similes are a great exercise to use in the classroom. One of the finest I've encountered was in a fourth-grade classroom from a "naughty" boy. We were brainstorming on various similes. I requested a simile for "The man is as bald as \_\_\_\_." A boy answers, "A lightbulb." Perfect. Not only is a lightbulb fuzz-free, it's shaped like a head. So it gives us a very accurate visual. Huzzah for the naughty boy. Of course, as lightbulbs have become spirals, this particular simile has a limited shelf life or might have to be relegated to historical pieces—in the waning days when we use lightbulbs shaped like heads.

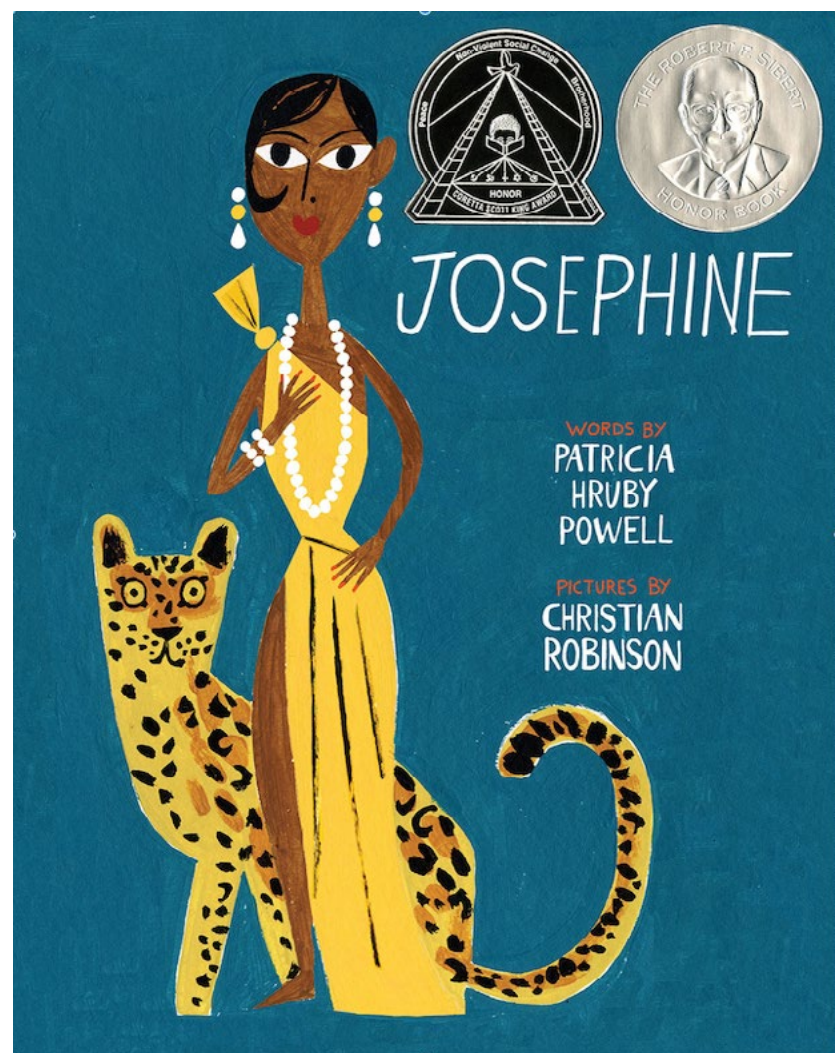
### Personification

A personification is an implied metaphor—the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristic to something nonhuman—as is used in **Matt Killeen's** *Orphan Monster Spy* (Viking 2018). In 1939 Germany, Sarah is a young blond Jewish girl spying in an elite Nazi girls school. Of her longed-for safety, we are told, "Sarah seized on this longing and strangled it, squeezing its pitiful and pathetic neck. She was not safe." This unattainable desire for safety (nonhuman) is made human by giving it a neck that she must squeeze and strangle. Pretty cool.

**Emily Dickinson** famously said, "If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry." That's how I feel about a great metaphor. And great similes. After all, metaphors, similes, and personification are all poetic devices.

Stretch us in your writing. Take us somewhere new, somewhere we've never been before—and perhaps you the writer has never been before. I love it when a writer makes me see something that I've always known but never articulated. Metaphors can do that. Make your readers leap. Make them feel the top of their heads were taken off.

**Patricia Hruby Powell**, formerly a dancer, storyteller, and librarian, is the author of the upcoming *Struttin' With Some Barbecue: Lil Hardin Armstrong Becomes the First Lady of Jazz* (Charlesbridge, December 2018), a Junior Library Guild Selection, as well as *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* (Chronicle, 2014), which garnered Sibert, Boston Globe Horn Book, and Bologna Ragazzi Honors, and *Loving vs. Virginia* (Chronicle, 2017), a Junior Library Guild Selection and Arnold Adoff Poetry Honor. Forthcoming are books about Ella Baker and about women's suffrage. She has been a mentor for *We Need Diverse Books* and SCBWI-MI. She teaches "Writing for Children and Teens" at Parkland College in Champaign. Visit Patricia at [talesforallages.com](http://talesforallages.com).





# Illustrator Tips

## Overcoming Self-Doubt In Illustration (Or, An Essay That Everyone Will Probably Find Worthless)

By Andy Prahin



Illustration 1

### Doubtful

Hello, there. I spent 9 hours on this illustration of two unwashed, down-on-their-luck sailors (see Illustration 1).

I just lied to you. I know, this gets us off to a bad start, but please hang in there.

I actually spent 9 hours on this illustration of two unwashed, down-on-their-luck sailors (see Illustration 2).

Here's the thing: I'll often spend a huge stretch of time on an illustration like the latter, but in my head it looks like the former. I sometimes get overwhelmed with self-doubt. Sound vaguely familiar?

### A Common Problem

Almost every illustrator I speak with or "listen to" through social media has



Illustration 2

experienced self-doubt about the quality of their output. This includes seasoned professionals with multiple high-profile books and projects under their belts.

If you're not one of these types who occasionally questions their abilities or work, well done! Stop reading at this point to avoid learning about things that can sometimes cause doubt. In fact, if you read on, you'll be opened up to an entire world of professional uncertainty you've never considered. Reading this article as a confident illustrator will almost certainly ruin your career.

Are they gone? Good. While poking around the Internet for this article, I read that those who don't experience self-doubt are probably megalomaniacs.

Okay, we well-adjusted people will continue.

If you do experience doubt, you know how derailing it can be. So it's good to know a few ways to overcome that uncertainty.

What follows are four-ish common doubt scenarios coupled with tricks I've built up over the years to counter that doubt. My insights might be very helpful to you. But then again, what qualifies me to provide advice to a bunch of people I don't know? And what if I'm not able to translate my experiences with doubt into words that are useful?

I'll kick things off with the original scenario detailed in my intro.

### Doubting the Quality of a Particular Illustration

*"I've spent half a day trying to draw this hoagie sandwich and it looks like Charlie Chaplain's foot. It's an abomination to visual taste."*

My go-to form of self-doubt isn't the broad, ego-shattering "I have no business doing what I do" self-doubt (which I get into later), it's a focused, nagging issue.

We can spend hours smashing our heads against a particularly tricky layout or pose or character study or whatever. We just don't believe that what we're focused on is any good. Luckily, this one has an easy fix.

Walk away.

