

Prairie Wind

Newsletter of the Illinois Chapter of SCBWI



Fall 2019



From the Editor

I am sitting here listening to **Neil Young's** album *Prairie Wind*. Fragments of lyrics seem to cohere. When summer days come tumbling down, he croons, and the prairie wind is blowing through [your] head...Fall is the time, he says, for going your own way. The summer is over, it's time to buckle down, get inspired, and find our own ways, and what better way to begin than by diving in to our very own *Prairie Wind*. I am thrilled to bring you our fall edition, full of inspiring personal stories, new ideas, and innovative tips to motivate your work and career... [>](#)



Greeting

Alice McGinty's moving farewell letter. "I didn't know if I could fulfill my dream..." [>](#)



Shop Around the Corner

Adrian Miller describes Bookies as a mainstay on the south side of Chicago for over 29 years... [>](#)

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News Roundup

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



Don't Miss

It's Game On! at **Prairie Writer's and Illustrator's Day** in November...



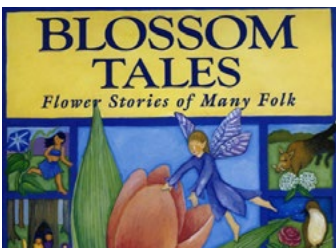
Season's Crop

Jenny Wagh lists our members' new books for fall...



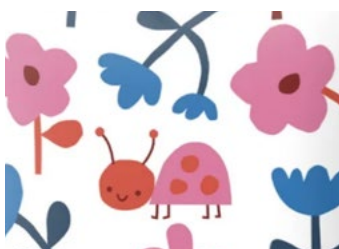
Tales from the Front

Sara Shacter celebrates the power of her debut group...



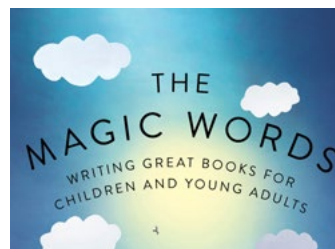
Writing Tips

Patricia Hruby Powell's considers whether to comply or not comply...



Illustrator Tips

Denise Holmes shares her many ideas and venues for making money as an illustrator...



Writer's Bookshelf

Alina Borger writes about **Cheryl Klein's** *The Magic Words*...



The Inside Story

Carol Coven Grannick chronicles how her shy, inner mouse has taken a great leap...



A Fly on the Wall

Gabriella Vagnoli starts strong by attending Marvelous Midwest...



A Fly on the Wall

John Bowen flies squadron over Marvelous Midwest...



Perspectives

Rachel Ruiz tells us about the Amber Brown Grant and a school visit...



Perspectives

Elizabeth Wheeler interviews 'Nathan Burgoine...



Illustrator in the Spotlight

Hannah Bess Ross adapts her art while staying true to her sensibilities...



Voices of Change

Shirin Shamsi describes her immigrant experience and her urgency to write stories...



Mentor Texts

Jennifer Kay Loescher offers mentor texts for deaf and hard of hearing characters...



Classes

Visit illinois.scbwi.org/area-classes-retreats-and-workshops/.





From the Editor

continued from front page

...Start out with **Alice McGinty's** moving [farewell letter](#). "I didn't know if I could fulfill my dream of becoming a children's book author," she writes of her younger self and then goes on to tell her own heartening story, which also reveals the story of our Illinois chapter of SCBWI.

Denise Holmes in [Illustrator Tips](#) writes, "I have a little secret to share with you: Illustrating picture books doesn't pay all my bills." Denise generously shares her many ideas and venues for making money as an illustrator, which will no doubt spark ideas even for the non-illustrators among us.

In this same vein, our [Illustrator in the Spotlight](#) **Hannah Bess Ross** writes about adapting your art and staying true to your sensibilities in "any type of work you get." She describes several projects, including illustrations for the celebrated new cookbook *Heritage Baking*, from Hewn Bakery in Evanston (where she also happens to work!). So, while you're at it, go buy some bread from Hannah herself and pick up one of her lovely cards at the counter.

Sara Shacter's [Tales from the Front](#) celebrates the power of a debut group—which she defines as "a gaggle (peck? flock?) of newly published authors and/or illustrators with books coming out in the same year"—to help launch your book, which in her case is *Just So Willow*, the delightful story of a finicky polar bear.

In [Voices of Change](#), **Shirin Shamsi** beautifully describes her immigrant experience and how books offered "solace and escape from a world that often made no sense" to her and how later, when she became a mother, she felt an "urgency to write stories so my children would see themselves in books."

Patricia Hruby Powell in [Writing Tips](#) speaks helpfully and provocatively on the tricky question of whether "to comply or not to comply" with editorial advice, whether it comes from a critique group, an agent, or an editor, and how your response to this difficult question (think carefully!) might fatefully impact your career.

Our guest columnist, **Alina Borger**, a former Illinois chapter member, writes about **Cheryl Klein's** *The Magic Words*, which she calls "the writer's equivalent of a travel book," "a gracious expert" along for your writing journey, and a book on her [Writer's Bookshelf](#) that is as "crinkled, dog-eared, and annotated" as a much older book.

The amazing *Marvelous Midwest* conference is covered by a pair of [Flies-on-the-Wall](#): illustrator **Gabriella Vagnoli**, who describes the conference as "the strong start to my career that I wanted," and writer **John Bowen**, who writes as he did once before in the voice of an actual fly!

We are also thrilled to launch our newest column, [Mentor Texts](#), which will explore books that can be studied, imitated, and used, as **Lynne Dorfman** writes, to "help us take risks and be different writers tomorrow than [we] are today." In this debut column, **Jennifer Kay Loescher**, our *Prairie Wind* editor (who is on leave for this issue and replaced by the wonderful **Pamela Dell**) explores a list of books on deaf and hard of hearing characters. Have examples of mentor texts related to this? We'd love to hear from you. Share your ideas on Twitter with #mentortexts.

Carol Coven Grannick brings us another deeply felt and relatable [Inside Story](#), chronicling how her shy, inner mouse has taken a great leap and developed a "Grand Promotional Plan," which she charmingly calls her GPP, for her forthcoming novel, *Reenie's Turn*.

Our [Shop Around the Corner](#) this time is Bookies, a store **Adrian Miller** describes as "a mainstay on the south side of Chicago for over 29 years." Adrian interviews two different booksellers, each one describing how she sees herself and Bookies participating in the local world of readers and book creators.

Rachel Ruiz tells a [lively story](#) of taking her book *When Penny Met POTUS* to a local school through the Amber Brown Grant, a fund that "pays tribute to the late and beloved author...**Paula Danziger**" by awarding "one school each year with an all-expense-paid visit by a children's book author or illustrator."

And finally, motivated by an examination of her own writing decisions, **Elizabeth Wheeler** brings us [Before You Pen a Queer Narrative](#), a penetrating, honest conversation with queer author **Nathan Burgoine**.

I hope you'll take some time to read another great issue of the *Prairie Wind*. May it challenge and inspire you to go your own way!

Thank you to **Kelly Darke** for her hard work on [News Roundup](#) and Jenny Wagh for [Don't Miss](#). And of course, a great, walloping thank you to our team.

Amy Alznauer

Jenny Wagh, Editorial Advisor
Amy Alznauer, Managing Editor
Pamela Dell, Editor
Cedric Gliane, Webmaster



Greeting

A Fond Farewell

By Alice McGinty

It's time to write a farewell as I retire from my role as co-Regional Adviser of the Illinois chapter of SCBWI. I've been in this role for ten years, and it's been one of most rewarding and formative experiences in my life!

While I could share hundreds of things here about my time as Regional Advisor, to do this right I'm going to take you back to before I played this role in our chapter and tell you a story—about how it all began.

I moved back to Illinois with my family in 1993, and my story starts about six months before, when I met my first real children's book author. I'd never met an author before, and somewhere inside me, I had this idea that authors were all really old—or dead. I didn't know if I could fulfill my dream of becoming a children's book author, because, after all, I was still pretty young and didn't qualify.

When I read about this children's book author doing a signing at a local bookstore in the Indianapolis area where I lived, I went. And there she was, not old or dead. Things were looking up! I bought one of her books, got her to sign it, and told her I had written a picture book and was submitting it to a list of publishers—and getting rejections.

"How do I do this?" I asked.

"How many rejections have you gotten?" she asked.

"Twenty-four," I answered.

"Good," she replied. "You're on your way."



She then got out a piece of paper and jotted down a phone number next to the letters SCBW. (At that time, illustrators weren't yet an official part of the organization.) "This is the organization you need to join," she said.

I did, and when I moved to Illinois not long after, I called Illinois' Regional Advisor, **Esther Hershenhorn**, and asked her if there were any members in my area. Esther welcomed me warmly and told me that my timing was perfect. A small group of members downstate had been talking about forming a critique group. I was just in time to join and help make things happen! I've always enjoyed making things happen, so I got in touch with the three members in my area, and we began to meet.

I also began to read the *SCBW Bulletin*, learned which editors were looking

for what, and submitted to them. I attended our chapter's retreat in Woodstock, Illinois, where I met editors for the first time, heard them speak... and submitted to them. Which led to my first publications. I was on my way.

It wasn't long before we formed a Central Illinois Network at Esther's suggestion (back then no networks existed south of I-80!), and began to offer programs and "Shop Talks." We were lucky if we could get more than four people to attend!

So when one of our new members, **Becky Mabry**, suggested we bring in **Darcy Pattison**, a well-known children's book author, to run a novel revision retreat in Champaign, I told her we couldn't possibly fill the twenty spots. Becky was not one to take no for an answer, though. She persisted, saying, "People will come!" until I



relented. We gave it a try, and people DID come—from all over the state. We filled the workshop, began to offer yearly workshops, and our membership grew. Soon other downstate areas formed networks. The Springfield SCRIBES were born, Bloomington-Normal members formed the “Near Normal Writers,” members in the Edwardsville area came together, and the Downstate Illustrator’s Network formed.

You know how you can just tell when something feels right? When it’s a good fit? That’s how I felt. I loved the people I was meeting. I was learning, I was growing. A community was forming—and it was my community.

Time passed, SCBW began to include illustrators, adding an I to its acronym, and I became the Downstate Coordinator for the programming

including **Louann Brown**, who made our SCBWI booth into an energetic, colorful magnet for teachers. They flocked there by the hundreds during the conference to meet Illinois authors and illustrators and to see our new books. We learned what they were looking for, that they were eager to find out about bringing Illinois members in for school visits—and we provided that.

I learned more too, grew more, and my community, our community, grew stronger. Our retreat in Woodstock outgrew itself, Prairie Writer’s Day took its place, and we began to offer a downstate Words in the Woods retreat.

When I became co-Regional Advisor in 2009 with **Lisa Bierman**, my community expanded even more. Not only did I get to work with the bright, energetic members in the Chicago area, but each year I was able to attend



I’m still growing, and so is SCBWI-Illinois. **Debbie Topolski** came on as my co-RA and has rocked our chapter with her energy and forward thinking. We are one of the biggest, strongest chapters in the world—one that is rich in generosity, smarts, creativity, and togetherness. As I step back, I know that the new regional team, with Deb Topolski, **Jenny Wagh**, **Cedric Gliane**, and **Deb Aronson**, will do amazing things for our chapter with their combination of smarts and energy!

And me, I’m staying close as a Regional Advisor Emeritus. My personal journey and my SCBWI journey have been so closely tied together I can’t pull them apart. SCBWI is my community and always will be. It has given me dear friends, knowledge, opportunity, a lifeline when I needed it, and more.

So I’m not going far, and I can’t wait to show up at events and see everyone’s smiles.

It’s been an honor to serve our dynamic Illinois chapter. I love you all!



and networks downstate. At Esther’s suggestion, we began to run an SCBWI-Illinois booth in the exhibit hall of the annual Illinois Reading Council conference. More people got involved,

SCBWI’s two annual international conferences, in NYC and LA, where I met regional team members from all over the world.



News Roundup

Fall 2019

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 the Anderson's website or call (630) 355-2665 for AB Naperville (123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville), (630) 963-2665 for AB Downers Grove (5112 Main St., Downers Grove), or (708) 582-6353 for AB La Grange (26 S. La Grange Rd., La Grange).

- **October 1** – **Kim Long**, author of *Lexi Magill and the Teleportation Tournament*, 6:30 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 Main St., Downers Grove (630) 963-2665. (MG)
- **October 2** – Fierce READS author group includes: **L.L. McKinney** (*A Dream So Dark*); **Margaret Owen** (*The Merciful Crow*); **Sara Faring** (*The Tenth Girl*); and **Katy Rose Pool** (*There Will Come a Darkness*), 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 Main St., Downers Grove (630) 963-2665. (YA)
- **October 3** – **Chris Colfer**, author of *A Tale of Magic*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. Tickets at ChrisColfer2Andersons.brownpapertickets.com (MG)
- **October 4** – **Ashley Elston**, author of *10 Blind Dates*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 26 S. La Grange Rd., La Grange, (708) 582-6353. Paired with our Ugly Sweater Party. (YA)
- **October 6** – **Annie Sullivan** (*Tiger Queen*) and **Lauren Mansy** (*The Memory Thief*), 2:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 Main St., Downers Grove, (630) 963-2665. (YA)
- **October 6** – **Jennifer Nielsen**, author of *Words on Fire*, 2:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. (MG)
- **October 14** – **Rosaria Munda**, author of *Fireborne*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. (YA)
- **October 17** – **Carolyn Crimi**, author of *Weird Little Robots*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. (MG)
- **October 20** – Anderson's Bookshops' 7th Annual YA Fandom Frenzy. Author panels and more. 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Tickets: www.eventcombo.com/e/ya-fandom-frenzy-35465. Must be 22 or younger to attend. Parents may attend with their teen(s), but need a ticket as well. (YA)
- **October 28** – **Sydney Smith**, author of *Small in the City*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 Main St., Downers Grove (630) 963-2665. (PB)
- **October 29** – **Eva Chen**, author of *Juno Valentine and the Fantastic Fashion Adventure*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 26 S. La Grange Rd., La Grange, (708) 582-6353. Tickets exclusively at JunoValentineAndersons.brownpapertickets.com (PB)
- **November 4** – **Andrea Beaty**, author of *Sofia Valdez: Future Prez*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. (PB)
- **November 5** – **Claudia Guadalupe Martinez** (*Not a Bean*) and **Eileen Meyer** (*The Superlative A. Lincoln*), 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 Main St., Downers Grove, (630) 963-2665. (PB)
- **November 6** – **E.E. Knight**, author of *Novice Dragoner*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. (YA)
- **November 10** – **Neal Shusterman**, author of *The Toll*, 2:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. (YA)
- **November 12** – **Ronni Davis**, author of *When the Stars Lead to You*, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. (YA)
- **November 16** – **Ken Kragel**, author of *Wild Honey from the Moon*, 11:00 a.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. (PB)

BOOKIE'S NEW AND USED BOOKS

Information is subject to change. Bookie's New and Used Books is located at 10324 S. Western Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, and at 2015 Ridge Road, Homewood, Illinois. For more information on this and other upcoming events, visit the website at <https://www.bookiesbookstores.com/>, email info@bookieschicago.com or info@bookieshomewood.com, or call 773-239-1110 (Chicago) or 708-377-0789 (Homewood).

- **October** – Stay tuned for more details on a Young Readers Book Club event featuring a local author.
- **October 11, November 1, and December 6** – PJ Story Time, 6:00 p.m.
- **October 27 and December 15** – Yoga and Lit, 9:00 a.m.
- **November 9** – Special event with the Homewood Science Center featuring **Ruth Spiro**, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- **November 10** – Special story time featuring **Sara Shacter**

TEENTOBER

When: October 1–31, 2019.

Details: A nationwide celebration hosted by libraries every October. The event aims to celebrate teens and to promote year-round teen services. It also highlights innovative ways that library teen services help teens learn new skills and fuel their passions, both in the library and beyond. TeenTober replaces YALSA's previous Teen Read Week™ and Teen Tech Week™ celebrations.