If you've got some breathing room on your deadlines, go do something



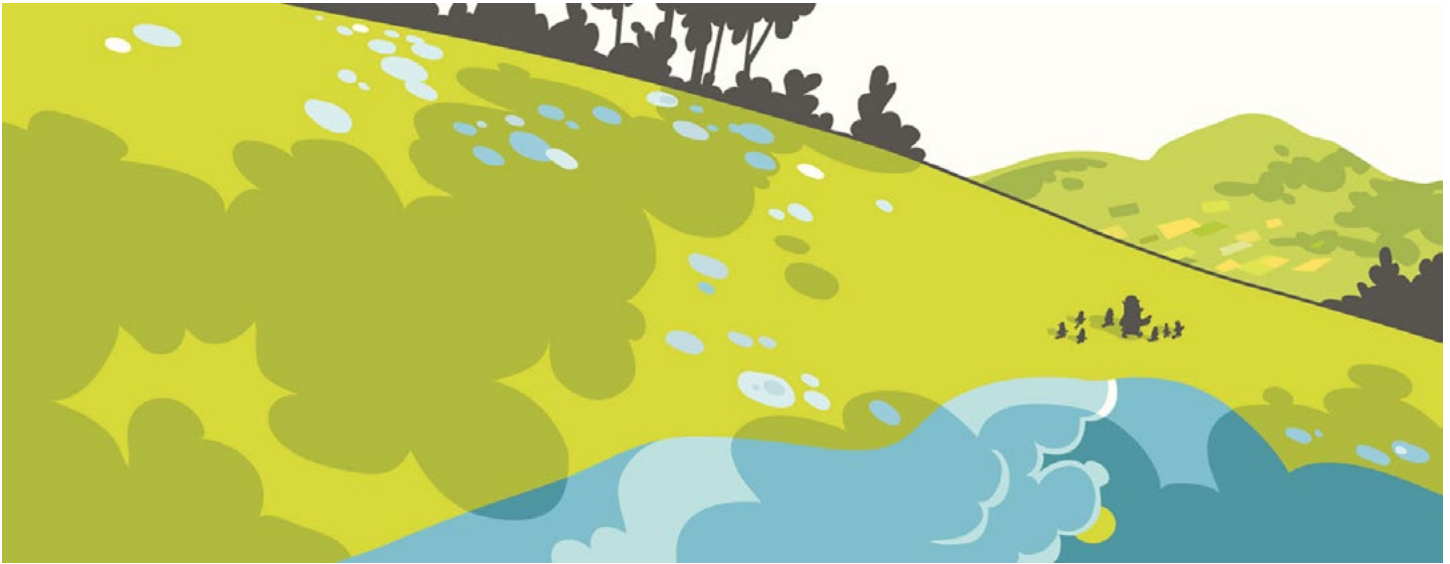


Illustration 3: I really don't like this artwork of mine, but maybe you will

you enjoy, like going outside. Or do something you haven't done in a while, like sleep.

If you're up against an inflexible timeline, shift to another spread or another aspect of your work.

The funny thing is that I'll often return to the offending work after sleeping on it to realize that it's actually quite good. It was simply that I'd gone down a rabbit hole of minute detail obsession and exhausted my ability to judge what was in front of me. You know, forest for the trees, or something like that.

And if I return and it's not quite good, the time away has allowed me to come at it with a fresh perspective. Usually, a few options for visual solutions arrive quickly after reengaging with the work. I suspect our subconscious continues to work at art issues while we sleep or watch period dramas or whatever. Thank you, subconscious, I'll supply you with a fresh supply of material on Netflix later tonight.

When you find yourself repeatedly doubting whether an in-progress piece of work is good enough, you can stay at it and burn piles of hours, but at what

cost? Your time is precious. Spend it wisely.

### **Doubting Your Ability When Compared with Others**

"What am I doing here sitting amongst my sad drawings when the genius behind this other work should be doing 100% of the art on this planet?"

Nothing gets me enthused to roll up my sleeves and get going on a project like looking at other people's brilliant work. Combing through Instagram, Behance, and print and poster websites is, to me, like Popeye loading up on spinach. Only the results are usually much less violent.

Sometimes, however, my digging for inspiration can backfire. I'll see a particularly unusual or incredible piece of work and the inferiority complex kicks in. The person who made this, I think, is a REAL illustrator. They blow me out of the water.

Here's an important thing to remember—there's enough room and demand in kids books and other illustration for many types of styles, including your own. Go to an art

museum. There are endless ranges of technique and realism on display. If you don't like the painting of the expired pheasants next to the tangerines, I can guarantee you another visitor that day will obsess over it.

Now think of all the different types of kids out there, or styles of shoe, or flavors of Play-Doh. No one illustrator appeals exclusively to kids. There are little people out there who will like your illustrations the best of all.

A quick anecdote will go nicely here while allowing me to break up this block of copy with an illustration or two. I struggled mightily with a spread from my first book, *Brimsby's Hats*.

I still don't like the spread. However, while I was talking with an agent of mine one day, she mentioned casually that this offending spread was her favorite of the book (see Illustration 3).

The point here is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Look to others for inspiration but not competition. Do what you do. There's a reason you've landed upon the style you work in. It's gorgeous.



## Doubting That Others Will Ignore the Insignificant

*"Ugh, this lemur is a fraction of an inch taller on this page than she is on that one. When people notice they'll write scathing reviews, which everyone will read and I'll die a very sad, very poor person."\**

Agonizing over obscure details. Is this really self-doubt? I need around 1,500 words for this article, so yes, in my book.

While I love working in pencil and I feel my loose line work keeps illustrations warm, *Brimsby's Hats* was created fully in Adobe Illustrator. You know why? I felt I could have the greatest control over the size and proportions of my main character if I worked on a computer. You know what? Nobody cares about this.

See Illustrations 4 & 5.

Do you find yourself concerned that the position of a potted plant in one scene isn't precisely aligned with its position in another scene? I noticed something while reading to my kids that might be helpful to you.

Go grab a copy of *Madeline* by **Ludwig Bemelmans**. Maybe you have one on your bookshelves. If not, go ahead and run to the library or your local bookshop. I'll wait...

... Okay. Open up to the kitchen scene on page 13. Which girl is Madeline? Yep, she's the one fearlessly risking a face-bite full of the plague. Now flip to page 15. Which girl is Madeline here? Sure, the one talking smack to the enraged tiger. But wait a moment. The girl on page 13 has straight blond hair while the girl on page 15 has curly red hair. What the heck?

Bemelmans, in this legendary book, cared so little about perfection that he didn't even sweat the consistency of his eponymous protagonist's hair. And the results are legendary. Where was his self-doubt? He was probably a megalomaniac. I kid, of course. The important part of this is to remember that your main character can look like two different beings and you still take home a Caldecott honor and watch your work become synonymous with children's literature.

See Illustration 6.

Do your illustrations draw in kids and adults? Do they help readers understand and enjoy the story? Well played. You've done your job and saved yourself countless stressful hours.

*\*You're in kid lit. You're probably going to be poor no matter what.*

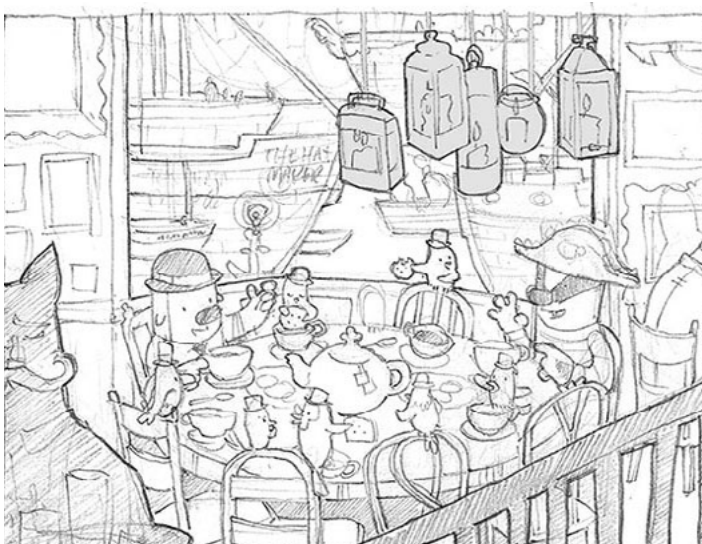
## Doubting Your Legitimacy (Imposter Syndrome)

*"Soon the whole world will know that I am a talentless phony."*

It's the artist's existential crisis.

You've just agreed to an assignment when the playground bully in your head pipes up. At first slowly, "You don't know what you're doing." Then, "How did YOU get picked to do this?" And, unexpectedly, "Everyone still remembers when you got caught talking to yourself in seventh grade." Because the playground bully in your head loves going off topic to keep you on your toes.

Let's go back to the first two quotes. Doubting your accomplishments or believing you're not worthy of your opportunities is a classic scenario and it's so common that there's a name for



Illustrations 4 & 5: What could have been if I had read *Madeline* before illustrating my first book





Illustration 6: Illustration from my forthcoming title, *Elbert the Curious Clocktower Bear*, created in a much more loose style thanks to lessons learned from *Madeline*

it: Imposter Syndrome. Google away, my friends.

Here's the thing: You're good. Don't believe yourself? Go talk to your fans.

Talk to the publisher that bought your book, or the person who gave you the freelance job. Discuss the artwork they saw that got you the job. Ask them what they liked about your work (because you'd like to ensure it comes through in the job they gave you).

Talk to your art director. Art directors are amazing expert-allies. Illustrators everywhere wrangle with doubt, and art directors deal with it regularly. Every kid lit art director I've worked with has been supportive and enthusiastic to no end. All two of them. I suspect these two were not anomalies in their field.

Reach out to friends and colleagues. Share your work on social media.

Friends will give you the boost you need. And your artist colleagues deal with the same things you do. Put your work out there among them and ask for feedback.

Last, don't ever discount your original fans, mom and dad and the rest of your family. Like me, you probably owe them a phone call anyhow.

### It's Been Fun

I know loads of illustrators who doubt themselves at times, but I don't know a single one who dislikes illustration.

Are you having fun (other than the crippling self-doubt, of course)? Yes, you are, because you're doing what you enjoy doing. Take a moment to remember this.

Now go get 'em.

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Chicagoan **Andrew Prahin** spent alternating childhood summers in *The-Middle-of-Nowhere*, Ireland. *The-Middle-of-Nowhere* took Andrew's imagination under its wing, supplying him with bogs and forests (ideal for exploring) and folk tales (ideal for fear-of-kidnapping-by-fairies-induced insomnia). While attending Northern Illinois University for illustration, Andrew won a partial college scholarship from his hometown of Arlington Heights by detailing his dream of working in children's books. Upon graduation, he promptly went into advertising. With the publication of his first title, *Brimsby's Hats*, Andrew made things right with the Arlington Heights Chamber of Commerce. His second title, *Elbert, the Curious Clocktower Bear*, is due out in March of 2019. Andrew lives with his children and his amazingly supportive wife, Katie.



## Writer's Bookshelf

### Review of *The Creativity Project*, Edited by Colby Sharp

By Jennifer Kaap

What if one month, instead of critiquing works-in-progress, your writing group decides to host a write-in? You set a timer and come up with a for-fun prompt. Ding! You pass your prompt to the person next to you, and then set another timer while you read and come up with a response to the prompt from the person on your other side. There's no time for overthinking or editing or worrying about perfection. This is a game! This is play! Sounds fun, right? (And when was the last time you wrote just for fun? I know it's been a long time for me.)

What if some of your favorite kidlit authors and illustrators walk into the Barnes and Noble, or the library, or wherever you meet, to join you in this game? How cool would that be? (Admittedly, I'd be a little more concerned about the quality of my work!)

That imagining is how I describe my experience reading *The Creativity Project* by fifth-grade teacher and book and creativity advocate Colby Sharp. (You may have heard of his online Nerdy Book Club and its offshoot conference: Nerd Camp.) *The Creativity Project* is a collection of prompts and responses from forty-four children's book creators including **Kate DiCamillo**, **Linda Sue Park**, **Dav Pilkey**, **Gary Schmidt**, and **Lemony Snicket**.

According to the author, "This project began with an idea: I wanted to celebrate the way ideas can be story seeds that take root and blossom."

Each contributor sent Sharp two creative prompts (prose, poems,

photographs, drawings, anything goes ...). Then, Sharp mixed and matched and sent off two prompts for each contributor to respond to (again, it could be a written response, or illustration, or whatever). According to an article in *Publisher's Weekly*, these prompts were sent off as snail mail packages, complete with "a paper 'thinking cap,' a 'do not disturb' door-hanger, and confetti made from book pages."



The result of this project was published in book form to entertain and inspire readers and writers.

The book is divided into three main sections:

1. Prompts and Responses
2. Prompts for You
3. Contributor Biographies

#### Prompts and Responses

This is the meat of the book, what the creators actually came up with.

One of my favorite prompts was written by **Kat Yeh**: "You have a brand-new audio translation app on your phone. Just as you click on it for the first time, your dog starts barking. And words begin to appear on the screen..."

The illustrated response by **Javaka Steptoe** made me laugh out loud. And right away, I was curious how others would respond to the same prompt. How would YOU respond?

#### Prompts for You

These are forty-four new prompts intended "to inspire your own creations." Because there are no responses, there is no one to compare with.

Here's a good one contributed by **Kirby Larson** for you (yes, YOU!) to try out: "It's a school morning and you come downstairs for breakfast as usual but to a quiet kitchen, which is definitely not usual. You look around for your family and spy a letter leaning against the box of Cheerios. You open it, and this is what you read:"

#### Contributor Biographies

Here, you can learn a little more about the authors and illustrators.

So how can a collection of prompts and responses be useful to me?

While this book was targeted at a middle-grade audience (as well as at teachers for use in their classrooms),





I believe it can also help folks like us develop our craft.

First of all, this book definitely inspires and encourages creativity. And isn't creativity where we get our ideas that we craft into stories?

**Colby Sharp** wasn't lying when he warned readers in the introduction of this book: "Chances are that while you are reading, your arm will start to wiggle. Your fingers will search for something to write with, and your brain will start thinking of what you would do if I sent the prompts in the mail to you."

Story prompts have long been in the writer's toolbox as a way to combat writer's block and generate ideas. **This book gives you eighty-eight prompts to stretch your imagination and develop your own material.** During these exercises, perhaps you come up with an idea for a longer piece, or you come up with a solution to a niggling problem in one of your manuscripts.

In any event, your butt is in the chair! You're writing! Maybe after you play around with a prompt, you're motivated to **keep** writing.

Obviously, **using these and other prompts would also work as an activity to do with kids during school visits or workshops.** I have used a "Jar O' Ideas" during library creative writing workshops for kids as a way to inspire and help those who are stuck and don't know what to write about. I plan on adding some of the prompts from this book to the jar!

Another great thing about this book is that you **gain insight into how favorite authors respond.** Or perhaps you discover a new-to-you author whose style you really enjoy. You can read about them in the Contributor's Biographies and then put all of their books on hold at your local library.

New mentor texts, hurrah!

*Horn Book* also pointed out an interesting but subtle lesson learned from this book: **it's okay to break the rules!** "Almost none of the contributors obeys the rules. Presented with a photo of an animal that is not a fox, **Linda Sue Park** writes about a fox. **Sherman Alexie** ignores half of his short prompt... Demonstrating the anarchic nature of creativity might be the most powerful message of this inviting project."

Like part of a prompt but not all of it? Go for it! Do it your way.

One of the things I liked best about the project was the community and collaboration aspect of it. **Here was a group of creators united in their love of reading and writing and sharing stories with children.** Writing is often a private affair. Yes, we may get together and offer feedback on each other's works, but how often do we take the chance to collaborate?

It took me only a few pages into this book to start imagining how fun it would be to make and exchange prompts and responses with writing friends.

Finally, the part of the book that made the most impact on me was Linda Urban's author note about **getting words on the page without worrying about quality:** "what you are reading here is not very far away from that first-draft prompt response, because I want all the readers and the writers who are looking at this anthology to understand that prompts like these are for play. They're for exploring and trying things out and seeing what skills you might have and where you might want to grow... The project isn't called the Perfection Project or the Judgment Project or the Published Authors Can Do No Wrong Project. It is the Creativity Project."

Writing is fun! Pick up *The Creativity Project*, and give the prompts a try. Or start your own Creativity Project with a group of writing buddies. Who wants to play? I'll bring the confetti!