For more information: <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/teentober>



Don't Miss

PRAIRIE WRITER'S & ILLUSTRATOR'S DAY

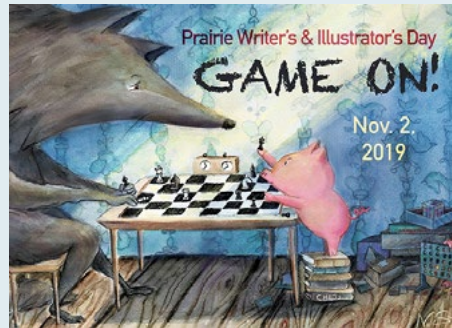
When: November 2, 2019, 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

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

Cost: \$170.00 for members, \$205.00 for non-members (additional opportunities for writers and illustrators available at an additional cost, see website for details)

Details: SCBWI-Illinois' annual conference

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



ANDERSON'S BOOKSHOP 16th ANNUAL YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE CONFERENCE

When: October 19, 2019

Where: Embassy Suites, Naperville, IL

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

For more information: www.andersonsbookshop.com/event/andersons-16th-annual-adult-literature-conference

ILA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

When: October 22-24, 2019

Where: Tinley Park Convention Center, 18451 Convention Center Drive, Tinley Park, 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: <http://ila.org>

43rd DAY OF READING CONFERENCE

When: November 22, 2019, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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

Cost: Based on membership status and which events one attends; 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 digital literacy expert **Troy Hicks**.

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

AWARDS

BOSTON GLOBE-HORN BOOK AWARDS

Winners

Fiction & Poetry: *The Season of Styx Malone* by **Kekla Magoon** (Wendy Lamb Books/Random House)

Nonfiction: *This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality* by **Jo Ann Allen Boyce** and **Debbie Levy** (Bloomsbury Children's Books)

Picture Book: *The Patchwork Bike* written by **Maxine Beneba Clarke**; illustrated by **Van Thanh Rudd** (Candlewick)

Honor Books

Fiction & Poetry

- *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* by **Adib Khorram** (Dial Books/Penguin Random House)
- *On the Come Up* by **Angie Thomas** (Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins)

Nonfiction

- *Hey, Kiddo* written and illustrated by **Jarrett J. Krosoczka** (Graphix/Scholastic)
- *Nine Months: Before a Baby Is Born* written by **Miranda Paul**; illustrated by **Jason Chin** (Neal Porter Books/Holiday House)

Picture Book

- *Dreamers* written and illustrated by **Yuyi Morales** (Neal Porter Books/Holiday House)
- *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* written by **Traci Sorell**; illustrated by **Frané Lessac** (Charlesbridge)

For more information: <https://www.hbook.com/?detailStory=presenting-the-2019-boston-globe-horn-book-award-winners>



GRANTS & CONTESTS

GOLDEN KITE AWARDS

What: The only children's literary award judged by a jury of peers. These awards recognize excellence in children's literature in six categories: Young Reader and Middle Grade Fiction, Young Adult Fiction, Nonfiction for Young Readers, Nonfiction for Older Readers, Picture Book Text, and Picture Book Illustration. Any current SCBWI member (renewed through at least December 2019) may submit a traditionally published book of theirs with a release date in 2019.

Deadline: Entries must be received between July 1 – November 15, 2019 (for books published between July-December 2019). Deadline is closed for books published in the first half of the year.

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

JANE YOLEN MID-LIST AUTHOR GRANT

What: This grant awards \$3,000 to mid-list authors and aims to help raise awareness about these authors' current works in progress.

Deadline: Entries are due by November 1, 2019.

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 the 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 as per the guidelines.

Deadline: Books published from July 2019 through December 2019 must be received by November 30, 2019. Deadline is closed for books published in the first half of the year.

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

SCBWI MAGAZINE MERIT AWARDS

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

Deadline: Entries must have been published in 2019 and be postmarked ON or BEFORE December 15, 2019.

For more information: <https://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 from an ethnic and/or cultural background that is traditionally under-represented in children's literature in America.

Deadline: Applications accepted between September 15 and November 15, 2019 only

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

SPARK AWARD

What: This award recognizes excellence in a children's book self-published either through an established self-publishing enterprise or individually

self-published. Any current SCBWI member whose membership has been renewed through at least April 2020 may submit one title for the 2019 award.

Deadline: SPARK 2019 opens November 15, 2019. Deadline is December 19, 2019.

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

SCBWI NARRATIVE ART 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). Additionally, an online gallery will display all submissions made to the competition.

Deadline: Submissions are due by midnight Pacific Standard Time, October 15, 2019.

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

Kelly Darke is a mathematics educator and aspiring picture book writer. She blogs at www.mathbookmagic.com about math picture books that inspire wonder and joy.



Season's Crop

Fall & Winter 2019

Compiled by Jenny Wagh

Picture Books

Fiction

Finding Treasure: A Collection of Collections by **Michelle Schaub**, Illustrated by **Carmen Saldana**, Charlesbridge, ISBN: 9781580898751, September 2019

Freedom Soup by **Tami Charles**, Illus. **Jacqueline Alcántara**, Candlewick, ISBN: 9780763897773, December 2019

Jasper & Ollie by **Alex Willan**, Doubleday Books for Young Readers, ISBN: 9780525645214, 2019

Just So Willow by **Sara Shacter**, Illus. **Stephanie Laberis**, Sterling Children's Books, ISBN: 978145927410, October 2019

Pick a Pumpkin by **Patricia Toht**, Illus. **Jarvis**, Candlewick, ISBN: 9781536207644, July 2019

Picture Books

Non-Fiction

Babies Around the World Dancing by **Tamara Baker**, Duopress, ISBN: 1947458787, September 2019.

Baby Loves the Five Senses Hearing! by **Ruth Spiro**, Charlesbridge, ISBN: 978-1623541026, September 2019

Buzzing with Questions: The Inquisitive Mind of Charles Henry Turner by **Janice N. Harrington**, Illus. **Theodore Taylor III**, Calkins Creek, ISBN: 978-1629795584, November 2019

The House That Cleaned Itself: The True Story of Frances Gabe's (Mostly) Marvelous Invention by **Susan Romberg**, Illus. **Laura Dershewitz**, The Innovation Press, ISBN: 9781943147656, September 2019

Like a Girl by **Lori Degman**, Illus. **Mara Penny**, Sterling Children's Books, ISBN: 978-1454933021, August 2019

Not a Bean by **Claudia Guadalupe Martinez**, Illus. **Laura Gonzalez**, Charlesbridge, ISBN: 9781580898157, November 2019

Picturing God by **Ruth Goring**, Beaming Books, ISBN: 9781506449395, September 2019

Prairie Boy: Frank Lloyd Wright Turns the Heartland into a Home by **Barb Rosenstock**, Illus. **Christopher Silas Neal**, Calkins Creek, ISBN: 9781629794402, September 2019

The Superlative A. Lincoln: Poems About Our 16th President by **Eileen R. Meyer**, illustrated by **Dave Szalay**, Charlesbridge, ISBN: 978158089937, November 2019.

Middle Grade & Young Adult

Fiction

Ava the Monster Slayer in Cousin Power by **Lisa Maggiore**, Illus. **Ross Felten**, Sky Pony, ISBN: 9781510748101, November 2019

Born in Syn by **Beth Kander**, Homebound Publications ISBN: 9781947003507, October 2019

Cape: The League of Secret Heroes (Book 1) by **Kate Hannigan**, Illus. **Patrick Spaziante**, Aladdin, ISBN: 9781534439115, August 2019.

Hazel's Theory of Evolution by **Lisa Jenn Bigelow**, Harper Collons, ISBN: 9780062791191, October 2019

Lexi Magill and the Teleportation Tournament by **Kim Long**, Running Press Kids, ISBN: 9780762466986, October 2019

The Curse of the Werpenguin by **Allan Woodrow**, Viking Books for Young Readers, ISBN: 9780451480446, August 2019

Weird Little Robots by **Carolyn Crimi**, Illus. **Corinna Luyken**, Candlewick, ISBN: 9780763694937, October 2019

We Speak In Storms by **Natalie Lund**, Philomel Books, ISBN: 9780525518006, September 2019

Middle Grade & Young Adult

Non-Fiction

From an Idea to Lego: The Building of the Largest Toy Company by **Lowey Bundy Sichol**, HMH Books for Young Readers ISBN: 9781328954947, July 2019

Jennifer Wagh is excitedly awaiting her debut picture book *Fall 2021 Eggasaurus* (Simon & Schuster Books For Young Readers) When not writing she's wrangling a classroom of preschoolers. You can find out more about her at <https://www.facebook.com/jennifer.wagh> or Instagram [@jennymariewagh](https://www.instagram.com/jennymariewagh).





Tales from the Front

Debut Groups – It Takes a Village to Promote a Book!

By Sara Shacter

The warnings can weigh heavily on a newly published author or illustrator:

“Once you sell a book, the real work begins.”

“Publishers won’t do much marketing unless you’re a big name.”

“Promote, promote, promote!”

Is all of this true? To some degree, yes. But there’s no need to panic! Where there’s a will, there’s a way.

When I sold my picture book *Just So Willow* to Sterling Publishing in 2017, it was not my first sale. I had published another picture book, *Heading to the Wedding*, with a small independent press many (many!) years before. That book did not sell well. One reason was that I didn’t educate myself about the vital aspects of publicity and marketing. I tried a few things, grew frustrated, and then gave up.

But now I had Willow, a polar bear who likes things “just so.” She irons her underwear. She straightens her spaghetti. So when a storm covers her backyard in a clean, smooth blanket of snow, she’s determined to keep it that way—in spite of all her Arctic neighbors sliding, stomping, and

creating a lumpy, bumpy mess. The dramatic question at hand: Will Willow stick to her precise ways, or will she join in the messy fun?

Just So Willow has a broader market appeal than *Heading to the Wedding*, which is simply about attending a wedding. So I girded my loins—I would not make the same mistake twice. This time, I would educate myself about the publicity and marketing options and take action.

But where to begin? Social media? Blog tours? Promotional swag? Book signings? Speaking engagements? School visits? Niche markets? Library programs?

Cue head explosion.

Then a miracle occurred, in the form of... **Lisa Katzenberger**.

Lisa is a wonderful picture book writer and is SCBWI-Illinois’ Social Media Coordinator. Though I’m sure she could descend from the heavens, we met up in a much more mundane fashion: during an SCBWI event at the Printer’s Row Lit Fest in Chicago. She asked when my book was coming out. I told her 2019.

“Mine too!” she said. “I’m starting a debut group. Want to join?”

I knew folks who were in debut groups. I knew they were helpful. But I had no idea what being in one entailed.

Little did I know how pivotal my group would become.

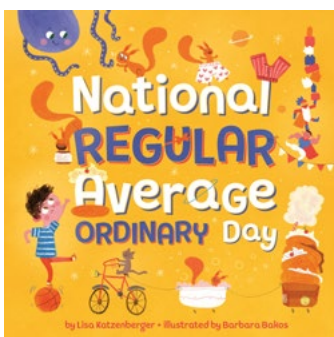
What Is a Debut Group?

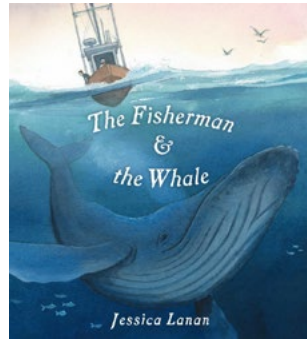
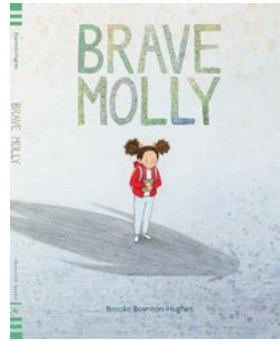
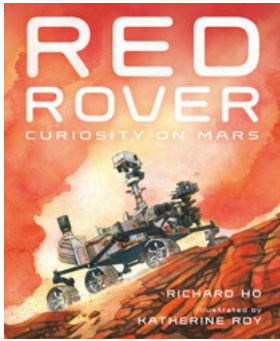
A debut group is a gaggle (peck? flock?) of newly published authors and/or illustrators with books coming out in the same year. They band together to help promote one another’s titles, pooling their resources to everyone’s advantage. Each member has unique contacts, skills, and points of view. The sum is definitely more than its parts.

My group, the Notable 19s, has a fairly flexible definition of “debut.” Some of our members are seeing their very first book come out. Others have illustrated previous books, but are debuting as author-illustrators. But all of our books are coming out from well-known larger publishing houses. In my case, I am debuting as an author with a mid-size New York publisher.

How Do I Find or Start a Group?

Finding a group can be a little tricky, as once a group launches it’s often closed





to new members. However, you never know unless you ask! Put the word out to friends and on social media that you're looking.

Want to organize a group yourself? Start with friends who have books coming out in the same year as yours. They may be able to recommend others who'd like to join your merry band. Social media can be helpful in this situation as well. Have you enjoyed communicating with a soon-to-be-published author/illustrator on Facebook or Twitter? Ask when his/her book is debuting, and check out his/her online presence to see if the two of you are a good fit. Finally, conferences can be a source of interested parties. Many folks meet like-minded creators during breakouts or over drinks.

Don't let geography stymie you. Most groups are spread across the country. The Notable 19s literally reach from coast to coast. But this is not an impediment. Quite the contrary. Geographical diversity is an asset. We each bring our different experiences and various connections to the mix, via SCBWI, Facebook, Twitter, bookstores, librarians, and so on.

Before you issue an invitation to join, though, it's important to get a sense of whether or not an individual will really be committed. In any case, launching a debut group is an act of faith. There's no way to predict exactly how folks will gel.

You might also experience some flux while you're organizing. The Notable 19s were just about to launch when Lisa's book was delayed until 2020. A sad development, indeed! In fact, a few of our original writers/illustrators had the same issue. So membership shifted and the fabulous **Teresa Robeson** took the helm from Lisa, who went on to join Perfect 2020 Picture Books.

Another point to ponder is how homogeneous you want the group to be, in terms of the books themselves. Only picture books? Novels? Only books traditionally published? Only independently? Do you want a mix of writers and illustrators? The Notable 19s is comprised of authors and/or illustrators of picture books. By focusing on picture books, we feel better able to target appropriate audiences.

How Many People Should Be in a Group?

The answer to this question depends on your objectives. Our group has 13 members. We wanted to keep the number small so we could adequately support one another. I know of groups with 20 members, and one with 100! The bigger the group, the more you can flood the airways. However, each member's book might receive less attention or promotion—after all, if there are 100 people in your group, it will be hard for you to follow each author/illustrator online, post about everyone's books, etc.

As a group grows in size, it can also become more difficult for its members to reach consensus if there are decisions to be made during the course of the year. And it may be more likely that the workload isn't quite as evenly distributed.

How Is a Debut Group Organized?

In order to keep folks' workload as fair as possible, it's good to have some sort of founding document outlining what's expected of each member. The document should first address the group's overall goals. Lisa did a great job on this front. The Notable 19s' main goals are to support and market one another and to give back to the kidlit community via blog posts offering advice, critiques as prizes, and giveaways. Lisa took on the task of setting up a website, Twitter account, and private Facebook group.

The founding document should also list what's required of each member. If you plan to have a website with a blog, everyone should contribute; with Google docs, it's easy to create a sign-up sheet. Will your group arrange Twitter chats and giveaways? Should your members be active on social media, using your group's hashtag? Should you all be reviewing each other's books and asking bookstores and libraries to carry each other's titles? Spelling out the expectations in advance makes for smoother sailing.