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*Jennifer Kaap is a children's librarian and a co-representative for the Dundee area network. She puts on her thinking cap, drinks tea, and stares at birds outside her bay window in Elgin.*



## Book Look

### More 2018 Picture Books

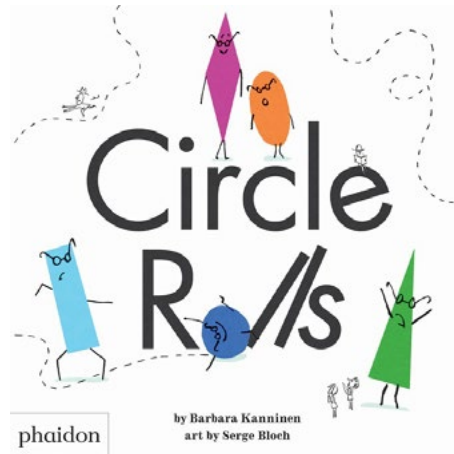
By Katherine Ryan

On the surface, these two 2018 picture books could not be more different, coming from different traditions in the picture book landscape. Telling a whimsical story, *Circle Rolls*, written by **Barbara Kanninen** with illustrations by **Serge Bloch** (Phaidon Press), is a concept book. A world away, *The Rabbit Listened*, written and illustrated by **Cori Doerrfeld** (Penguin/Random House), is a fiction picture book with an endearing main character and the traditional narrative arc. Yet both books are kid (and adult) pleasers and include the rich and deep layers that characterize outstanding picture books.

#### Circle Rolls

Shapes are enjoying a well-deserved moment in the picture book spotlight. Last year **Mac Barnett** and **Jon Klassen** wrote and illustrated a smash with *Triangle* and just followed up with *Square*. Rounding off the trilogy, *Circle* will be released in 2019.

While concept books are often designed for the very young, the tale of *Circle Rolls*, which offers many kinds of learning, is sure to delight one and all. Writing in rhyme, Kanninen weaves many different concepts into the story, from the names of colorful shapes to the nature of these shapes, and even a subtle lesson on kindness and cooperation. Meanwhile, Bloch's elegant and sparse illustrations work together with the words to enhance the tale and even tell a different tale. Moreover, the scale of the pen-and-ink illustrations plays a vital role in the story. Largish shapes take center stage while diminutive humans are the chorus.



Sparked by an innocent human sneeze, the story of blue Circle's rolling demise begins. As the tiny human chases the rolling circle past other shapes, the reader learns that the orange Oval "rocks" while the yellow Square "sits like a box." So from spread 1 forward, the reader and listener have the opportunity to see and reflect on color, the names of different shapes, and a defining characteristic of each shape.

While more humans gather to help, the rolling continues past "standing" light blue Rectangle until blue Circle hits the green Triangle's "point." Alas, blue Circle *explodes*. When tiny bits of the circle land on yellow Square, this time a shape (Square) sneezes and more chaos follows—magenta Diamond tripping, pushing Star, then purple Star tipping. Even Line is bending, causing the shapes and the tiny humans to glide and slide together. When these shapes and tiny folks fly and collide, the shapes fall down, and a mini ambulance drives up to help. Who can solve this catastrophe? And how? Fortunately, red Octagon arrives and recites the single line of dialogue in the book: "Shapes! Stop!" Tiny cars obey, as do the

shapes that rise, and all together they straighten Line. However, what about blue Circle—still scattered around yellow Square?

Wearing black-rimmed glasses for close work, rosy-pink Heart appears to gather bits of blue Circle. So the other shapes put on glasses and follow Heart's lead. With help from the very small humans, they all put blue Circle back together again. Mended with "dabs of glue and globs of tape," the blue Circle is back rolling again.

The language in *Circle Rolls* sizzles and pops, inviting audience participation upon rereading. Creative and rich word choices (e.g., flip, flop and whirl and twirl) energize the story and the story rhyme. Strong, active verbs (rolling, tipping) also keep the story moving, piquing the audience's curiosity about what happens next. Children will relish "reading" the wordless substory involving the diminutive people to an adult.

With its boisterous cast of characters, Barbara Kanninen's story anthropomorphizes shapes, all in a good cause. Children can discover some sophisticated notions about shapes in less than 120 words. These notions are cleverly anchored to what children may already know from their social world (e.g., stop sign, heart). And notions about kindness, caring, and community are deeply rooted in scenes where the Heart guides the community's repairs of Circle. Bloch's fanciful drawings extend and elaborate the terse text, *showing* the power of caring and community throughout the book.





## The Rabbit Listened

Coming from a different perspective, *The Rabbit Listened* supports social-emotional learning. *Publishers Weekly* and others have noted a lack of books that address readers' psychological or emotional well-being by emphasizing empathy, kindness, and related topics.

**Anna Dewdney's** acclaimed *Llama Llama* series serves as an exemplar. In an online interview, Doerrfeld acknowledged writing this book for "her children, herself, and people to start learning what to do when life gets difficult and emotions become awkward, messy, and overbearing." Indeed, this story does show readers what people of all ages might do when they have a problem and how people can help or comfort someone else when life's difficulties arise. Thus, rich with emotional and practical resources, this enchanting tale also provides many different kinds of learning.

Doerrfeld's spare yet poignant text tells the facts of the story while the illustrations carry the story's emotional weight and depth. The soft, smudged, soothing illustrations contrast with the precise details to capture the range of emotions portrayed in the story. And notably, the gender of the main character, Taylor, is not referred to in either the text (no gendered pronouns) or the illustrations (curly, short-haired child in striped pajamas).

Everyone has moments when, figuratively speaking, crows fly out of nowhere and wreak havoc in one's life. Alas, this is precisely what happens to Taylor. The story opens with Taylor building something "special" —a jumbo block tower. By spread 3, the crows arrive and dash the blocks to the ground. Fortunately, the animal community rallies around Taylor. One by one, they offer plenty of ideas about how Taylor might proceed. The chicken wants to "talk, talk, talk" to

# THE RABBIT LISTENED



CORI DOERRFELD

help Taylor process these challenging circumstances, but Taylor turns away. Then Taylor's friend, the "growling" bear, proposes Taylor shout—but no shouting for Taylor. The elephant suggests Taylor remember exactly what the block tower looked like. Taylor doesn't want to remember. Then the hyena, ostrich, and kangaroo visit—you can guess what each recommends. Finally, the snake comes by and advises, "Let'ssss go knock down someone else'ssss." But Taylor doesn't feel like that either.

So the animals leave Taylor alone, but being alone doesn't help a bit. When a rabbit quietly snuggles up next to Taylor, Taylor invites the rabbit to stay. The rabbit *listens* when Taylor draws on the collective wisdom of the animal community and finally talks, shouts, and laughs. And as Taylor recounts all the other ideas the animals mentioned, the rabbit stays and still *listens*. And the rabbit *listens* to Taylor's plan to build again. Into action—Taylor's new block structure is amazing!

Children will readily identify with Taylor and the predicament. If not crows, something crashes the block structures in their lives also. The simple text with the detailed illustrations makes the range of Taylor's emotions visible. So Taylor's adventures help children understand the different kinds of emotions they experience. At the

same time, the onomatopoeia (e.g., cluck, hee-hee) brings a playful tone to this tale. These sounds bring the animal characters to life—children will delight in the opportunity to "read and reread" this story. The animal vignettes will stimulate rich conversation about the nature of the animals and about the animals' various "suggestions" about how to deal with trying circumstances. The sequential appearances of these different animals create a sense of suspense about which animal will appear next.

In *The Rabbit Listened*, Cori Doerrfeld creates a cast of colorful characters that shows how one can best comfort others during difficult situations. A gentle surprise—the humble rabbit, like all animal companions, reminds people of all ages that sometimes saying nothing while offering a hug is exactly right. Still, as so artfully illustrated in this story, one's community and their well-meaning notions provide important sources of social support in times of trouble. After all, when Taylor is ready to sort out what to do, Taylor considers or tries most of the fine ideas the community suggests. And Taylor's resilience and learning in the face of setbacks inspire.

Hats off to *Circle Rolls*. What a delightful way for the author to introduce children to geometry and physics. Also, hats off to *The Rabbit Listened*. The audience will remember hero Taylor and the wisdom of the rabbit's quiet, loving support. And as different as these two books are, both underscore the value of community when people face life's challenges—a soothing notion in these uncertain times.