A Shout-Out to My Notable 19s

- Founder: **Lisa Katzenberger** (*National Regular Average Ordinary Day*, Penguin Workshop, 2020)
- **Lisa Anchin** (*The Little Green Girl*, Dial)
- **Marcie Atkins** (*Wait, Rest, Pause: Dormancy in Nature*, Millbrook Press)
- **Cassandra Federman** (*This is a Sea Cow*, Albert Whitman)
- **Richard Ho** (*Red Rover*, Roaring Brook/McMillan)
- **Brooke Boynton Hughes** (*Brave Molly*, Chronicle)
- **Jessica Lanan** (*The Fisherman and the Whale*, Simon & Schuster)
- **Shauna LaVoy Reynolds** (*Poetree*, Sterling)
- **Stephanie Lucianovic** (*The End of Something Wonderful*, Sterling)
- **Cathy Ballou Mealey** (*When a Tree Grows*, Sterling)
- **Teresa Robeson** (*Queen of Physics*, Sterling)
- **James Serafino** (*This Little Piggy*, Philomel)
- **Hannah Stark** (*Trucker and Train*, Clarion/HMH)

Why I Love the Notable 19s

For me, the Notable 19s have been everything I expected—we tweet out each other’s news, review each other’s books online, and promote the group as a whole.

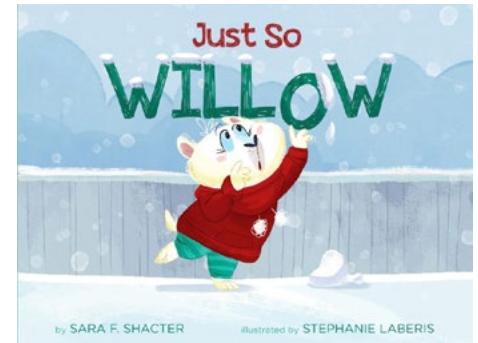
But it’s also been much more.

Enthusiasm was extremely high when we started so goal-setting became our first priority. Together, we brainstormed 13 ideas, some of which included making a flyer about our group, approaching various bloggers we knew, and starting a snail-mail chain of ARCs so we could review each other’s books more quickly. We then voted on the top four ideas. A sign-up sheet on Google made it easy for everyone to pitch in.

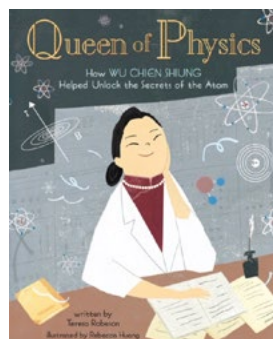
As we emailed back and forth, working out all the details, something wonderful happened. These authors and illustrators—none of whom I knew when I joined—morphed into friends. I heard about their kids and their hobbies. They made me think and laugh. I discovered they are all, to a person, kind and generous. We can be open with each other when reviews aren’t what we had hoped or when some aspect of this crazy industry leaves us befuddled.

So if you’re thinking about joining or starting a debut group, I vote yes! You really have nothing to lose. Your group can be big or small, focused or general.

But as I often say, there aren’t many mean people in the business of creating children’s books. Chances are, you’ll find a new band of brothers and sisters. Maybe even some friends for life.



Sara F. Shacter’s most recent publication is the picture book *Just So Willow* (Sterling, 2019). She is also the author of *Heading to the Wedding*, as well as many articles for magazines and educational publishers such as ASK, Click, Highlights for Children, YES Mag; *Canada’s Science Magazine for Kids*, *World Book*, and *Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry*. In addition, Sara has worked as a contributing editor for ASK and *World Book*. Find her at www.sarafshacter.com.





Writing Tips

To Comply or Not to Comply: A Few Stories

by Patricia Hruby Powell

Critique Groups

We write by ourselves—pouring our hearts and ideas out onto the page. Then we bring those heart-filled pages to our writing group. Hopefully they support us and want the best for us. But the whole point is to improve our writing, so the members critique—after all it is a critique group. They question us. What is your main purpose? Someone asks, Is this phrase really what you want to say? Or, This structure confuses me. Or, perhaps the worst, This is fatally flawed.

When yours is the work being critiqued, you listen carefully. If you have an ongoing group you learn each member's strengths in critiquing as time goes on. This one is good with rhythm and sound. This one is a librarian and knows the literature. This one is the grammarian. But this other one knows the main character's voice doesn't need to be grammatical. You don't disregard anyone's feedback—whether they're published or not. Sometimes the least experienced person in your group has a clarity that turns out to be the most helpful of all.

You take notes during the meeting. You go home and pore over the written comments, whether on paper or in e-documents. I take the one paper version that speaks to me most clearly (or is the cleanest, or attracts me for some reason) and then I assign a color for each critiquer and add their notes to the document. If two or more people have the same comment, I take that comment especially seriously. I return to my color key to remind myself who else made similar comments. I know my critiquers. I respect my critiquers. We've

grown up together as writers and have gotten published over time. Some are pre-published. Yes, some people move away, but we usually remain friends. New people occasionally join. We help each other.

It's understood that as a critiquer you're expressing opinions. So much is simply subjective. One suggestion or marked problem might contradict another critiquer's suggestion. You know that the one being critiqued won't do everything you suggest. It's their piece, guided by their vision.

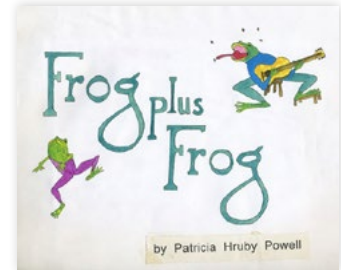
So the buck stops at the writer. It's up to you—the writer—to figure out the right path.

Submissions to Agents or Editors

When you or your group think it's time to send your work to an editor or an agent, you ready yourself to receive further suggestions or advice, from the editing professionals. If the editor or agent likes your work enough to ask you to revise, that's great. They're interested. Hoorah! You're making progress. But what if the advice makes no sense to you, or you're opposed to the changes?

Now let's get personal. Here are some stories, starting with my own.

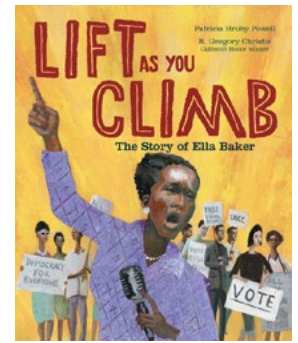
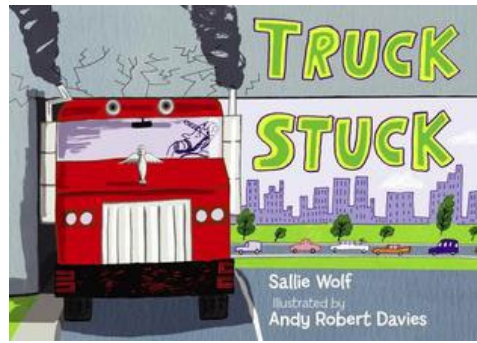
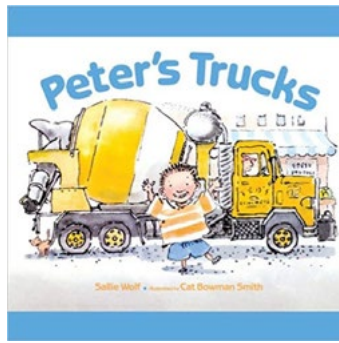
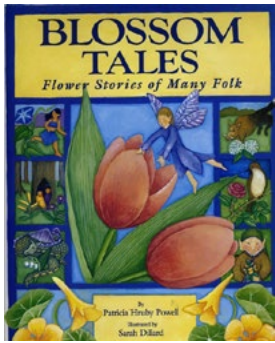
My background is that of a dancer/choreographer who was the chief cook and bottle washer for my dance company, One Plus One. Well, actually I was dancer, choreographer, booking agent (sometimes), and oftentimes costume designer, lighting designer, travel guide, grant writer,



and who knows what else! I was NOT accustomed to others telling me how something should be done. **Walter Lorraine** at Houghton Mifflin said he might buy my picture book titled *Frog Plus Frog* if I made a story out of it. Hmm...It felt like a story to me. It was the story of my internationally touring dance company, told in "Frog" and illustrated by me. I revised, trying to make it more of a "story." Perhaps I still didn't understand what Mr. Lorraine meant by "story." Anyway, I didn't change it to his satisfaction. He told me I was stubborn. True. But I'd tried. It was never published.

I wrote an autobiographical novel of my eleven-year-old self, titled *Maddy* (get it, Patty/Maddy?). Editor **Wendy Lamb**, then, an editor at Penguin, said, Do this and this and this and I'll look at it again. I tried half-heartedly, but I didn't really want to do this and this and this. I liked my book the way it was. **Virginia Buckley** of Clarion and **Robbie Mayes** of FSG each asked me to make revisions I didn't want to do or didn't understand. I sort of tried. They both declared it publishable—but not by them. It was never published. Who knew it would be so difficult to get published?

I submitted a collection of retold flower folktales, *Bloom Tales*, to Charlesbridge. An editor there told me that if I chose



other simple folktales and retold them briefly such that each could be an illustrated double-page spread, she'd love to look at that. But that wasn't what I wanted to do. Who knew it was this difficult to get published?

So a few years later I tried what that editor had suggested and sent it to her, but by then she'd left the house. And no one else at Charlesbridge wanted it. Publishing is a subjective matter too—and therefore placing a manuscript is partly luck.

Eventually that manuscript of brief folktales became my first book, *Blossom Tales: Flower Stories from Around the World* (Moon Mountain 2002), beautifully illustrated by **Sarah Dillon**. Sadly, Moon Mountain is now defunct. But the lesson is: Those editors are smart. They know what they're talking about. Today, most manuscripts have to go through agents to get to editors, but those agents know their stuff too, and might also suggest revisions.

So if you want to get published, I'd suggest you do what those smart and knowledgeable editors and agents suggest. But how can you do that if your heart isn't in it? Next question: Am I sorry I didn't comply? I was disappointed to not get those early manuscripts published, but I kept working, persevering, improving my work. As with any art, by practicing diligently you improve your skills. After *Blossom Tales* I published two retold Navajo folktales with Salina Bookshelf,

wonderfully illustrated by the Navajo artist **Kendrick Benally**.

Let's look at some other authors' stories—members of SCBWI-Illinois who complied and got published. They're not necessarily *compliant* but they did end up complying. And so became published authors—probably sooner in their careers than I, a non-complier, did.

Sallie Wolf had a manuscript critiqued at a local conference. The editor liked her writing but didn't want the piece Sallie had submitted. The editor wanted a truck piece. Sallie set to writing it on her 'L' trip home—a different truck for each day of the week. The editor said, "Wrong age group, trucks are for toddlers, focus on your audience". Sallie complied, rewrote, sent it in. After nine months she called the editor. The editor asked her to rewrite it in rhymed couplets and gave her a first couplet as a model. OK, said Sallie.

Four years after that 'L' ride *Peter's Trucks* was published (Albert Whitman 1992). Sallie then wrote *Truck Stuck*, which Whitman rejected, and twelve short years later ;-) it came out with Charlesbridge (2008). (Sallie did not give up). Sallie complied. She believed some smart editors and improved her stories as she worked with them.

There are lots of similar stories. Frequently an editor will ask for a revision, the author will comply,

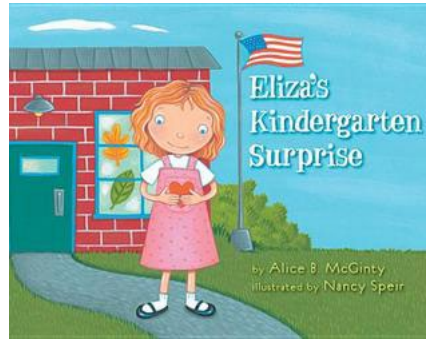
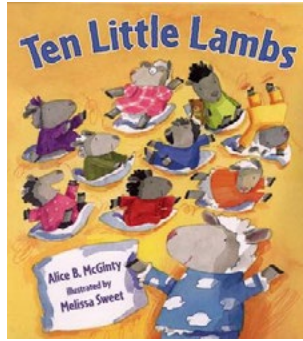
and yet no contract is offered. Most authors feel they vastly improve their manuscripts by working with an editor who cares. So what if, after all that work, no contract is offered? Oftentimes it will sell to another publisher. That's what happened with my *Lift As You Climb: The Story of Ella Baker* (McElderry—Simon & Schuster 2020). I worked with an editor from one house. We radically improved my manuscript. We worked great together. But she couldn't get it through acquisitions—you know, that's when the editor brings the work to the editorial, marketing, and maybe art staff meeting—where they decide on whether to offer a contract. Shortly after, my agent sold this manuscript to Simon & Schuster and there was practically no editing to be done (I'd already done it).



Sara Shacter spent a year revising her novel for an agent. Though the agent ultimately passed, the manuscript had improved immensely and Sara snagged another agent.

Carol Grannick made six huge revisions to her novel for one agent, who finally felt she'd nailed it, but the agent failed to sell the book. They parted





ways. So Carol returned to her original concept, made improvements to the story, and sold it. Ta da! Sometimes what an editor or agent wants isn't what the book you're writing necessarily needs to find its home. Carol's vision held strong. *Look for Reeni's Turn* (Regal House/Fitzroy Books, 2020). Yeah, Carol!

I do love working with an editor whose ideas make sense to me. But I'm still stubborn. My agent has been placing my work for ten years now. We do well together. But recently, she was confused by the structure of a manuscript I submitted to her. She asked me to do something that baffled me. Each day I'd look at her preferred structure and each day I'd close my computer and go off to clean my deck, organize my office. Or play Wordscapes on my phone. After a week or so, I asked my (editing) agent to submit the piece as I'd organized it, to the four editors who have bought recent works of mine. I wondered if she'd drop me, but I couldn't do what she'd asked. After a few days of silence, she agreed. If it turns out all four of those editors are perplexed by my work, I'll go back to the drawing board. It was risky. But I simply couldn't do what my agent wanted—it was no longer my piece with my ideas if I restructured it.

Post Contract

Even after you have a contract (Yay! Congratulations! Fireworks! Cocktails!) editors inevitably ask you for revisions. Sometimes you fully comply and

sometimes you don't. They expect this. Editors respect their writers.

In **Alice McGinty's** first trade book, *Ten Little Lambs* (Dial 2002), there was the mention of underwear. The editor did not like the underwear. Alice said something to the effect of, "Please, I want the underwear. Kids love underwear." But it was a first book and as Alice says, "You pick your battles." That underwear became pajamas.

In another of Alice's books, the marketing department created a title that simply didn't work for Alice. Every day she'd suggest an alternate title. Finally they agreed on the title *Eliza's Kindergarten Surprise* (Marshall Cavendish 2007). You pick your battles.

My editor wanted a metaphor of fabric to run through *Loving vs. Virginia* (Chronicle 2017) in the same way I'd used a volcano metaphor in *Josephine* (Chronicle 2014). I couldn't make it work. But I kept a few references to home-spun cloth and fabric, which deepened the tactile sense in the story. Sometimes (or maybe always) an editor requests changes because she thinks something is missing from the work—but there are various ways to address what might be missing. What they want is for your book to work in the best way possible.

To Comply or Not

If you're not yet published, is it because you're still developing your style, your

work? The stories above are just a few sample situations. Walter Lorraine was correct. I'm stubborn—not just due to my experience as chief cook and bottle washer, but stubbornness is a deeply hewn character trait of mine. I like to think of it as being strong-willed ;-)

We make decisions about our work at every turn. And when we let others into the mix—critique group members, agents, editors, our readers—we open ourselves up to even more decisions that must be made. No one can tell you with certainty when to comply and when not to, but maybe these stories can help guide you when you face your own struggles with editorial demands.

To comply or not to comply, that is often the question.

Please share your inspiring (or not-inspiring) stories or ask questions or advice from this knowledgeable group of Illinois SCBWI members.