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**Katherine Ryan** is a writer, evaluation consultant, and professor emeritus at University of IL (Urbana). She finds the SCBWI-IL community to be a vital source of support and enrichment for her writing.



# The Inside Story: Short Reports from the Inner Journey

## *It's Time: One More Important Thing I Learned From the Day Job I Just Left*

By Carol Coven Grannick



It was the right time to leave the extraordinary early childhood center where I worked. Even though I miss the children, the faculty, and my boss and friend, the principal, I knew that I needed to leave the day job that I loved.

I'd gotten to the point that my 4–6 a.m. writing habit was flagging, my commitment to work out after eight hours at the early childhood center was a whisper at the back of my mind. I fell asleep on the couch at home for a nap that would maybe give me a couple more hours of attention to revision and research, or with a book in my hands, or at the computer in a half-successful effort to research editors or agents to whom I wanted to submit.

Saying goodbye was hard. And that was good. It meant something I couldn't quite put into words until days of open hours and open space let my brain experience days without anything on my mind except my goal of submitting every polished piece of work I could.

I spent July researching, tweaking, and all-out revising every piece of children's work I felt was worthy (and needy) of it, and sent one after the other out with queries crafted individually for each editor or agent. I've already had

one rejection, which I'll relegate to my email rejection folder, and recycle the manuscript into 1–3 submissions elsewhere.

The time feels luxurious, and I don't take it for granted. The opportunity to finally have days of writing, reading without falling asleep, and learning (taking two intensive classes in August, both of which are generating lots of new writing) is a gift. And I mean to make good use of it.

Still, one of the things on my writing mind this month was whether to do yet another revision of my middle-grade novel—not because I felt it needed it, but because maybe I “should” because it would be more marketable (without having any indication that this might be true).



During the month, these words about leaving my job at the early childhood center floated in and out of my mind's eye: *I worked hard. I did a good job. I cared for people, and they cared for me. This was the best job I've ever had, and it gave great meaning to my life.*

Is there anything better?

Well, I realized there might be. And that would be to apply that feeling

and those words to my writing, before sending out each piece of work, before pronouncing it *finished*—at least for the time being:

*I worked hard and did a good job. I cared for my character and her story, and she responded with poetry that was deeper and more powerful. I did my best, and the process has given great meaning to my life.*



And that is making it easier to leave, not only a job I loved, but a manuscript I've loved that I'll do my best to sell while I finally turn my focus to new work.

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**Carol Coven Grannick's** award-winning novel in verse, *Reeni's Turn*, currently out on submission, reflects the underrepresented epidemic of diet experimentation in the young middle grades. She writes poetry, picture books, and middle grade fiction, as well as essays and articles for online and print magazines and blogs, including **Cynthia Leitich Smith's** *Cynsations*. She is a full-time writer with commitments to her work, her friends and family, and political activism. Her new website is: [carolcovengrannick.com](http://carolcovengrannick.com).





# A Fly on the Wall

## *Happy Fly on the Wall: SCBWI-Illinois 2018 Spring Thaw—Pitch Perfect 2*

By Jiton Sharmayne Davidson

It was the middle of my graduating semester at Vermont College of Fine Art and I was facing multiple deadlines. So no, I did not want to pitch a manuscript to industry professionals for feedback at the time. Of course it was a great opportunity to sit at the table with **Annie Nybo** and **Jonathan Westmark**, editor and associate editor at Albert Whitman & Company, agent **Marcy Posner** from Folio Literary Management, or **Alex Weiss**, associate agent from Jennifer De Chiara Literary Agency, to be guided in creating the perfect pitch.

But no, the timing was bad for me. Therefore, I attended the Spring Thaw as an inconvenient honor. As last year's recipient, I was honored to serve as peer-guide for 2018 winner of the SCBWI-Illinois Diverse New Member Pathway award, illustrator **Felicia Whaley**. I was happy to accompany her to her first SCBWI event. However, my intention was to experience the Spring Thaw as the fly on the wall, not as an active participant. But of course I was drawn into and immersed in that amazing synergy that happens when children's book authors and illustrators get together at SCBWI events.

Picture book author and self-described "veteran conference goer" **Urania Smith** said that what she "liked most about Spring Thaw was the intimate nature of the conference." She appreciated that it was "not as big as other conferences, which allowed" for connections and conversations with writing peers and faculty. Urania also found the roundtable focus helpful: "not only did I get a chance to hear feedback on my work by an industry professional,

but also from my colleagues." She enjoyed the exchange and creative affirmation.

Likewise, picture book author **Christine Mapondera Talley** says that "the most beneficial part was the detailed critiques. I knew I could do more with the story but kinda felt stuck. The comments echoed at the roundtable" were useful and well worth the money for Christine. As the fly on the wall, I heard excited buzz about the pitch sessions from multiple participants. The consensus was that Pitch Perfect was worth the extra investment for insider knowledge as well as connections and exposure to agents, editors and publishers.

The breakout sessions were both energetic and thought-provoking. The picture book session by **Caroline Crimi** was fresh and memorable. It was also Felicia's first opportunity to engage with SCBWI as an illustrator, but that session turned out to be enlightening on multiple levels for both of us. I learned something new and useful from the presentation; however, the magic happened when we broke out into smaller critique groups. Out of five of us, Felicia was the only illustrator.

As a student in writing for children, I felt right at home with the discussion along with the lightbulbs lit with ideas around the circle. But what really caught my attention was Felicia's reactions as each author read her or his piece. After a full discussion where each author fully participated, I asked her what she had been reacting to. Was she seeing illustratable moments? Felicia's response was the dynamite that blew

my mind! Well, it wasn't anything she said specifically, but how she, as an illustrator, saw the story that brought so much light to the craft.

Following Caroline's directive to find that "one true thing," questions for Felicia included: What do you see when you hear my story? Describe the visual spread (please), why is that the first image you see? Keep in mind that Felicia, by her own admission, is no expert picture book illustrator. But she is an artist who tells stories with pictures. Her observations helped us to trim the extraneous language and exposition to find that one true thing. Further, as a group, we talked about the collaboration between the author and the illustrator. Felicia also gained so much insight into the job of illustrating picture books from the perspective of the author. By the end, I realized that I had never had such a session, not even in my MFA program. It was pure synergy. I advocate for opportunities for authors and illustrators to get together in small group picture book workshops at future conferences.

While one-third of the conference attendees were in their pitch sessions, the second third was in the picture book session, and the final third was in the novel break-out session, which directly addressed issues of diversity in children's books. **Crystal Chan's** well-researched and professionally delivered lecture about writing the "other" and own-voices narratives was informative, enlightening and necessary. However, diversity is too broad and important a topic to be presented as a novel craft break-out session. Still participants were inspired to generate topics for



future presentations and discussions on diversity. For example:

1. How do I include and remain true to diverse characters without telling another culture's stories?
2. What are some MG and YA novels that do it well?
3. How do I include diverse books in my reading list?
4. How do I teach diverse books?
5. How do I support diverse authors?

The intimate roundtable sessions also provided Urania the opportunity to freely interact with her writing peers as an author of color. She says, "I was able to bring to attention that a person at my critique table unknowingly used a stereotypical representation of a minority group in their query letter," which was eye-opening for the writer. Urania liked that she was able to offer a different perspective, and that "others at the table engaged in helping the writer find alternative language in their query."