Patricia Hruby Powell teaches continuing education writing classes at Parkland College in Champaign. She tends to feel a strong ownership of her writing, but loves to work with editors whom she admires and respects and who can guide her in improving her books, which currently include *Struttin' With Some Barbecue*; *Loving vs. Virginia*; and *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker*.



Illustrator Tips

Passive Income for Picture Book Illustrators

By Denise Holmes

I have a little secret to share with you: Illustrating picture books doesn't pay all my bills. I make most of my money through multiple streams of revenue. I find it incredibly difficult to take on any other work while I'm in the time-consuming process of illustrating a book, so I've found other great ways to keep the money coming in while staying focused on my art. It all happens through passive income outlets.

What exactly is passive income? For artists, passive income is money you receive regularly from artwork you've already created or that you make specifically for an art-based outlet. This allows you to keep earning money while focusing on your picture book projects or other work not immediately generating revenue. Win win!

To get your revenue streams going you do have to make an investment of time and energy at the beginning, but once you've got everything set up, money can flow in on a regular basis with little effort on your part. Since most of the work to establish these channels happens upfront, your only ongoing need will be the occasional promotion through social media. Your stream of



passive income won't happen overnight but you can slowly build up your various outlets, focusing on the ones that work best for you.

Artists have a lot of options when it comes to generating this kind of income, from selling digital graphics or art prints to teaching online. The hardest part is figuring out which one to try first. Here are some great possibilities.

Selling Your Work Through Digital Marketplaces

My first jump into passive income started with *Etsy*. I opened a shop to sell digital graphics (clip art) on the site. I spent a good six months to a year coming up with unique sets of 10-20 digital graphics. I packaged them together in a zip file to sell for around \$10 each. I still sell digital graphics on *Etsy* but recently I started using a newer platform as well, called *Creative Market*.

I focus on these two marketplaces so I don't spread myself too thin. As

you might expect, the sites you spend the most time on will be your most successful. And each marketplace will have a different type of customer so take that into account when you decide where to establish your shop. Other digital marketplaces I recommend are *Design Cuts* and *Gumroad*, which bills itself as "super-simple e-commerce and audience-building software for creators."

The good thing about these online marketplaces is that you set the prices for your work. But of course every "venue" takes a percentage of each sale so make sure to charge accordingly.

Create On-Demand Sites

On-demand websites are online shops where you can upload artwork for use on different products, including t-shirts, coffee mugs, beach towels, home décor, and yoga mats. These shops take care of sales, production, manufacturing, shipping, and returns, which gives you more freedom to create artwork and promote as you need to. Like digital marketplaces, each print-on-demand (POD) website reaches a different





customer base so do your research to figure out which one works best for your artwork. Some print-on-demand sites I recommend include **society6**, **Redbubble**, **Casetify**, and **Zazzle**.

Selling Art On-Demand

Another on-demand option is selling art prints of your work on sites specifically designed for that. This is similar in concept to the on-demand sites mentioned above, but the merchandise for sale is strictly art. These sites will host a shop for you and take care of the sales, production,



manufacturing, shipping, and returns and some will allow you to sell original art as well as art prints of your pieces. Some print on-demand sites for art prints I recommend include **ArtPal**, **Saatchi**, **Artfinder**, **FineArtAmerica**, **Art.Com**, and **Artfully Walls**.

You can also sell digital downloads of your artwork in PDF form. This means you first have to upload your art to the site(s) of your choice. If it's art you've generated on your computer you can just send that file directly to the site. If it's art not done on computer you can scan it to create a digital version or take a high-resolution digital photo of it and then upload. Your customers can simply go to the site you're using and download your work after purchasing it there. They handle printing and framing themselves.

Another possibility is to sell digital files of your work through your own website. If you use **Squarespace** for your online portfolio you can set up a shop using their e-commerce option. Other storefront options include **Shopify**, **Etsy** or, if you have a Wordpress website, **WooCommerce**.

One drawback to selling digital downloads, of course, is the risk that someone could misuse the file by selling the artwork as their own.

Teaching Art Online

If there's one thing that's gained popularity over the past few years it's online classes. For students, there's something gratifying and inspiring about seeing an artist's process. Teaching online can be both very rewarding and very challenging.

My friend **Stephanie Fizer Coleman** was just featured on Skillshare because people have now watched 1 million minutes of her classes. I asked her a few questions about her experience and if she could offer any advice.

"Take a look at the classes on **Skillshare** and figure out how you can bring your unique perspective to a topic," she told me. "It can seem like every topic has been covered, but there's always room for a new take on something. You'll also want to start out thinking about the project you'll be teaching for the class. Skillshare prefers project-driven classes because they drive student engagement."

Stephanie spends an average of 1–2 hours a week responding to student questions, critiquing work, and promoting her classes.

My colleague **Sabina Radeva**, creator of Design Garden classes, and I teach two online workshops a year called the Trend Workshops. We purchase trend reports for the coming year through fashion and home décor sites and translate them into trends that artists and illustrators can incorporate into their work. The 3-week workshops are comprised of three weekly live sessions in which students critique each others' work, along with teacher input. By the end of the class our students will have created three new pieces of art for their portfolio. This work can be used on POD sites, licensed to companies, or used to sell digital graphics. Once a workshop ends we then offer the course as a self-paced video class. In this case, students take the workshop with no live sessions or teacher feedback. As it turns out, this is my most profitable passive income source.

Think about what unique perspective you can bring to the online teaching community and develop a class for one of these platforms. It can be quite a feat to create the content and then film and produce it, but once you do, students can continually sign up and take your classes.

Teaching platforms I recommend are **Skillshare**, **Udemy**, **Teachable**, and **CourseCraft**.





Unique Platforms

There are numerous platforms through which you can create passive income. It may be winning design challenges on Minted and having a greeting card design land on the shelves at Target. Or winning a Spoonflower contest that results in working with a fabric company to design a collection.

Here are a few unique platforms for passive income:

Patreon is a really cool crowdfunding platform where fans can support creatives with monetary donations on a monthly basis. As a creative you can earn extra money by posting unique content for your fans. On your Patreon page you set up monthly subscription payment tiers, providing different perks for each level of subscription. You can offer behind-the-scenes process videos, monthly video hangouts, and exclusive content for only your supporters.

What I like about Patreon is the ability to have an engaged audience. Instagram is fleeting and you might get a like or a quick comment but on Patreon you don't have to fight algorithms to find your audience. One of my favorite Patreon creatives is **Fran Meneses**. She has a following of 1,820 and earns \$5,218 per month. She says "Patreon shifted my creative process: I can take the time to work on personal projects



and create new material without having to worry about anything else. This is the first time in my life I have the space to do this and I'm incredibly grateful."



Spoonflower is a print-on-demand site that prints custom fabric, wallpaper, and gift wrap. Setting up an account is easy and it's simple to upload your own illustrated patterns for people to buy. What's most exciting about Spoonflower is their weekly design challenge. A theme is announced on their website and designers compete against each other for the public's vote to win prizes. Doing these challenges can build up your design library, teach you how to work on a brief—an "assignment," in this case provided by the website—with a deadline and if you win, it may get your work in front of a fabric company.

Minted, similar to Spoonflower but with a focus on paper goods, is a community of independent artists and designers who participate in

Minted competitions. Artists receive a brief, upload their work to the online gallery, and other community members vote on their submissions. The winners' designs are produced and then they earn a commission on every sale. In addition, many designs that win are printed and available in stores where Minted cards sold.

I've only skimmed the surface of all the passive income opportunities out there. There are others! It's a matter of doing some research and determining which platform works best for you. I've had some wonderful experiences selling on sites I've mentioned. As well as the benefit of having a steady income stream, it's nice to be able to create personal pieces of art that may find a home on one of these platforms. By putting in some effort and time, you might be surprised to find how much passive income could come your way!

Denise Holmes is an award-winning illustrator with over 10 years of experience creating cute and happy illustrations for the children's market, with her work appearing in picture books and as wall art and greeting cards. She spends her days drawing in her home studio in Chicago, where she lives with her husband and daughter.





Writer's Bookshelf

The Magic Words: Writing Great Books for Children and Young Adults by Cheryl Klein

Reviewed by Alina Borger

When my husband and I traveled to Iceland last summer, we took an excellent new guidebook along with us. We came to rely on that book. It never led us astray, we had a number of adventures we wouldn't have been able to experience without it, and we avoided some of the dangerous and expensive pitfalls endemic to travel. We often joked that we'd brought along a well-traveled, Midwestern dad in our backpack.

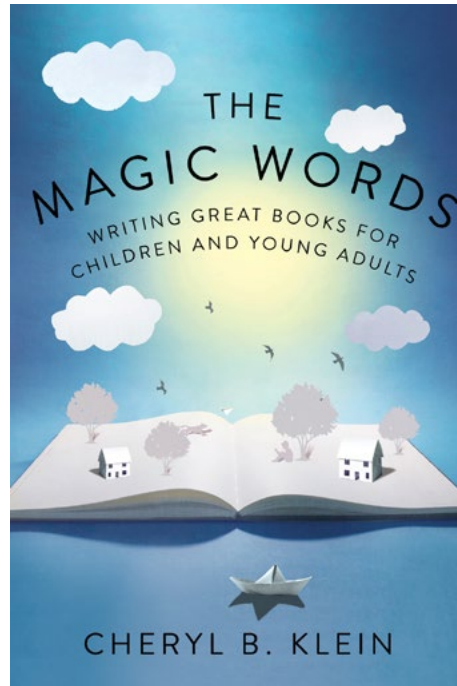
Cheryl Klein's *The Magic Words: Writing Great Books for Children and Young Adults*, is the writer's equivalent of that travel book. With it close by, I've got a knowledgeable, raised-in-the-Midwest editor sitting beside me and cheering me on.

A Fangirl Moment

When it first came out, I read and annotated Klein's book with a small group of SCBWI folks. I've taught from it on several occasions in my creative writing classes. I regularly purchase it as a gift whenever one of my students completes a first novel.

So it's no surprise that when I saw Cheryl Klein would be leading sessions at our Marvelous Midwest conference—those were the magic words that convinced me to attend.

In her sessions "18 Revision Tips" and "Premise, Promise, and Purpose," Klein used information from her book, offering additional examples, stories, and time for guided practice. But for folks who missed the sessions, the book stands alone beautifully. Like the travel



guide I used last summer, *The Magic Words* will not lead you astray, will take you on adventures you might otherwise miss, and will help you avoid some of the pitfalls we all face in writing novels for young people.

Never Leads You Astray

First and foremost, Klein's book is an excellent primer on the basics of writing popular fiction. The book includes chapters or long sections that target the following:

- First chapters
- Scene revisions
- Plot
- Pacing
- Character
- Point of view

What's more, she demystifies some of the terms that often seem like secret codes in the kidlit community—terms like "head hopping" and "stakes." In context, she explains and defines her terms with patient good cheer, following them up with examples. For instance, in "Experience and Emotion," Klein delineates the age bands and characteristics of the various types of books in our field. She starts with board books and works all the way up to YA and New Adult novels. Similarly, in "Worlds and Wonders," she meticulously explains each of the (many) subtypes of speculative fiction.

But Klein has her own twist on some of the common elements of fiction, too. In her chapter, "Structure and Sensibility," for example, she argues that all plots fall into one of three types: a conflict plot, a mystery plot, and a lack plot. In "Vision and Revision," she collects and explains in one place many of the most common revision strategies, but she also includes specific strategies that she's developed in her work with writers.

Adventures You Might Miss

Klein isn't just offering a primer, however. She's also pressing her readers to consider things they may not have considered before—encouraging us take an adventure off the path. For example, her description of building a bookmap is included as an extensive side bar, but until reading this book, I'd never even heard of such a thing. To help take writers through her simple, step-by-step process, Klein includes a sample map of a single scene from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* as well as a link to



a complete map of a book she herself edited, *Marcelo in the Real World*. When I made one of these maps for a work in progress, it became perfectly clear that I had several redundant scenes and at least as many unnecessary ones—realizations I likely wouldn't have had otherwise. Those realizations freed me up to write new, necessary scenes.

Later, in "Obstacles and Negotiation," Klein also invites readers to try a scene analysis, offering seven ways of looking at a scene. Before *The Magic Words*, I'd been analyzing scenes in my critique group for years. But immediately afterward, my feedback changed. Questions like "What is being negotiated in this scene?" and "Does it have an establishing shot and an appropriate fermata?" are now foundational to how I see and analyze my partners' submissions.

These things were new adventures not only because they gave me specific new things to try, but because they introduced new ways of seeing the things I was already looking at. Take the language in that last question: Klein's comparing the end of a chapter to a fermata, a musical term for holding a note or pausing over a rest for an unspecified time. This is exactly what we want our readers to do with our chapter endings, so for this former violist, it's a brilliant new metaphor that will get a lot of mileage for me and my students.

Avoiding Pitfalls

Finally, Klein is careful to warn her readers about some of the pitfalls they might face in writing and publishing. "Vision and Revision" lays down as direct a path to polishing a new manuscript as I've ever seen, and her chapter "Love and/or Money" offers an important crash course on everything from finding an agent to holding your first book in your hands.

But it's in "Power and Attention" that Klein is at her most effective in helping writers avoid pitfalls. There, she uses her position of power (she's currently the editorial director at Lee & Low) and privilege (she's a white woman in children's publishing) to explain issues of power, diversity, and own voices. With her characteristically straightforward tone, she encourages writers to think carefully about how their stories and their own identities are positioned in the world—both explicitly and implicitly.

It's an invitation germane to all writers, but particularly so for white, cis-het folks who have long held power over who gets to tell stories, how we tell stories, and how those stories come to be in the world. As Klein says, "fictional work can contribute to real-world consequences, so imagine responsibly."

Take The Magic Words Along for the Journey

My copy of *The Magic Words: Writing Great Books for Children and Young Adults* has only been around my studio for a few years, but it is crinkled, dog-eared, and annotated like a much older book. That's because I've come to rely on Klein's wisdom and pragmatism when I'm revising my work. As grateful as I was for my Iceland guide last summer, I'm even more grateful to have such a gracious expert along with me on my writing journey.

*A recent graduate of Vermont College of Fine Arts, SCBWI member **Alina Borger** grew up in the Chicago suburbs. She now lives, writes, and teaches high school in nearby Iowa City, Iowa. When she's not writing, she's watching her boys play soccer or curling up with a book and a mug of tea. www.alinaborger.com*



The Inside Story

A Writing Life at the Intersection of Shy and Introvert

By Carol Coven Grannick

I live at the intersection of Shy and Introvert in a world and business of Put-Yourself-Out-There. I'm guessing there are others reading this who live in the same neighborhood.

Few recent acquaintances, colleagues, or even friends of mine would call me shy or know that I'm an introvert. Many people who meet me these days tell me that it simply can't be true.

But it is true.

Even though I'm now far from the socially awkward girl who felt like she didn't know what to say to people, this little one still lives inside me:



She's not the loudest voice, but she stays around to remind me of where and who I've been. She is part of my personal tapestry of qualities, experiences, and characteristics that make me one whole human package.

In fact, her little *I'm-scared-I'm-small-I'm-not-good-enough* squeaks also remind me of how much impact

I've been able to make on my own life's journey. I've learned through practice and hard work to replace Mousey's pessimistic thoughts with more optimistic thoughts. (And I recommend for anyone serious about learning to reframe negative thinking the work being done in the field of [Positive Psychology](#).)

That, and a feistiness I may have been born with—but have definitely cultivated—encourages me to continue to stretch myself beyond characteristics that limited me in childhood. These traits and practices also allow me to be the more relaxed, spontaneous, funny, authentic, honest person I've always been, although with only a small group of close friends.

Taking Stock

As an introvert, I prefer small gatherings to large events, meetings with a few friends or colleagues, and a schedule that doesn't fill up with back-to-back social engagements. I need a feeling of meaningful connectedness in relationships, as well as enough alone-time to feel connected to myself.