As an African American children's book author and scholar, I do hope to contribute to this ongoing conversation about diversity in the future. Which leads me to this funny story. As the day was closing down, a box of books appeared on the registration counter. I had missed an announcement and could almost swear I saw a little sign that said, "take one." Maybe I did see the sign associated with something else, or maybe I didn't. What I know I saw was the novel on the top, *Piecing Me Together* by **Renée Watson**. Here's a little backstory: I should have been at that very time writing a 250-word annotation on that very book, which I had checked out of the library. Keep in mind what a writing student's book budget must be, then picture me in crazed deadline gratitude: "Thank you, God." Then there was also the *Parker Inheritance* by new VCFA faculty author

**Varian Johnson**. So I walked away with at least four good books. What a blessing.

Cut to weeks later when I was informed that those books were donations, not a diverse book exchange between authors. My reaction: "I must have looked like such a JERK" taking those books meant for children in underfunded schools. So I have returned those books along with the books that I could spare from my own personal library. Now, here is my personal contribution in celebration of my graduation with an MFA in writing for children and young adults. Using student loans and book donations by authors, I will provide 100 copies of the books that I have used in my exploration of children's books by contemporary African, Caribbean, and African American authors. I will also provide written essays/articles and bibliographic annotations so that teachers feel more confident teaching these books in their classrooms. I plan to include books by **Kwame Alexander, Sharon Draper, Kekla Magoon, Nnedi Okorafor, Jason Reynolds, Jewell Parker Rhodes, Rita Williams Garcia,** and **Jacqueline Woodson**. I invite SCBWI members to add these authors to your reading list.

Finally, with literary agent Linda Camacho presenting the 2018 SCBWI-IL Many Voices Outstanding Manuscript Prize to **Traci Dant** for her manuscript *Polio Summer*, the day was complete. It was time productively spent for me as I realized that there was no more important place to be. Spring Thaw–Pitch Perfect 2 was a children's book feast for this happy fly on the wall. Buzz you later.

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**Jiton Sharmayne Davidson** is a recent Vermont College of Fine Arts grad with an MFA in writing for children and young adults. She is the 2018 SCBWI Diverse New Pathways peer guide and lives on Chicago's south side where she teaches kids yoga.





# Perspectives

## On Your Way to Being Published

By Eric Arnall

### An Awesome Road Trip

Maybe it's your first trip or maybe you've driven the route so many times you have it memorized. You're enjoying the ride with the top down. You wave at your characters as you speed by. The weather is perfectly crafted: puffy white clouds give way to a storm. Amarillo, Texas, Historic Route 66. You've got the radio turned up all the way.



Listening to the voice and dialogue you've written blast through your speakers makes you smile. You drive by

a sign, Being Published 50 miles ahead. You reach over to turn the bass up when suddenly the steering wheel starts to shake. You pull over on the shoulder, jump out of the car, and there it is: a *flat plot*. Your story is stalled. It's foggy . . . and almost dark.

### What a Headache!

You pop the trunk. No spare. You don't remember passing any other stories. You, hesitate, then cross the ditch and head into the forest. Maybe there's a house somewhere near, a light. You google *fiction plots* and scroll through the list: "How to Plan Your Novel Using the Three Act Structure"; "The 4 Main Plot Points"; "5 Plotting Moments That Matter"; and "Plotting with Michael Hague's Six Stage Plot Structure." The foliage is barely passable. You trod on: "Revisiting the 7-Point Story Structure"; "Writing Prose: The Eight Point Arc"; "The Ultimate Plotting Tool for Pantsers: Your Novel in 12 Sentences"; and "Blake Snyder's Beat Sheet" with its fifteen points. Exhausted, you see a light through the trees. You run. Panting, you step out of the woods and discover the light is the moon reflecting on the hood of your story. You're right back where you started.

### Choice Overload

Paralyzed with so many options, you don't know which directions to follow. You feel hopeless. Worse, you're losing the passion and excitement you had for writing. You read articles on plotting, buy the books, attend conferences, and work with writing coaches. But you're frustrated—and overwhelmed. It all seems so complicated. You try this

method and then that one, but none seems to fit *your* story. Nothing clicks with *you*. There is no aha moment.

### A Bump in the Road

Before you call a tow truck or send your story to the scrap yard, know that you are not alone. Even the best writers have *flat plots* and *stalled stories*, but, most important, know that a plot problem is just a bump in the road.

### My Journey

When I wrote my first novel, I struggled with plot. After I had written several thousand words, **Esther Hershenthorn**, my first writing teacher, helped me see that I had little to *no* plot, just wonderful characters and voice and . . . (She softened the blow and



simultaneously whetted my appetite to learn more, as only she can. Those of you who know her know what I mean.)

Excited about fixing the *flat plot* in my story and tackling the problem head on, I ran across **Martha Alderson's** wildly successful *Plot Whisperer Blog* and her plotting books. We worked one-on-one for several hours over the course of several days. I improved by leaps and bounds.



But I needed more help. I needed a private writing coach who was local. I secured **Michael A. Black**, an accomplished Chicago novelist whose works have been featured in popular magazines and anthologies. More than anyone, he helped me grow as a writer and get my manuscripts in publishable shape.

Although Martha and Michael helped me untangle the mess of a story I'd created and I learned tons from them, I still didn't "get" plot. Martha talked about the universal story having four sections: beginning, beginning of the middle, end of the middle, and end. Her plot formula included three important features: character emotional development, dramatic action, and thematic significance. Michael, on the other hand, stuck to the basic Three Act plot structure: Act I, introduce the characters and conflict; Act II, the conflict escalates, things get worse; Act III, the conflict reaches critical mass (the climax) and is followed by a resolution (dénouement).

Neither of these approaches clicked for me. Although Martha has coached well-known novelists, as well as famous screenwriters, directors, and playwrights, her approach seemed too complicated. And, in my mind, the three-act structure is forever attached to plays that I read in high school. For some reason, I couldn't get that structure to transfer to my novel-writing world.

Because I was still in a heavy fog when it came to PLOT, I decided to compare the plot points from the most popular plot formulas I'd come across since I had been writing. Maybe that would help.

## An Unexpected Surprise

Using the articles listed above, I created a table and compared plot points. It

immediately became apparent that the plots had several elements in common. A story begins with a set-up, or stasis, that includes a "hook." An inciting incident or moment, aka trigger or catalyst, causes the protagonist to begin a quest. Complications, confrontations, or "pinches" hinder the quest. At the midpoint, the protagonist becomes more active, makes a critical choice to continue, quit, or alter her journey. Confrontations and complications build to a point in which the protagonist loses all hope of reaching his goal. The dark night of the soul follows, but things make a turn. There is a reversal and the hero faces the monster or obstacle and either succeeds or fails. The resolution of the story follows. All the loose ends are tied up.

Before comparing the structures, I wasn't sure which plot would work for me, but afterward, I was pretty sure I connected with the 8-point plot formula more than the others.

1. **Stasis.** Normal life of the character
2. **Trigger.** Something external to the protagonist happens that forces her to take a journey.
3. **Quest.** The hero begins a journey to reach a goal.
4. **Surprise twist.** At the end of the beginning, the  $\frac{1}{4}$  mark, something unexpected happens that catches the hero and the reader off guard.
5. **Critical Choice.** The hero decides to continue, quit, or go a different route
6. **Crisis.** The lowest emotional point for the hero. All hope is lost. The dark night of the soul.
7. **Climax.** Highest point for the hero. She confronts and overcomes her enemy with a weakness introduced at the beginning of the story.
8. **The Resolution.** Loose ends tied up.

**Mary Cole**, in her book *Writing Irresistible Kidlit: The Ultimate Guide to Crafting Fiction for Young Adult and Middle Grade Readers*, refers to the 8-point plot as the Emotional Plot, noting that it tracks the protagonist's experiences and emotions, rather than focusing on actions and events.

## Test Drive

The plot structure was new so I took it out for a spin and plotted a couple of old *Star Trek* episodes. I was able to identify all eight plot points. Then I tried it on children's books and found all eight again. I was getting the hang of it. As a teaching librarian, I thought I'd try to teach it to my students. They got the hang of it, and before long we were all identifying plot points in a story. It was then I knew I finally "got" it. Without understanding plot structure, it took me eight years to finish my first novel. For my second novel, I wrote out eight "tentative" plot points. (Nothing is set in stone when you're writing.) I wasn't sure how I'd get from one point to the next, but I jumped in the car and took off. Ten months later, I made it to the end of the story!



## On the Road Again

Whether you're writing a new story or revising a manuscript, you need a plot! The important thing is to choose a structure that works for you and serves your story. With one that clicks with you, one that fits *your story*, you'll be able to fix any flat along the way. Before you know it, you'll be back on



the road and well on your way to Being Published.

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*When he's not working on his middle-grade detective novel series (think Easy Rawlings for kids), Eric Arnall serves as a middle school librarian for CPS. After completing his Ph.D., working as a US Army chaplain, pastor, teacher, and principal, the amateur photographer realized his true passion is storytelling. He is represented by Scott Treimel NY Literary Agency.*





# Illustrator in the Spotlight

*Diana Sudyka*



## Are you an illustrator or an author/illustrator?

Illustrator.

## What is your preferred medium to work in?

I love traditional mediums, and mainly work in gouache, watercolor, and india ink. Almost all of my work is done on paper, but sometimes clay-board too. I do use digital tools like my iPad Pro and Procreate, but just for minor edits, cleaning up files, and to enhance color sometimes.

## Tell us a little of your beginnings and journey as an illustrator.

I have enjoyed drawing from a very young age. I have a BFA in printmaking from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and an MFA from Northwestern University. For years I worked as an intaglio printmaker for Chicago artist **Tony Fitzpatrick** at his old studio Big Cat Press, using the equipment for my own print work after hours. I still love etching's process and visual texture, and learned a lot of real art world survival skills working for someone like Tony.

After getting my MFA, I was pretty ambivalent about academia and the fine art world. I worked at the Newberry Library for a couple of years, briefly considering becoming a librarian. Even though I wasn't making much art at that time, I was continually inspired by the Newberry's collections. Some of my favorite items were original woodblocks for engravings made by **Rockwell Kent**, and **Thomas Bewick**. Also during this time my husband started a screen printing press for his own work. He made screen-printed posters for Chicago's indie rock scene and invited me to collaborate on some jobs.



I enjoyed learning a new printmaking technique and illustrating for musicians I admired.

Those first collaborations eventually led to my getting my own poster clients. There was a site, now no longer, called [gigposters.com](http://gigposters.com) that many of us in the design community posted our work to. This was before Facebook and Instagram. Some art editors saw my poster work there, and that led to my first book illustration jobs. It was mostly cover work and some editorial stuff. I didn't have an agent, but one job led to another. I was lucky. I got a few solid jobs like illustrating several of the books in *The Mysterious Benedict Society* series by **Trenton Lee Stewart**, but knew that I needed to be more focused to make this a more sustainable career.

We had a daughter in 2011, and nothing provides focus like having a child. I have always wanted to illustrate picture books, and now I was getting a real education in what was out there from reading them all with our daughter. Northwestern's library has a lovely collection of old, obscure children's books that I dipped into regularly as well. I attended events like ICON and met other children's book illustrators and authors. It's such a lovely and supportive community. Eventually I was approached by Writers House Ltd, and my book work is now represented by **Andrea Morrison** and **Rebecca Sherman** there. I have several picture books in various stages of completion. The first, *Sometimes Rain* by **Meg Fleming**, is due out from Beach Lane Books/Simon and Schuster in fall 2018. It's about moving through the seasons and playing outside. Then *When Sue Found Sue* by **Toni Buzzeo** (Abrams) will follow. It's about paleontologist **Sue Hendrickson** who discovered the largest, most complete T-Rex fossil that bears her name. And finally, *What Miss Mitchell*

*Saw* by **Haley Barrett** will be out in spring 2019 with Beach Lane again. It celebrates the life of Nantucket astronomer **Maria Mitchell**. Beyond this, I am planning my own author/illustrator project. Or maybe I will take a nap!

### Do you have favorite themes or characters you return to in your art?

Nature, natural history, being outdoors. Recently, I have been into drawing grumpy, outraged animals, particularly squirrels. I love folk and indigenous art traditions too, in particular the way that the lines between human and animal worlds are often blurred.

### What does your workspace look like?

My workspace is in our home basement. There's a huge set of oak flat files that contains my old print and poster work. My worktable was made by my husband from a huge section of an old bowling lane. It is usually piled with reference books and paintings in various stages of completion. There are windows, but I do fantasize about having a loft space flooded with sunlight someday.

### Please share an illustration and give us a brief "step-by-step" of your process.

I begin with small, rough watercolor sketches. If there are minor changes before going final, they are incorporated digitally using Procreate or Photoshop. Final art is done in gouache on heavy watercolor paper. I don't do a lot of mapping out with pencil first and sort of just dive in. Final paintings get scanned and cleaned up digitally. I don't have a lot of process pics, but depicted here is a rough for a spread in *Sometimes Rain*, and it's final state.

### Which illustrators were your favorites when you were little?

**Richard Scary** and **Garth Williams**.

### Which illustrators are your favorites now?

**Bernarda Bryson Shahn**, **Emily Hughes**, **Feodor Rojankovsky**, **Isabelle Arsenault**, **Leonard Weisgard**, **Alice** and **Martin Provensen**.

### Do you ever tuck little personal homages or details in your illustrations?

The dog that appears in *Sometimes Rain* is our dog Nora. I also painted my daughter in a scene of little kids looking up at a giant T-Rex skeleton in *When Sue Found Sue*.

### What inspires you creatively, spiritually or emotionally?

The natural world, the people who study and protect it. My husband Jay, and my daughter Isabel.

### What gets in the way of your creativity?

Too much screen time.

### Where can we find you?

Website: [dianasudyka.com](http://dianasudyka.com)

Instagram: [@tinyaviary](https://www.instagram.com/tinyaviary)



# Voices of Change

## News from the Diversity Committee

By Susanne Fairfax

Our organization is a kind one, a powerful one, full of generous people who support one another – from seasoned kidlit authors and illustrators to new writers and artists first trying their hand at creating children’s literature. The only trouble is that our organization is too narrow in its membership. We are composed largely of people who inhabit the historically centered portion of our culture – white, cisgender, heteronormative, nondisabled. This narrow slice is echoed in the industry. This is not good for children, who span the full breadth of humanity and deserve books that do too, by people who do too. This is not good for historically marginalized writers and artists who often have to work outside the mainstream in order to share their gifts in children’s publishing. And this is not good for the nonmarginalized members themselves, who end up missing out on some fabulous fellow creators, a richer community, wonderful books and a deeper understanding of themselves and our world.

This organization of ours has work to do. Is it full of kind, generous people? Yes. Does it also need to contend with racism, homophobia, gender normativity and ableism that society’s systems have woven deep within us on an organizational and individual level? Yes. If you feel defensive when you read this or start to think “Not all...” or “I’m not...” or “Not us...” or “We’re all the same...” or any sort of colorblindness thought or “My best friend is ...” or “You’re being divisive...” – please use this opportunity to notice that interior voice. Catch it. Breathe with it. Sit with it. Don’t speak it. Don’t write it.

Let it be your friend and teacher. I will say right now that I contain racism and ableism within the fibers of my being. And, yes, internalized homophobia and gender normativity too. I’m not happy that any of these reside within me. I work to understand and transform them, moment by moment. To pretend that those weed seeds were not there would give them more ability to take root and spread within the crevices. It would allow those tendrils to extend outward and cause harm more often than they already do.

*Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.*

– James Baldwin

As writers and illustrators we possess many tools to face what needs to be changed. We swim in the waters of interior voice and the mind’s eye. Familiar with POV, we have the capacity to acknowledge multiple perspectives. As wordsmiths and image makers we can comprehend the nuances of written and visual language, so we can grasp the harm done by stereotypes and erasure. We can understand why it matters who controls the narrative. As natural observers and researchers we can examine our own thoughts and the systems around us. With effort, we can take notice of society’s damaging seeds within ourselves. We can use these powerful skills to better discern our industry’s need for diversity, equity and inclusion. This is an issue not with two sides but with many facets. I believe the process of change begins with working to understand one’s position in relation to various positions of privilege/power. I am in the position of privilege afforded

by my whiteness. I am in the position of marginalization ascribed to me as a lesbian. I am in the position of privilege accorded me as cisgender. I am in the position of privilege relative to people living with disabilities. I was raised within a household affected by my mother’s disabilities and I live with a permanent hearing loss in one ear, but I definitely navigate a world designed for my relatively nondisabled existence. By strengthening our awareness of where we are in relation to power, we learn when to let go of what we think we know and to listen. We don’t know what we don’t know. We grow when we truly take in the harmful impact that our culture and systems have on people with less privilege in a given facet of our identity. We can stop taking our positions of privilege for granted and work to dismantle that privilege and create equity.