I still set reasonable (achievable) goals that take my "tapestry" into account. I may tell myself, *Go ahead to this event, even if you don't enjoy it as a whole, because you can find a way to enjoy small parts of it, like interactions with a few people that will add meaning and value to life. But I might also give myself the option to say, Nope, not going to this, because today, right now, it's overwhelming because of _____.* And I'm okay with that. I get to decide when I want to leap, and when I'm just not up for it. We all do.

When Journey Meets Challenge—or Celebration

In most journeys, major life events, both painfully difficult and joyfully positive, tend to test us and allow us to *discover unknown or dormant strengths*. My journey to stretch myself beyond my childhood limitations has led to both painful and joyful events that push me to change or adapt much more quickly than I might otherwise have.

For example, I wrote about [my experience at a major medical center](#) in Chicago after my husband's heart surgery because it changed me forever. I discovered in an instant my capacity to overcome a lifelong hesitancy to speak truth to a *certain kind* of power. This not only enabled the hospital crisis to have a positive ending, but it has impacted my writing life. For example, I've noticed a greater comfort and authenticity in the queries I send out and a parallel increase in feeling like a peer of editors and agents, rather than someone "smaller," in need of their approval.

In March of this year, the positive experience of receiving a book contract jolted me onto a new path. I felt a warm but quiet glow of pleasure in the offer, and in that instant my decade-long journey with this story, its ups and downs, its multiple revisions, and what I call its "Beautiful, buts" ended. The road, previously filled with *angst* and the pure emotional weight of being on the journey, turned a corner. I was on a new road now. The road I'd been on became a story I could tell, filled with experiences I could share that might help others.



I overflowed with excitement about all the marketing activities I would need to plan leading up to my book launch. What? Huh? Me, the shy and introverted writer, the mouse, excited about marketing? Yep. I was as surprised as you might be.

The Plan

Rewinding for a moment...I like to plan ahead, if I can, for events that may challenge me, test how I've grown, or allow me to use strengths I've developed. In September of 2018 I applied for an [Illinois Arts Council Grant](#) to attend [Esther Hershenhorn's Vermont Manuscript Workshop](#).



Landgrove Inn, Landgrove, Vermont, where Esther Hershenhorn's Manuscript Workshop takes place



At the time I applied, I hoped I wouldn't be doing yet another revision of *Reeni's Turn*, my MG novel in verse, but I figured I'd have a new manuscript. Since I couldn't attend without the grant, it was a plan in limbo. But as a person wanting to make a good match between my preferences and my strengths while also aiming to challenge myself a bit, I'd chosen this workshop for three very particular reasons:

1. Unlike my previous [Ragdale Foundation residency](#), where I had a meaningful but not completely socially copacetic experience, I knew I'd be more comfortable in a group of children's writers.
2. Esther's workshop is small. For the shy part of me, meeting a handful of people I didn't know would be easier than meeting a whole

houseful. We were four writers and Esther.

3. I knew and had worked with Esther early in my children's writing career and trusted her to be straightforward and extremely helpful in getting a manuscript to blossom.

(and potentially amazing!) social or professional situations.

- **Act Friendly.**

I had a friend in my graduate program in social work who once made an interesting comment to me. I'd probably said something about feeling uncomfortable in social situations, to which she replied, "You say you're shy, and I get that, but how you *look* and *seem* is aloof and angry." Wow. That was a good friend, and she taught me something I've never forgotten.

I learned that friendly, mannerly behavior that focuses on the other person relaxes the shy, sometimes self-deprecating "Why would anyone want to talk to me?"-ness that can happen to us in new situations.

I learned to ask about the other person and stop worrying about myself. When the opportunity arises, saying *please*, *thank you*, and looking directly at someone while talking or listening—even if it's uncomfortable—is so helpful.

- **Remember how interesting most people are, with stories of their own they often enjoy sharing.**

And Then...

In midwinter I was notified that I would receive the IACA grant. Yay! I signed up for the workshop. In March, only two months later, I signed a contract with Fitzroy Books for the September 2020 debut of *Reeni's Turn*. Before the workshop I consulted with Esther concerning initial ideas for marketing the book, and we agreed that we would spend the week in Vermont creating a "Grand Promotional Plan." I could hardly wait until July!

Now that the workshop has come and gone—and yes, Landgrove was this exquisite—I have reflected on some *behaviors* that enabled me to have an amazing week. You may recognize them and may have your own ways of behaving that help you as you head to potentially uncomfortable



As soon as I ask about someone else and that person begins to share or story-tell, it helps me feel involved. As I get to know a new person, I remember how interesting most people are. We all have our unique stories. And hearing another's story may encourage me to share my own.

- **Embrace the idea of “stretching” yourself.**

I love Ray Bradbury's quote: “You've got to jump off cliffs all the time and build your wings on the way down.” The more I gather “stretching” experiences and the more I take leaps without wings, the more comfortable I become, even though I never expect to lose (or get rid of) Mousey.

For many of us the behaviors I note above are the result of *beliefs* we hold about being decent to others and believing in their goodness, using good manners, extending hospitality in the broadest sense, and more. I have found that tying these positive, people-oriented behaviors to my beliefs is an aid as I attempt to integrate such behaviors more fully into my life.

But back to the Vermont retreat... Before I even thought about it, the five of us had gathered at dinner, chattering about writing and the business of writing and what we each hoped to accomplish during the week to come. By the time I settled into my cute room for the sleep I craved, I already felt part of this small cohesive group of mutually supportive children's writers, each with a different creative focus and unique work.

Becoming

One of the big issues Esther and I discussed in Vermont was my protagonist's journey. She has inner strengths, undiscovered and untested



until she makes a decision to perform a solo—the thing she dreams of but also the thing that frightens her more than anything. It is a journey, we realized, of *becoming*. Reeni must discover whether she can find courage, and voice, as a dancer and a young woman without giving up who she already is. I love the idea of a journey to become. My own journey does seem to echo through the heart of all my work.

I returned home from the retreat energized and with a commitment to myself to “leap” daily. Whether these leaps were tiny or big, I would try each day to do something *put-myself-out-there-ish*.

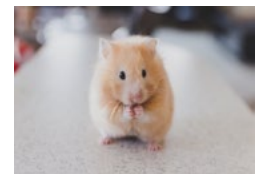
A few of the leaps I've taken recently include:

- Posting poems on **David Harrison's Word of the Month blog** (a little scary, but fun)
- Reaching out to someone I didn't know yet to make joint plans for a book-related event (not too scary)
- Promising a colleague I would show up at the local SCBWI-IL network party (promise = easy, actually going = not so easy, and in fact I didn't go, for several reasons)
- Contacting another colleague to try out for blog participation (uncomfortable but not terrifying)

- Reaching out to yet another colleague to ask about being featured in an article (really scary)

Based on the Grand Promotional Plan Esther and I developed at the Vermont Manuscript Workshop, I have about seven more things to do yesterday—so I plan to do them by the end of August.

Today I am neither the shy and introverted girl I once was nor completely free of those characteristics.



And that's just fine with me. I like my Mousey. She is part of me.

I believe we are all our history, our present, and our future. We are a mix of who we've been, who we are now, and—a favorite part of living, those repeated leaps of faith—who we can become.

How about you? I'd love to hear about “leaps” you've taken that might have been difficult for you but resulted in feeling great about “stretching” yourself. You can email me at carolcovengrannick@gmail.com.

Carol Coven Grannick's MG novel *in verse*, *Reeni's Turn*, will debut from Fitzroy Books in September 2020. Her take on the creative “inner journey” appears in the *Prairie Wind* and in *Cynsations* columns. In addition, Carol is a new member of the GROG Blog. Carol's poetry and fiction for young listeners and readers appears or is forthcoming in *Cricket*, *Ladybug*, *Babybug*, *Hello*, *Highlights*, and *Hunger Mountain*. She's working on her website to debut soon at carolcovengrannick.com.



A Fly on the Wall

The Artist's Perspective

By Gabriella Vagnoli

This year's Marvelous Midwest conference coincided with my graduation with a BFA in Illustration and, for me, that was one of those serendipitous coincidences not to be ignored lightly. I signed up and looked forward to it for months, focusing my last semester at school on getting my portfolio ready to look professional.

Things began at the orientation meeting, where **Esther Hershenhorn** advised us to clarify our goals for the conference so we could evaluate them afterward. I had two goals: to meet other illustrators and to learn more about what agents and editors wanted to see in a portfolio.

I also chose **Debbie Ridpath Ohl's** intensive on social media because I have been wanting to grow my online presence and become more visible to potential clients. Although she was a little under the weather, Debbie did not fail to share her energy and enthusiasm for social media, too often criticized and viewed as only a place of hate or confrontation. I really loved the way she encouraged us all to think of social media as a place to "give" rather than "take": Supporting others, sharing their content, and generally giving good karma all around means eventually getting good karma back.

Debbie's whole intensive was packed with good advice and information. She offered little "tricks" on how to make your posts more relevant (for example, get a calendar with all the silly holidays possible. Then, let's say you wrote a book with a polka dotted dancing hippo in it... You should celebrate National Hippo Day! And National Dance Day!

And International Dot Day!) and suggestions for connecting with other people in your industry in an authentic and unforced way.

A little touch I appreciated: Before the conference Debbie had researched the social media presence of those who had signed up for her intensive and used examples from their feeds to illustrate things that were well done or to point out chances we might have missed. It was a personal and relevant approach that I think made the whole intensive a lot more valuable for all.



Jenny Wagh and Mike DeSantis

I confess I hesitated when I read about the scheduled costume party, not knowing what to expect. But after a bit of doubt went for it—in costume—and I'm happy I did because, let me tell you, this crowd likes to have fun! I even discovered that some partying illustrators had a past as jugglers or liked spinning plates as a hobby!

The next day, I attended **Jacqueline Alcantara's** presentation on finding your style as an artist, which is something I have personally struggled

with. Her presentation was a journey through her own experimentation to arrive at her unique style and it helped me realize how much work it takes—through imitation, trial, and error—to get there. Jacqueline also had great suggestions on how to present your portfolio and what to include in it. One tidbit I found particularly relevant is that your portfolio isn't meant to "shock" like an Instagram post; it's meant to "connect" with people emotionally and "stick" with them.

I was definitely excited to attend the next session, "Optimize Your Portfolio," with **Nicole de las Heras**, art director at Random House Children's Books. An important takeaway was that postcards are still relevant and the best way to be seen by an art director, whereas emails can be left unopened or can get lost among the hundreds of other communications these professionals have to deal with every day. They might hang on to a favorite postcard for a long time waiting for a project to come up that would fit well with the postcard artist's style. So you never know when the "postcard seed" you planted might sprout, but the great advantage of postcards is that they make an immediate visual impact. So keep sending those postcards!

To optimize your portfolio Nicole suggested including 10-15 strong pieces, some of them sequential to show consistency and pacing. She recommends indicating where you think text might best be placed within your illustrations and also that you emphasize storytelling rather than character design. Tell a story with your image. Let the art elevate the text.



Francis Vallejo

Yet another important suggestion Nicole made was to show only the types of illustration you want to be hired for. She said you shouldn't feel you have to include things you're not comfortable drawing, but target your art for the market you're going for.

At lunch, we listened to **Jack Cheng's** keynote, "Writing for Children in the #metoo Era" and I encourage everybody to read it on his blog. I cannot rephrase better a speech that was beautiful and inspiring. Jack delivered his talk with great pathos, tenderness, and authenticity and I hope that many more people will get to hear or read his powerful testimony.

In the afternoon, I chose to attend **Tracy Vonder Brink's** "Make It in Magazines" session because I've submitted work to some magazines in the past and I wanted to know more, although I wasn't sure how much information would be directed at illustrators. Tracy is a contributing editor for *Click*, *Ask*, and *Muse* magazines, all properties of Cricket Media, and she has a lot of enthusiasm for the magazine market, which definitely rubbed off on me. While the session was definitely tailored more toward writers than illustrators, there was some information for us too; for example, it was interesting to find out more about the specific target markets

of each magazine and to learn how long it takes for something to go from being accepted to being published and paid for (sometimes up to 2 years!).

Next, I attended two "First Look" sessions, the first with **John Parra**, **Sharismar Rodriguez**, and Nicole de las Heras, and in the second one **Wendi Gu** replaced John Parra. But during both sessions the panelists gave impromptu critiques of a number of attendees' illustrations. Although critiques can be intimidating, they can also be a very useful process—one I went through a lot during college. The objective of a critique is to highlight some of the work's qualities and to point out what can be improved in the piece, but one of a critique's greatest values is the objective take on your work—a different point of view on your piece that might make you see something you missed about it yourself. I personally felt that the panelists tried too hard to find nice things to say about the work and worried too much about hurting the participants' feelings. I thought they could have offered more practical feedback, the kind that might help an artist improve his or her piece, and that for me was a missed opportunity to learn.

Debbie Ridpath Ohi's Sunday "Photoshop for Illustrators" breakout was very useful for me as someone who's had limited experience with Photoshop. And following that, I sat in on a couple sessions in which two great illustrators—**Francis Vallejo** and John Parra—each demonstrated the process behind the art they create.

Seeing the extreme difference between their art styles and their processes was a worthwhile reminder that every artist produces work in their own unique way. Francis' journey to create his picture book *Jazz Day* was a three-year-long process that included a location trip,

the hiring of models for a photo session, research on the original material, and 3-D modeling of the location. John Parra's process includes background research as well, but he moves a lot faster in terms of production. What these two artists have in common is how deeply they research the backgrounds of the historical characters they both depict in their books. The end results are both beautiful and unique and it was extremely inspiring to see the passion they both put into their work.



John Parra

As the conference drew to a close, I reflected on what I'd gotten out of it: I met other illustrators, I learned how to improve my portfolio, and I got inspired to write my own story for the first time. I'd set my goals in Esther's orientation and by the end of the Marvelous Midwest weekend, I achieved both. In other words, attending this conference was the strong start to my career that I wanted!

Gabriella Vagnoli is an illustrator from Italy who lives in Illinois. She has been a member of SCBWI since 2017 and you can find her portfolio at www.gabriellavagnoli.com



A Fly on the Wall

The Marvelous Midwest Conference 2019

By John Bowen

Squadron Yellow Delta Leader Fly #G42B-551X

*After-Action Report: Marvelous
Midwest – Let’s Go to the Fair*

May 3-5, 2019

Naperville, Illinois, USA

After painstaking planning, our Fly Squadron Yellow Delta was eager to conduct operations at the large human gathering called “Let’s Go to the Fair.” We flew in formation 0.6 miles southeast, arriving at the Chicago Marriott Naperville on May 3. We expected conditions suitable to what the humans call a “fair”: spilled nachos, sticky-handed children, and horses. HORSES!

It goes without saying, we were crestfallen to find instead a gathering of genteel writers and illustrators carrying tote bags, conversing in pleasant tones, and sipping coffee. Decaf, ugh.

We immediately regrouped and established a new plan of action. We would follow the writers and illustrators to see if they did anything interesting. (Spoiler alert: They didn’t.)

Fly #C72R-89IV followed a set of humans to listen to another human named **Cheryl Klein** talk about something called a “picture book.” She made no sense at all. She talked a lot about how different picture books have different “structures”; but as every fly knows, a book has only one structure: a pile of papers with a VERY HARD cover.

She talked about the “sound” of the words in a picture book; but as every fly



Cheryl Klein

knows, the only sound a book makes is THWACK!

She talked about how a picture book should contain various types of pictures – little bitty pictures, one-whole-page pictures, and even two-whole-page pictures; but as every fly knows, pictures are LIES.

This Cheryl Klein human has obviously never landed on a triple-scoop ice cream sundae only to find it is just a PICTURE!

One of our sub-squadrons found its way into a large, promising-looking room where all the humans had gathered to eat. To the sub-squadron’s disgust, the writers and illustrators consumed fresh, healthy food. In an attempt to determine what might attract these humans to something appropriately rancid, Fly #A99M-41GP listened to a speaker talk about something called *Booklist*.