*It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.*

*The failure of academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower.*

– Audre Lorde

For “divide and conquer” to become “define and empower,” we have work to do. But I can tell you that my engagement with this work has enhanced my life and improved my writing. I am immensely grateful to the amazingly generous marginalized people who, in spite of past and present harm, take the risk of being vulnerable to





share their perspective and experiences and produce valuable work in support of understanding. There are so many books, articles and online groups created by brilliant and dynamic people. There is no need to stay undereducated and in the familiarity of comfort zones. I'll offer some of my approach to broadening my view in case it is helpful to anyone.

First of all, I make sure that I don't limit my exposure to one source because no individual can speak for an entire group. I participate in multiple affinity groups and allies groups, online and in real life. I follow a wide range of kidlit authors and illustrators on Twitter, beginning with people historically at the margins. I read fiction and nonfiction by a breadth of authors whose lived experience is different from mine. Conference breakouts and book talks are a great place for listening. I participate in webinars within and outside children's publishing. When I see terms I don't know, I consult Merriam-Webster, Urban Dictionary, related experts, or Google. Google is my friend (though I take it with a grain of salt and dig past first responses). I know that there's a whole lot I don't know. When it comes to listening to and comprehending issues faced by people of color, Native peoples, people living with disabilities and transgender people, I have a ton of work to do and still misstep (possibly in this very article or sentence). But when I misstep, I learn. Impact matters more than intent. In order to hear impact, we need to stop talking about intent and listen more deeply. That is where the learning arises. When mistakes occur, I try to absorb the lesson, apologize and move on. When it comes to my marginalized position as a lesbian, I grow stronger the more I speak up, especially when I'm listened to, truly heard. When a laugh line relying on homophobia causes an entire conference room to burst with

laughter, my interest in being in that space fades. Each time I swallow the impact in silence, my sense of self in that company erodes. When I speak up and I'm met with defenses, I feel frustrated and discouraged. Impact matters more than intent. But when I say something and someone truly listens without getting defensive, and says with genuine understanding, "Ugh, I missed that, I'm sorry, I'll watch out for that," I feel hopeful. Simple empathy can be lovely too. These ventures can be uncomfortable, but the discomfort of working through complexity is better than furthering harm or accepting harm, succumbing to its inevitability.

#### Impact matters more than intent

In order to hear impact, we need to stop talking about intent and listen more deeply.

When we inhabit the position of privilege and power in any given facet, we may not even realize how much we take that position for granted. We may not see the subtle forms or micro-aggressions that occur and accumulate. We miss exclusions. Stereotypes slip by and compound the harm. We may see forms of progress from the outside and think a problem has been solved, not recognizing the steps forward and backward when making change. Just look at the fierce backlash we are currently facing in our country: discriminatory laws implemented and resurrected; conversion therapy resurging; coopting of the term freedom in cahoots with religion in the name of oppression (that may start with wedding cakes but it leads to employment discrimination); white supremacist rallies in the open (they never went away completely, just underground); voter restriction; discriminatory laws and mass incarceration; the horrors around immigration; failure of our culture to respect and support people

with disabilities; glacial speeds in adopting ADA requirements; blatant mocking of a reporter with disabilities. The threads of harm in our culture can also be found in children's literature. We know children's books can be powerful in positive ways. They can also cause harm and perpetuate stereotypes. Omission holds power too. We cannot think that our kidlit world is separate and immune from the problems in the world in some false sense of innocence. Forward and backward steps occur here too. Let's not let the current call for change miss the mark.

So how do we work toward change? Understanding oppressions is essential, but we also need action. Appropriate action. How we go about this work matters immensely. Those at the center sometimes work toward change in ways that perpetuate harm without realizing it. Good intentions, separate from deep understanding and relinquishment of privilege, can be misdirected. People in a position of more privilege can have a strong impulse to jump in to fix the situation, to "help." But this very act is problematic, for all parties. It recenters the individual or group originally in the position of power/privilege. It does not shift the power dynamic, and therefore does not effect true change. Historically marginalized groups are at the margins because the systemic structures, power dynamics, cultural norms, rules etc. hold people there in order to reassert the comfort and surface simplicity of the center position. Sadly, this actually robs those at the center of depth and true liberation.

*If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.*

– Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s



Our liberation is indeed bound up together. We live in a world that is not equitable. Historically marginalized groups have had narratives controlled by people outside the group. These narratives have been extremely harmful, full of stereotypes, inaccuracies, distortions and omissions. If the industry is going to change, those in positions of privilege cannot continue to control the narrative and occupy the center.

We are in the midst of an amazing moment in our industry right now. It is awake and alive and has a spotlight on the lack of diversity. If those in the center grab onto this wave of awareness and impetus for change, treating it like a trend that is there for the taking, then that powerful opportunity for true change is missed. The same inequitable systems get reified. The harm continues. Diverse books by nonmarginalized creators are not the solution. That is not fixing the real problems. I'm not talking about whether writers can ever write outside their lived experience. That is another conversation. I'm talking about how we answer the call for change in our industry. If we want to create equity, the current unjust systems need to change.

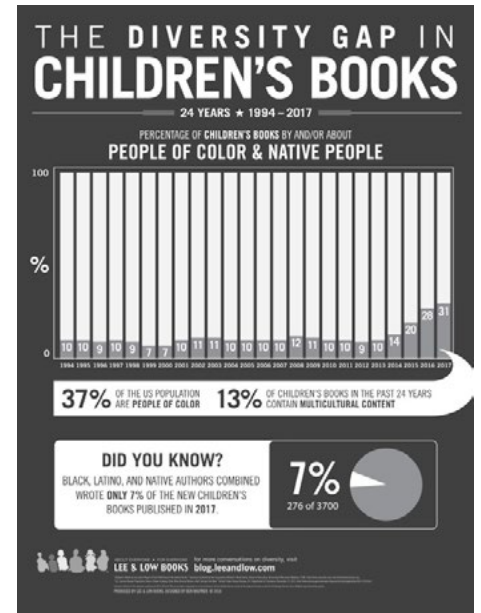
Imagine if the response to #WeNeedDiverseBooks becomes "Yes, we do. How can we dismantle the structures that privilege some writers and illustrators over others?" And what if it continues with, "How can our industry actively value the perspectives and lived experiences of marginalized creators?" and "How can our organization change so that

historically marginalized creators feel welcome and encouraged to tell their stories?" Diverse writers and artists already exist well beyond the small number of celebrated creators who have a place at the table. What can we do to create more seats for such a valuable talent pool?

We need action. I believe appropriate action arises when we let go of preconceived ideas and bear witness to reality. Understanding positions of power/privilege and truly listening creates fertile ground. Opportunities for action in numerous nuanced ways show up. With less of one's ego in the center of the equation, one can see them more clearly and take action. And if a misstep occurs, one has greater agility to navigate that terrain and learn even more, connect even more. This work builds on itself. But starting right where we are, we can take action. We can step out of any center position we find ourselves in, relinquish privilege, open doors, pass the mic, signal boost.

So, let's rise to this moment and use this powerful wave to create true change. We create characters and worlds from the recesses of our minds. Certainly we are up to the task of creating change in ourselves, our organization, and our everyday world.

Thank you to **Urania Smith** for a wonderfully rich and nuanced conversation that helped me rework this column. I appreciate your time and mad skills. You continually enrich my experience and SCBWI-IL is lucky you are in our community.



\* We do not have such clear statistics for books about and by LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities, but we know that we do not have adequate respectful representation.

**Susanne Fairfax** is SCBWI-IL Diversity Committee Chairperson. She and other Diversity Committee members have been working to improve the diversity, equity and inclusion of our chapter. She writes picture book and YA manuscripts in the interstices of making a living in photo/video and life with her partner of 22 years, Deb, and their energetic pup, Raku.