Strangely, this *Booklist* is not the only list of books these humans have. The

Booklist recommends its “book list” to other places called libraries, which have their own “book lists.” Sometimes you have to wonder how *homo sapiens* made it to the top of the food chain.

Anyway, the *Booklist* doesn’t even review all the books they receive to make their “book lists.” They review only about 8,000 books out of the 60,000 books they receive annually (presumably from someone else’s “book list”?) And only 3,000 of these are children’s books, and only 400 of those get a “star,” which means the book is exceptional. Four hundred! That’s nothing! I have more first cousins than that, and they are ALL exceptional!

Not at all satisfied by a meal of ciabatta crumbs and unsweetened tea, Sub-Squadron Spider Slaughter flew an undercover mission to a smaller room where they listened to a human with pink hair named **Kathleen Ortiz** talk about “itches,” which the sub-squadron hoped would involve rotten vegetables. But it was just more words. Words, words, words. And worse than



that, the Kathleen Ortiz human insisted that the pitch words had to be in a particular order:

TITLE is a GENRE about CHARACTER who must MISSION/JOURNEY in order to overcome/complete/reach CONFLICT.

With the proud spirit of resistance swelling in their hearts, Sub-Squadron Spider Slaughter deposited a secret message in fly-pheromone as they sped from the room:

“Marvelous Midwest: Let’s Go to the Fair is a stifflingly dull gathering of humans who sit around all day talking about words in order to starve and bore an entire squadron of flies who only want their fair share.”

This kind of thing went on and on. A rookie unit visited the room where a human called **Allison Remcheck** said a lot of words about “High Concept, High Power” but the unit learned only that “high concept” means you have a strong hook and can pitch (that word again!) your book in just a line or two. To the poor rookies, this sounded entirely too much like fishing, a human activity in which they do things to flies that would send shivers through any fly’s



Jack Cheng

exoskeleton. Needless to say, the rookie team skedaddled.

The squadron reassembled as the humans listened to one of their kind named **Jack Cheng** talk about the way something called “gender” was represented in something called “Beauty and the Beast.” Our entire squadron’s wings started beating faster! At last – something promising! Beasts smell great and their fur is almost always matted and flecked with all kinds of tasty bits. So when Jack Cheng revealed his “beast,” every fly charged forward to feast! And what happened next? We smashed into a wall.

Because the “beast”? It was just a picture. A lying, cheating, deceiving picture! Somewhere Cheryl Klein was laughing, I just know it.

After licking our wounds and rubbing our heads many, many times with our front legs, we followed a human wearing a uniform to the back of the building, where, praises be to the *Lord of the Flies*, we found a grease trap! After digging in for a long, long time and patting our full, full bellies, we decided to make one final go at this “Let’s Go to the Fair” thing.

But when we got back inside, panic nearly set in among the troops. There was a bird at the fair! There should not have been a bird at the fair! Birds eat flies! So, demonstrating the courage and selflessness a good leader must always possess, I informed the squadron that I would investigate this bird myself. I was both relieved and confused to find that this was a human named Bird. **“Betsy Bird.”** You don’t meet any birds named Human, so why is there a human named Bird?

Fortunately this Bird person seemed to present no direct threat to flies, as I didn’t see her eat a single insect. (Note: Just because I didn’t see it, doesn’t mean

it didn’t happen.) Rather, she talked about what humans have to do after they have published a book, which is to PROMOTE it. A lot. Actually kind of ad nauseam. Which is great, because flies love pretty much anything that makes a human nauseous. She recommended keeping your “website” up to date, which made me wish I had brought Sub-Squadron Spider Slaughter with me. She recommended reading blogs and something called *Publisher’s Weekly Children’s Bookshelf*. She recommended that authors and illustrators visit schools and libraries because sometimes that’s a way they can make money. For a Bird she seemed to know a lot, but I was getting tired by this point, and I knew the rest of the squadron would be as well.

It was the last day of the Marvelous Midwest “fair” and every human and every fly was exhausted. We scavenged a few Larabar crumbs as the humans made their way out of the Chicago Marriott Naperville, but we knew it was time for “Let’s Get Away from the Fair.”

All in all, the humans seemed to enjoy themselves at this “fair,” which—good for them. But “Let’s Go to the Fair” was a complete bust for Squadron Yellow Delta. If the humans ever convene a gathering like this again, we unequivocally recommend that every fly in the sector avoid it at all costs and find a more suitable environment, like a school picnic or a random gathering of dogs.

Yours,
Squadron Leader Fly #G42B-55IX

John Bowen lives and writes in Normal, Illinois, which probably tells you everything you need to know. For a few years now he’s helped coordinate SCBWI-IL’s downstate Words in the Woods conference, which you should definitely attend if you can.



Shop Around the Corner

Bookie's New and Used Books

By Adrian Miller

Bookie's has been a mainstay on the south side of Chicago for over 29 years. On September 21, 2018, Bookie's opened a second independent bookstore, located at 2015 Ridge Road, in Homewood, Illinois. We asked **Holly Alexander**, director of business and operations there and former librarian **Narita S.**, children's department lead and bookseller, to give us a view into what makes Bookie's such a success.

From the moment I stepped out of my car I was struck by the rainbow sign that read "open" right above the front door. In the store's front window an elephant relaxed in a rainbow hammock surrounded by an assortment of children's titles. I was eager to get inside and learn more.

How do you view your role as a bookstore to not only carry diverse titles but to promote diversity and inclusion in the children's market and in the community?

Holly — We think it's vital to foster community, diversity, acceptance, and inclusion. Part of that includes creating effective displays and events for topics and ideas that might otherwise go unnoticed, like LGBTQ issues, Asian-Pacific month, the moon landing anniversary, environmental issues, etc. We also gear toward every age group from babies to teens. Children are never too young to start learning about issues that could affect them throughout their lives.

Narita — I see my role as a bookseller in an independent store as a facilitator, presenting information to all of our readers by actively seeking out



published works with diversity at their core. It's essential to share the stories of people who don't see their lives reflected in the media. By displaying and promoting these works, my goal is to normalize seeing an array of characters and stories that accurately reflect the experiences of all audiences who come into the store.

The children's book cooperative just released it's updated numbers on diversity in children's publishing. The new study showed small upward ticks in representation for IBPOC in children's books. How important are studies like this to determine the type of books you seek for your children's selection?

Holly — Studies don't influence me much as a buyer because I'm focused on the particular demographics of my store(s), the sales histories of the types

of books that have done well in the past, along with books that might go unnoticed in big box stores.

Narita — I believe these kinds of statistics are important to view as an invitation of sorts, one presented to booksellers, publishers, librarians, and other literary professions as a way to show that a gap exists. Now it's time to mend that gap. However, I also believe too much dependence and emphasis on dry figures relegates so many diverse stories to statistics instead of normalizing diverse storytelling. As diverse individuals, we navigate this world not as statistics but human beings. Diverse stories are not anomalies—they are all around us. Stories never originate from just one place. Every single country (and person) has a story to tell; some have just never received a platform to share them. The root solution, I think, is to urge publishers to publish literature by writers and creators of all



backgrounds. And bookstores as well as the larger community should offer resources, learning possibilities, and safe/supportive places for writing and sharing ideas. I also urge bookstores and libraries to acquire materials that accurately reflect the real world.

Narita, as an Indian American, you mentioned that, during your youth, you tried to read books with characters looked like you. How successful were you at finding such books? Has it been difficult as a procurer to find diverse books both by character and by creator?

Narita — As a child, it was very difficult to find characters who looked like me. While I was able to project myself into my favorite books, there was definitely a special connection in seeing someone like me. It is still a challenge for me to find teen or adult books presenting Indian stories that are not just retellings of *1001 Nights* or not about brutal misogynistic societies—a stereotype that does not reflect my culture at all. One summer, I tried to read books in the fantasy genre with female POC main characters. Only a very small handful were truly well-

written. As I have mentioned, I really push for people to realize that diverse stories already exist, they just don't have a recognized platform. If authors and publishers can put so much research into wyverns and elves and mystical lands, they can put the same research and resources to people who actually exist. However, for years I have been involved in procuring materials and I can say confidently things are becoming more inclusive. I hope for a day where such inclusion is exactly as normal as seeing the sun in the sky.

When I walked in the children's section, I immediately recognized books from quite a few Illinois authors. What do you believe your role as a bookstore is in supporting local authors? How does Bookies foster relationships with local authors?

Holly — Part of being an indie bookstore is having available the books often ignored by large, corporate stores into the hands of kids who need them. Carrying the work of local authors offers opportunities for the writer to interact directly with his or her readers, which is a thrill for all of us. We try to not only

carry their books but do events with them as well. Just this past weekend we had our first young reader's book club with a local author.



What is your earliest/best memory about visiting a bookstore as a child?

Holly - I grew up with a family that really didn't read except for one aunt. She is the one who ignited my love of reading at a very young age. But this was also at a time that books tailored to middle schoolers and teens were almost nonexistent, so I was reading Anne Rice and John Saul when I was pretty young. I think that's partly why, now that the children's book world is so full of vibrant, fun, diverse titles, my love for this kind of literature has only deepened with time. I have focused most of my adult life on getting just the right book in each child's hand. It's important for them to have something to relate to or even an escape from sometimes-grim reality at times. That's why I loved books growing up.





- *The Hazel Wood* by **Melissa Albert** and *The Astonishing Color of After* by **Emily X.R. Pan** (YA)

Narita

- *The Nameless City* by **Faith Erin Hicks** (MG)
- *Lalani of the Distant Sea* by **Erin Entrada Kelly** (MG)
- *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* by **William Joyce** (picture book)
- *The Day You Begin* by **Jacqueline Woodson** (picture book)
- *Magic Ramen: The Story of Momofuku Ando* by **Andrea Wang** (early chapter book)
- *Love Is* by **Diane Adams** (picture book)

What makes a good children's book?

Holly — A story with a good message or meaning behind it, relatable characters, voices and concepts that resonate with the age group of the reader, along with uniqueness and the book's availability.

Narita — As an animation student, I always hear how “emotional storytelling” is really the key to a good story in media; I believe that applies to children’s books, too. In childhood and children’s media, anything can happen. There are all kinds of big magical things, small simple moments, and an innocent understanding that the world will always be much bigger than we can comprehend. In my opinion, a good children’s book consists of a character who reaches and grows outside their comfort zone. They get to exercise their strengths and confront their weaknesses. A good children’s book has adventure, magic, and big scary twists and turns. And it also has to follow the rules of good writing and good storytelling. Its characters are appealing, even if they aren’t always the nicest, and they have great chemistry with

each other. It respects the themes of friendship, big life moments (including grief, change, sacrifice, or trusting yourself) and of course humor.

What makes Bookies unique?

Holly — Unfortunately, small businesses are a rarity these days (particularly bookstores, due to Amazon) so it’s our goal to provide one-on-one service to our customers while still working to get them the best deal. This personal touch is what customers come back for. Each of our booksellers loves the written word and can talk books for hours if allowed. We also have a wide variety of new and used books that you may not find elsewhere. Plus, we are staffed by people who live in the communities we serve so we are all striving to make our neighborhoods better.

Narita — Bookie’s is unique in that both stores have the flavors of the communities in which they live. We strive for the perfect combination of new releases and popular books alongside the rare finds and mysterious tomes found in used bookstores. Bookie’s Homewood has selections curated by staff who live locally, so any reader who enters our store is looking at a special mix of books straight from the hearts of their neighbors.

Narita — I can’t say that I have a distinct memory of being in spaces like bookstores and libraries, I have just always existed with them. As a child, I remember the magical feeling of knowing thousands of stories were waiting for me to find them—it’s a wonder I still carry with me as an adult. I always felt grateful to find a book about whatever subject interested me, which fostered a belief that as long as I could read, I would always find my way through anything (a notion I know is maybe a little romanticized).

What are your favorite/recommended children's books right now?

Holly

- *Strictly No Elephants* by **Lisa Mantchev** (picture book)
- *Little Elliot, Big City* by **Mike Curato** (picture book)
- *Mia Mayhem* by **Kara West** and *Ranger in Time* by **Kate Messner** (first chapter book series)
- *See You in the Cosmos* by **Jack Cheng** and *Hurricane Child* by **Khernyn Callender** (MG)

Adrian G. Miller, Jr. is an aspiring young adult and picture book author. He has a degree in mathematics and a minor in computer science from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. He’s a member of SCBWI and lives in Flossmoor, Illinois, with his family.



Perspectives

Opportunity Pings

By Rachel Ruiz

One chilly December afternoon last year, my in-box pinged. It was an email from **Kim Turrisi**, Director of Special Projects for SCBWI. She was asking if I'd like to be a guest author at Elizabeth Meyer School in Skokie, Illinois. The elementary school was the recipient of the Amber Brown Grant. Well, I thought that sounded very cool. When I became a published author a little more than three years ago, I decided whenever possible I would say yes to every opportunity. So I already knew I was going to accept Kim's invitation. There was just one thing. *What's the Amber Brown Grant?* Should I know what that is? Had I once known, but had now forgotten?

Before responding, I logged onto the SCBWI website and typed "Amber Brown Grant" into the search bar. And guess what I learned? It's pretty amazing.

Established in 2005, the Amber Brown Grant pays tribute to the late and beloved author and school speaker **Paula Danziger** by continuing her commitment to connecting young people to creative influences. The grant awards one school each year with an all-expense-paid visit by a children's book author or illustrator. This includes \$250 in books by the visiting author or illustrator and \$250 to create a memorable day for their students. The author or illustrator also receives \$500 for his or her time.

I told Kim I was honored and I accepted. She put me in touch with **Amy Kelley**, the school librarian at Elizabeth Meyer, and we settled on a date in February. I would do two



presentations, with roughly 100 kids in the morning and 100 in the afternoon, all pre-K and kindergarten students.

I decided to read my debut picture book, *When Penny Met POTUS*. I felt that, with its furry blue monster (POTUS) and a curious main character (Penny), the book was best suited for this age group.

But when I sat down to work on my presentation, I was a little stumped. The talks I had been giving during that time focused more on the trajectory of my career path and how I came to be a published author after many years of doing other jobs—all while dreaming of being a published author. That's when it hit me. This was the perfect topic to talk about with the kids. My dream started when I was about their age—so they could relate better than kids of any other age.

Go Time

The morning of the presentation, it

inconveniently decided to snow. I can't remember how many inches we got, but I managed to make it to the school on time. I kicked things off by showing the students two *When Penny Met POTUS* book trailers produced by my production company. Book trailers work a lot like movie trailers, I explained to the kids. They give you a sneak peek, a little taste, if you will, of what the book is about.

I told the students that over the course of my career as a TV writer and producer, I got to work with Bozo the Clown, **Oprah Winfrey**, and **Barack Obama**. *Who's Bozo the Clown?* they asked. I showed them pictures and said *Your parents would know*.

I told them that each and every one of my jobs had been an incredibly cool experience I was fortunate to have had and all had contributed to the person I am today. However, there was this dream I had been dreaming ever since I was five years old. *Can you guess what it was?*



Writing! some of the kids shouted. **Being an author!** others said. They were paying attention.

I told them I always knew I was a writer. And as I got older that didn't change. But sometimes well-meaning adults tried to discourage me from that path. **What kind of jobs can you get as a writer? You won't make any money. Maybe you should go into business.**

But as I told the students, for me, there was no getting off that path. No matter what job I did, it always involved some form of writing—whether it be for local news, TV shows, or a presidential campaign.

In 2012, I spent the year as a video producer for President Obama's re-election campaign. That's when my almost 3-year-old daughter Macy became obsessed with one word. No, it wasn't "mama" or "dada" or even "candy." The word was POTUS. You see, she picked up on the fact that I, along with most of my colleagues at Obama for America headquarters in downtown Chicago, referred to the president as POTUS.

Every night when I got home from work it was **Did you have lunch with POTUS today? Does POTUS wear red socks? Is POTUS allergic to peanut butter? Well, if you didn't see POTUS, what did you do all day? But her all-time favorite question was When can I meet POTUS?**



At the time, reading picture books to Macy was a bedtime routine I relished. On one of these nights, as we cuddled in her room, an idea started to percolate: my experience working on the campaign and Macy's curiosity about POTUS. **There's a story to tell here**, I thought. I didn't know what that story was quite yet, but something was bubbling.

Fast forward to the weekend before the 2012 presidential election. President Obama was doing a marathon of campaign rallies across several states. My friends on the video team had gotten my husband Alex, Macy, and me tickets to a campaign rally in Milwaukee, where Obama was doing a final push. After his speech, I got to introduce myself and my family and tell him about my role on the campaign. He thanked me. I thanked him. Macy got to shake his hand. It was all very brief, over in a flash. But something significant had transpired during that quick meeting. Macy got her wish. She met POTUS. And I got what felt like a lightning bolt. That idea that had been percolating was now taking shape.

Four days later, President Obama was re-elected. And I was out of a job. With a lot of newfound time on my hands, I used Macy's naps each day to write a very rough (**and very bad**) first draft of *When Penny Met POTUS*. Then, over the next several months, I proceeded to rewrite it about 100 times. Knowing next to nothing about how children's book publishing worked, I embarked

on what would be a three-year journey of trying to get the book published. Early on in my search for a home for *When Penny Met POTUS*, I sent my manuscript to an editor at one of the big five publishing houses. She rejected it, but not before giving me some advice: Join SCBWI. It was the best move I ever made.

Dream Big Dreams

On July 1, 2016, *When Penny Met POTUS* was published by Capstone and released to the world. After many years of dreaming—and working for it—I was a published author. Since then, I have published seven more children's books, I've acquired an agent, and we have two picture book manuscripts out on submission. My reality has exceeded my dream.

I'm incredibly thankful to SCBWI and to the Amber Brown Grant committee for inviting me to share my story with Elizabeth Meyer's students and teachers. I wrapped up my presentation that snowy February afternoon with a message that applies to anyone still working toward and chasing their dream: Don't give up. No one gets to tell you what or how big your dreams can be.

Rachel Ruiz is the author of eight children's books, including her debut picture book *When Penny Met POTUS*. Rachel also penned two nonfiction picture books, *When Hillary Rodham Clinton Played Ice Hockey* and *When Rosa Parks Went Fishing* as well as the Superhero Harry chapter book series for Capstone. Her first graphic novel, *Martin Luther King Jr.: A Graphic History of America's Great Civil Rights Leader (Great Lives)*, was released in June 2019. Rachel is the co-owner of *Storyteller Chicago*, which produces video book trailers for children's books. For more information, log on to www.storytellerchicago.com



Perspectives

Before You Pen a Queer Narrative

By Elizabeth Wheeler

An author once told me that writers possess radical empathy. The words “radical empathy” resonated with me. It was 2013, and my first novel, *Asher’s Fault*, had hit shelves. The story features 14-year-old Asher, who uses the lens of an old-school Minolta camera to make sense of his screwed-up life. He is also gay. As much as I love Asher, I would hesitate to publish this novel today. Why?

Sometimes empathy results in our writing outside of our own experiences in a noble but potentially damaging attempt to “make a difference.”

Canadian writer **’Nathan Burgoine** is the author of *Exit Plans for Teenage Freaks*, a fresh fantasy with a rich cast of characters, action-packed pages, and Cole—a teleporting teen whose voice is so engaging I can still hear him talking in my head. ’Nathan and I both published our novels through Bold Strokes Books’ young adult line, Soliloquy. The difference? ’Nathan is an own voice author. I am an ally.

Bold Strokes Books consulting editor **Ruth Sternglantz** explains that #ownvoices is a response to “a problem that arises when a) authors who belong to marginalized groups don’t get access to publishing channels, b) stories about those marginalized groups are not told, and c) publishers get woke and want to tell the stories of marginalized groups but the stories they sign are all by writers outside those groups.”

Because I want to be a better LGBTQIA+ ally, I asked ’Nathan to talk about the need for own voices and representation in young adult literature.



What should young adult writers who want to pen queer narratives consider?

’Nathan – I think most of the unique issues that face queer people come from the non-inheritability of our culture. The vast majority of us aren’t born to queer parents and queer grandparents, etc., so we don’t have the inheritance of narrative and history that most marginalized voices have. When you add to that the way history is gathered, written, and taught through the same non-queer lenses (often actively so, with an attempt to outright erase our existence from stories and history), the importance of even fictionalized representation of queerness comes into sharp focus: This may very well be the first “someone like me” a reader has encountered. It becomes important, then, to make sure those characters represent something as authentic as possible, rather than being used as just a plot device or as some sort of idea of queerness. In other words, the character development should be done with forethought and care, and with the idea in mind that this character could very well be massively *important* to a reader.

As a contrast, I encountered the first ever queer character like me (a gay man) in a story I was taught in 11th grade English class. The character was miserable and died (and died violently). The teacher turned to the class and explained it as an example of “poetic justice”—the moral failing of the character (i.e., that he was homosexual) led to the appropriate ending (his violent death). That kind of narrative must not be the only narrative out there (and for a while it very much was the mainstream narrative). Even well-meaning authors of queer fictions (who perhaps wish to raise awareness in readers through the characters they portray) don’t realize how often they perpetuate the notion that “queer = suffering” by showing only queer characters in pain, suffering, alone, disowned, dying, etc. This is why I think it’s so important to elevate and highlight ownvoice writing from any marginalized group, especially with point-of-view characters.

Boiled down, I think my singular advice would be to consider that *it’s entirely possible to be an ally (or even a queer person) and still do damage with well-intended representation of those who are not-like-you*. Even within the larger umbrella of queerness, that’s possible—cisgender queer individuals writing transgender queer characters consistently miss the boat. I go back to “why?” a lot—Why do I believe I should be the person to write this particular story with a marginalized character voice that isn’t within my own lived and breathed experience? Why is this a better choice than elevating those who are speaking from their own voice? Generally speaking,



I'm not that person, and it isn't better. But, I can *choose* to write diversely (and do my damndest to do it well) without taking the mic from someone else. I can include characters from outside my own experiences or voice with love and care and compassion within stories where I do speak from my own experience. For me, that strikes the best balance.

It's also important to remember that queerness can be, and often is, a source of individual freedom and strength; can create chosen family and community; and offers a unique point of view. This is often missed when written from an outside lens, or by a non-queer author, looking in. Many queer youth today have access to language, terms, and labels that my generation didn't even know existed until we were in our mid-twenties or older. It's not unusual at all to hear queer teens and tweens discussing pansexuality, gender fluidity, aro/ace spectrums, and the like. They may not be connected to a larger face-to-face network of queerness, but many of them have an understanding of who they are, and at a much younger age than people did even a single generation before.

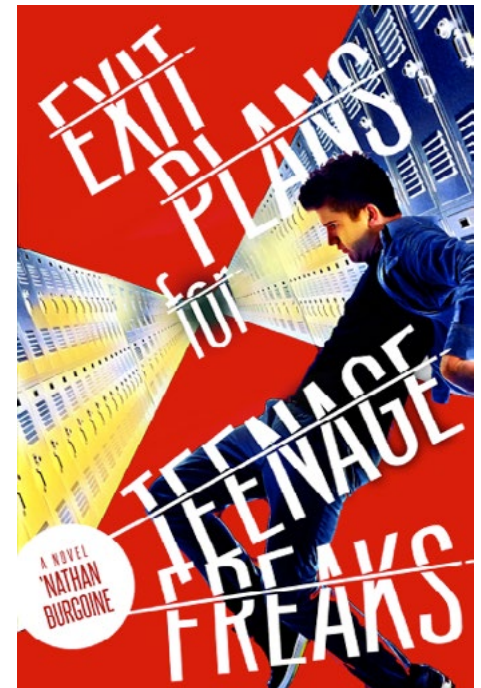
What advice would you give to nonidentity writers who want to include queer characters in their works?

Nathan – I think the answer is baked into the question here: to *include* queer characters in their works. Any writer not representing the breadth of diversity found in the real world is doing an injustice to all their readers, I believe. It can be the smallest thing: have a secondary character who mentions their same-gender partner in passing; have a character who uses they/them pronouns; include the words “pansexuality” or “bisexuality” when considering crushes; show a diverse group of friends or give the high school a G.S.A. All of these things

tell potential queer readers: “You exist in this fictional world.” That's a bare minimum, easy thing to do. Just *include* us. Sometimes I think authors wish to champion a certain group of people (in this case, queer people, though it could honestly be any marginalized group), and that impulse comes from a great place, but if you're writing from outside looking in, there's a very good chance the story you will tell (intentionally or not) will reflect your position: It will be an outside-looking-in story, not an inside-living-as story.

As an example consider the movie *Love, Simon* (or, as the book was called, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*) and the sheer volume of (likely well-meaning) people who describe the story as “a rom-com” or “fluffy and fun” or “so sweet.” If you know the story, you know that at the end, Simon ends up sharing a kiss with the boy he was secretly writing to throughout the story, and his family is supportive of his queerness, as are his friends. But in the meanwhile, he has been blackmailed, manipulated, threatened (there are multiple passages in the book where we learn that not only are the other students mocking him, they're making very explicit threats about assaulting him), and he is outed not only to the entire school at large but in a way that removes all his agency. The assumption is that he has outed himself, as though he has willingly invited the entire student body to sexually assault him. But in fact this “coming out” is written by someone else. As a queer reader? I had to put down *Simon vs.* over and over and over again, and nearly didn't make it through the book, and then had to stare in disbelief at the sheer volume of people saying how amazing and fun and light and fluffy and awesome it was. Worse, in the face of that onslaught of positivity the book seemed to be garnering, I felt like I couldn't discuss how awful the book made me feel.

Recently, I got to spend time with a GSA group. To a person, the queer kids in the room agreed *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* was a story about queerness for non-queer people and how they learn to accept queer people. One even said, “If I open a book about a trans character, I look at the author, and if the author isn't trans, I close the book.”



I often talk about “staying in my lane,” when I write, and I do. The vast majority of my main, POV characters will be queer fellows, but the “lane” in question is on a massive, multi-lane highway. Looking out my windshield, I can see all the other cars in all the other lanes, and so can my characters. So while Cole, the protagonist of my queer YA adventure *Exit Plans for Teenage Freaks* is a gay boy (like I was), his friend group at his high school GSA includes a lesbian dating a bisexual girl, his ace BFF, and the leader of the GSA, who is a nonbinary pansexual. Cole's crush is dealing with being bisexual as well as being black in a mostly-white town in small-town Ontario. Also,



Cole's father is Deaf and runs a team interpretation business. None of these things are done in a way that centers the story outside of my own lane, and none of it was done without a lot of research. I hired sensitivity readers for feedback on two important aspects of my book: the representation of both the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (a community I've been involved in, but I am not Deaf or HoH myself, though I'm functional in ASL), and being black in a small white town. In short, I wrote a diverse world, absolutely, but I did it from my own point of view voice.

Non-queer authors don't have to tell queer stories to include and champion queerness. Honestly, the most incredible thing is when I see authors boosting the signal of lesser-heard voices. Publishing skews to the straight, white, able, cisgender, and neurotypical. Books about characters who fall outside those lines are still most often written by those within most of those lines. It sometimes feels like authors think "Someone should tell [a particular story] about this *kind* of person!"—and I agree, that's true—but they jump in and write that story without considering whether someone who has lived the marginalization has already done so, and without support put behind getting that book into the hands of youth in the first place. The end result is another celebrated (publisher-promoted) book about a marginalization written from the outside looking in, often hailed as a triumph.

As a queer guy, I don't need non-queer people writing the next *Love, Simon* and creating the next "major queer event" in entertainment or trying to tell stories rooted in queerness. I just need non-queer people writing and publishing books to remember to show, through fictional characterizations, that people like me exist (and aren't completely miserable every single time), and also

to allow queer people to tell their own stories about queerness. And finally, the industry should celebrate queer titles with as much fanfare as similar books by non-queer authors receive when those books are released by major, big-5 publishers.

Or, to put it as simply as I can: When I write, I'm not going to write a book written in a voice I don't have—I'm going to find books written by those who have those voices and read them and do my best to boost their signal whenever I have the chance. That's my own personal position. It's not proscriptive, but it certainly feels like one of the few ways I can try my best to change the publishing machine that elevates some voices and ignores and silences others. **

The Publishing Machine

Unlike publishers who may only publish one or two queer-themed books a year at most, every book published (YA or adult) at Bold Strokes Books is queer. Consulting editor Ruth Sternglantz explains, "The problem #ownvoices is meant to correct is exactly why for the past century queer writers have started queer independent presses." At Bold Strokes Books, they never ask anyone submitting stories about their sexual orientation or gender identity, but "this is about saying voices should be authentic. And that means a lot of things."

Elizabeth Wheeler identifies as cis-female (she/her pronouns). In 2013, her first book in The Asher Trilogy, Asher's Fault was published as part of Bold Strokes Books' young adult line, *Soliloquy*. Today she examines the role nonidentity writers can play to amplify and support #ownvoice authors in the LGBTQIA+ community.



Illustrator in the Spotlight

Hannah Bess Ross



Are you an illustrator or an author/illustrator?

I strive to be both! I think there's the potential to pursue and excel in several different avenues of the illustration world. I think I'm a different kind of artist depending on the avenue I'm focusing on. Sometimes, for various projects, I'm solely an illustrator and, for other projects, I'm an author/illustrator.

In what medium do you prefer to work?

I'm mostly a painter but I dabble in printmaking and sculpture as well. Lately I'm enjoying a watercolor/gouache combo style of painting. I use Photoshop to make edits here and there but prefer traditional materials to digital.

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

I've always loved to tell stories. To pass the time at restaurants when I was a child I would create characters using our table condiments—giving them personalities as one might with

dolls or action figures. I'd invent narratives for my friends and we'd play in a magical, imaginative space where we were mermaids or runaways or fairies with mysterious powers. As I got older I found I could create stories on paper—give characters life with color and shape and words. I drew often and with intent. I wanted to tell stories no one had ever told before. This, albeit an ambitious task for a 12-year-old, led to high school art classes and then to art school and later an art career.

As I write those words I feel a little like an imposter. Having "a career in art" feels difficult to specify or quantify. It doesn't feel like something you ever achieve or obtain—it can be sort of fleeting and uncertain. In that sense, I think I'm very much still at my beginnings as an illustrator and have so many aspirations and dream projects. For now, I'm pushing forward with the jobs I do get as I continue to try to tell unique stories. Embracing an art career is exciting and terrifying all at once but I definitely couldn't do anything else.



Can you talk about the diversity in the types of projects you do?

One of the key parts of being a creative is adapting. If you're good at telling stories and making art you'll find a way to stay true to your sensibilities in any type of work you get. I try to make myself available as an artist in a variety of ways. It's a challenge sometimes but opportunities provide experience, and as such any experience is a good experience. Though my preferences lie in creating whimsical work for an eclectic children's market, I have done several more commercial projects as well. I recently did the illustrations for a cookbook about heritage grains that involved a more technical and clean technique. I've done botanical illustrations for wedding invites, logos for politicians, and graphics for small businesses. It's always interesting to see how my subtle, illustrative quirks come out in these types of pieces. I think it's important for artists to explore a variety of opportunities with an open mind and remember that we can apply our art in versatile ways without sacrificing any sort of artistic integrity. If you're excited about the work you're making, you'll definitely shine through.



Which illustrators were your favorites when you were little?

I relentlessly loved **Mary GrandPré's** early illustrations. I also loved **Quentin Blake**, **Shel Silverstein**, **Maurice Sendak**, and **Lane Smith**.

Which illustrators are your favorites now?

So, so many. I particularly love following **Carson Ellis**, **Esmé Shapiro**, **Kelsey Garrity-Riley**, **Lindsay Stripling**, **Lisk Feng**, **Jon Klassen**, and **Elizabeth Haidle**.

What's one thing that may surprise people about you?

I wanted to be an opera singer and still do.

What gets in the way of your creativity?

My own silly brain. Like most artists I suffer from a lot of self-doubt pretty much 90 percent of the time. I think it's hard being an illustrator who loves to look at and be inspired by other illustrators. It can become deeply destructive to compare yourself to others and set their success as your standard. Paths are never identical and oftentimes have hidden obstacles, obstacles unseen by an outside eye. One of my goals is to limit my social media habits and avoid overstimulating myself.





Please share an instance in which the seed of an idea or experience (though small at the start) took root and grew to become one of your books or illustrations.

The writer in me is obsessed with the musicality of words. I often think of a title for an illustration before I actually create the illustration. I love the “sing-songy-ness” of phrases and alliteration and keep a word-association list on my computer. They’re not all gems but every so often these little combinations of words will inspire visuals for me. For

whatever reason, on January 3 of this year I wrote down “wistful pet weasel party” and thus the illustration below came to be. Other weird ones include “priceless peach baby” and “the fish ladies are coming” ...I know. I’m a weirdo.

What three words best sum you up?

Good segue: weird, whimsical, and always-a-little-bit-sleepy.

Where can we find you?

My website is: www.hannahbessross.com

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



Hannah Bess Ross is an award-winning, Chicago-based illustrator/writer interested in all realms whimsy. She attended the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio, before moving back home to live in a nice little house with her boyfriend and her orange cat. She waits hopefully and patiently for the day her first children’s book is published and will throw a big party that all of you are invited to.



Voices of Change

There Are Places I Remember

By Shirin Shamsi

*No coward soul is mine
No trembler in the world's storm-
troubled sphere
I see Heaven's glories shine
And Faith shines equal, arming
me from Fear*

No Coward Soul Is Mine
by **Emily Bronte**

They say hindsight is 20/20. Rightfully so perhaps, for if I were to look back at my life and the long and winding road to publication, it would seem as though it were inevitable that I would end up as a writer.

I look up at my bookcase and see my very own middle grade novel, *Laila and the Sands of Time* (Clear Fork Publishing, May 2019), leaning against *Wuthering Heights*—and other beloved works of literature—and each time I catch my breath in wonder. It is still with amazement and awe that I acknowledge my dream has come true. I vividly recall the day my wonderful publisher, **Callie Metler-Smith**, contacted me to request the complete manuscript. I still have outbreaks of imposter syndrome and have to coax myself back to the reality that yes, it is real. I believe dreams do come true—that is, if you are willing to put all your wholehearted energy, hard work, and focus into pursuing your dream. Dreams do not come easy. You have to work at them with focus, fervor, passion, patience, and perseverance—and in my case, I worked at it for decades, perhaps my whole life.

*...I am a part of all that I have
met;
Yet all experience is an arch
where thro'*

Gleams that untravell'd world...

Ulysses by **Alfred Lord Tennyson**

Looking back, I see how my writing journey began very early on, when I was a child of eight years. Every year my siblings and I went to the shop around the corner to purchase our brand-new diaries. This was a ritual in my family. We were all writers and wrote an entry each and every day, even if to say, “I watched ‘Doctor Who’ today and it was scary.” At other times there was not enough space (in my one-week-per-page diary) to fit all the things I had to say that particular day, so I taped a scrap of paper to the page and continued writing. I had a very lumpy diary, with many folded scraps of paper.

My parents moved to the UK in the mid-1950s from the newly created Pakistan. My father was an educator, so our home was always filled with books. I recall reading *Ladybird Tales*, a treasured collection of fairy tales, and being absorbed by the beautiful illustrations. As I got older it was **Enid Blyton's** books that caught my imagination. My father became a full-time writer when he retired. The smell of freshly printed books arriving in parcels still brings back wonderful memories.

I was a middle child of seven and was fortunate to have three older sisters for they told me stories—before I could read. My eldest sister told me stories from Greek mythology while the second eldest sister read science fiction. I become obsessed with time travel at an early age.

Mother told us stories of her childhood in India and her traumatic experience

of the Partition in 1947. She arrived in London with two toddlers, a young mother only 22 years of age. She had left everything and everyone behind her to build a new life in England with her husband and children. Travel was not easy in those days; we were all she had—me and my six siblings. Her stories expanded our horizons and nourished our souls.

*...To follow knowledge like a
sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of
human thought.*

Ulysses by Alfred Lord Tennyson

School and home were two different worlds. Our immigrant experience was not simply our father's struggle to provide for his family, but also a challenge for both our parents to preserve their faith and culture, which at times felt at odds with mainstream society. Navigating the two worlds was tough, although coming from a big family helped; there was support and security in our shared experience. Every child craves acceptance and as the only brown girl in my class, I often felt misunderstood. When even the teachers did not appreciate or even understand why I did not celebrate Christmas, it made me feel very alien.

Like every child, all I wanted was to belong. I knew I was different. I knew I looked different. Books were a solace and escape from a world that often made no sense. Books made me feel I belonged. I would lose myself in different worlds, where labels and exteriors mattered not. I became one with the character, for we were joined together in our human struggles.



Jane Eyre’s yearning for acceptance, love, and independence is a universal yearning that echoed in my own heart. David Copperfield’s pain and suffering became mine. Every character I met became my friend. I lived vicariously through these fictional characters who were often more real to me than my peers. Through these friends I traveled through time and space, across the world on flying carpets, and to different universes. It was a rich world of experience that I lived in and learned from—while still safe and secure in the haven of my self-imposed bubble.

On my last visit to the UK, I had a reunion with some high school friends. Each of them expressed little surprise upon hearing of my newly published book.

“I always knew you would become a writer,” said one friend. “You always had your nose in a book.”

They all agreed.

Yes, if I travel down memory lane, the dots connect. Books were integral to my life, my survival. The Bronte sisters were as much—if not more—my peers as the students in my class. In some ways, Victorian England matched the atmosphere of our home life far more than the psychedelic sixties and disco-dancing seventies. We had zero social life and were very cloistered in our upbringing. But the atmosphere in our home was one that encouraged improving the mind and soul through learning.

While my peers went to the movies, I whiled away many an hour in the library or a secondhand bookshop. If I discovered a battered old book, my elder sister would often replace the shabby cover with her own artwork, then laminate it. We had a great treasure of a collection.

Years later, when I became a mother, I felt a need to improve upon my children’s experiences. I felt an urgency to write stories so my children would see themselves in books. I often wrote and illustrated stories for them, which are now collecting dust in the attic and will never again see the light of day. My husband has always been my number one fan. He encouraged me to “go for it!” when I spoke of my dream to write for children.

My children are now grown, and I am proud to say that they are doing absolutely wonderful things in the world. Though my journey to publication has taken over two decades, I have zero regrets. I began writing for my children, but now I write for *all* the children of the world. The journey has been enriching. It has been a journey of learning and growing; it has been a journey of highs and lows; it has been a journey of such wonderful abundance that at times my heart overflows with overwhelming gratitude.

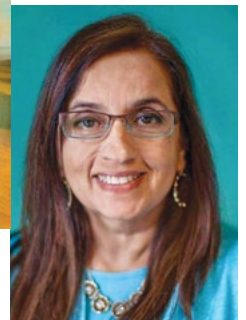
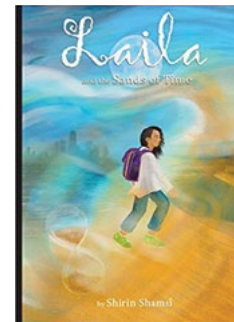
I believe in the power of books for they lit up my childhood days and nights. Books are powerful in the way they impact and enhance a child’s world. I also believe there is a great need for all cultures and lifestyles to be represented in stories, so that we can create more empathetic citizens of our world. Growing this empathy is so necessary, for our world should be all-inclusive, not excluding anyone in any way. But we are moving forward and I feel honored to be writing in this wonderful time in children’s publishing history.

I recently contacted my elementary school in the UK to request an author visit. I received a very encouraging reply welcoming me to visit. I am thrilled that I will be able to return to my old school next spring when I go to see my mother. In some way it will be like coming full circle.

I can never repay all the people who have helped me along the way. What I can do is pay it forward as did those before me. I write to serve children with whatever I have to give. I write with the knowledge that there may be some child feeling left out and not belonging. I want my stories to take that child’s hand and say, “Come now, you do belong. You belong with all your otherness for you are part of this beautiful color-filled world. Here we celebrate everyone’s stories. This is your time to shine.”

Until the lion tells his story, the tale of the hunt will glorify the hunter.

—African proverb



Shirin Shamsi was born and raised in the UK and now makes her home in the Chicago suburbs. With a background in early childhood development, she has always put a priority on children. *Laila and the Sands of Time* is her debut middle-grade novel. Shirin has raised six children—three human and three feline—all of whom have provided much inspiration for her stories. When she is not writing, Shirin enjoys reading, storytelling, painting, and spending time with family and friends.

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Mentor Texts

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Characters

By Jennifer Kay Loescher

Full Disclosure: I do not have hearing loss, nor am I a member of the Deaf Community. My twelve-year-old daughter and I are currently taking American Sign Language (ASL) classes. She wants to support a close friend at school who has partial hearing loss. As a result of my daughter's lived experience, my current YA work in progress includes a hearing protagonist who signs ASL with her deaf best friend.

When I first started writing this story, my wise MFA advisor suggested — in addition to doing extensive research and getting to know members of any community you hope to write about — an author should read 100 books that include characters with that marginalized identity element. Sadly, my hunt for mentor texts with deaf or hard of hearing characters has not uncovered anywhere near 100 children's books.

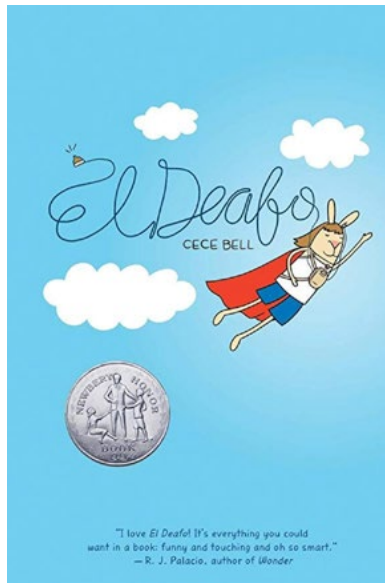
The book list included with this article is not exhaustive or curated. These are the books I found most helpful to develop my characters. While reading these books, I assembled key questions authors should consider to develop authentic deaf or hard of hearing characters.

According to the National Association of the Deaf website:

The deaf and hard of hearing community is diverse. There are variations in how a person becomes deaf or hard of hearing, level of hearing, age of onset, educational background, communication methods, and

cultural identity. How people “label” or identify themselves is personal and may reflect identification with the deaf and hard of hearing community, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset.

There are huge differences between the lived experiences of being born deaf inside the Deaf community and experiencing hearing loss at an older age in the Hearing community. There is also a misconception in the Hearing community that “well-educated” deaf people can almost replace hearing with lip-reading.



Lip-reading is a very difficult form of communication that can become impossible based on setting conditions and a person's speaking habits. I've been told by several deaf and hard of hearing friends that my lips are impossible to read. I don't move my mouth very much when I speak, and I tend to look down

instead of at the person I am talking to. My speaking habits are in no way a reflection of the intelligence of the person unable to lip-read me.

Historical research may be required to create an authentic deaf or hard of hearing character. Teaching philosophies from the time era when a character became deaf or hard of hearing will have a huge impact on the way that character communicates. There was a period of time when deaf people were raised orally and were not taught sign language. A character born deaf during at that time might have learned ASL later in life, or they might have created their own system of communicating with home-made signs and lip movements. Access to ASL education, and interest in learning that language, can vary greatly within the Deaf community.

Medical research may also be required. The age, cause, and level of hearing loss will strongly impact the lived experience of your character. These factors will also dictate whether devices, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants, would improve your character's hearing.

The more important question that hearing writers often overlook is whether a deaf or hard of hearing character wants to improve hearing. A hearing person's lived experience of spoken language and hearing the world is not superior to a deaf person's lived experience of signing ASL and experiencing the world through other senses.

Deafness and hearing loss are physical



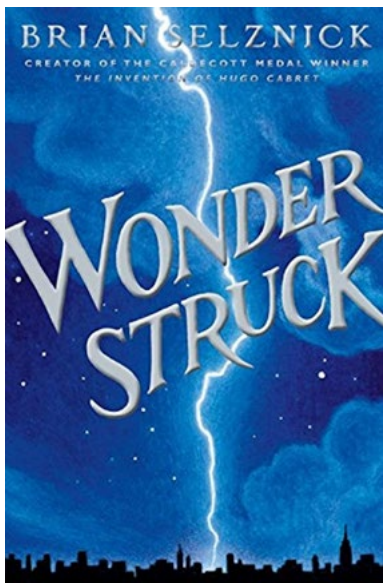
disabilities that often cannot — and in many cases should not — be cured. KidLit characters with this marginalized identity element need to be well-rounded kids with more going on in their lives than their hearing level. They need plot arcs and emotional arcs that can be resolved through their own agency, choices, and actions.

4 Middle Grade Mentor Texts:

El Deafo by CeCe Bell

(Newbery Honor Book)

Cece becomes deaf after an illness when she is four years old. She progresses through lip-reading, a hearing aid, and the phonic ear before reluctantly learning sign language. Deafness is shown in this graphic novel with empty dialogue bubbles. ASL signs are shown visually in panels. While Cece's hearing loss is a huge subplot, the primary story is about friendship. This book is a memoir based on the author's lived experience.



Wonder Struck by Brian Selznick

Ben was born deaf in one ear and loses hearing in the other ear when the house is struck by lightning while he

10 Writing Craft Questions

1. What caused the character's deafness or hearing loss?
2. How old was the character when deafness or hearing loss occurred? And in what historic time era did the deafness or hearing loss occur?
3. Was the character born into the Deaf community? If not, does the family encourage the character to join the Deaf community? Or do they insist the character attempt to blend into the Hearing community?
4. Does the city where the character lives have a large Deaf community? Do public places / businesses have employees who know ASL or are willing to have written conversations? Is the character accepted?
5. Does the character attend a Deaf school? If not, what accommodations does the school provide for a deaf or hard of hearing student? Are there other kids in the school who are deaf or hard of hearing?
6. Does the character have or want items to aid hearing, such as hearing aids, interpreters in the classroom, cochlear implants, voice to text software, etc.? Would any of these devices actually improve the hearing of someone with the character's specific medical condition?
7. Does the character have technology at home that flashes the lights instead of making a sound, such as doorbells, telephones, or alarm clocks?
8. Does the character lip-read? If so, consider situations that make lip-reading impossible, such as moustaches, mumblers, speakers who turn away, dark spaces (like sleepovers), watching TV, crowds, etc.
9. Does the character use ASL? If so, have you taken ASL classes to learn how the language works? ASL order conveys information in the shortest number of words possible. ASL signs can drastically change meaning depending on the location of the gesture, the number of times a gesture is made, the combination of gestures, and the expression of the person signing.
10. How does the author indicate ASL? With quotation marks or not? In italics or bold? In English sentence grammar or ASL order? With visual descriptions of the ASL sign motions or not? There is no standard way of including ASL in manuscripts, but the Deaf community has opinions and preferences which evolve over time.



is talking on the telephone in 1977. He does not know sign language or how to read lips, so he communicates by writing on a pad of paper.

Ana was born deaf in 1927 and was locked away in a house “for her own good.” She does use ASL to communicate with her brother. Her storyline is told completely in pictures, so the ASL language is not conveyed in the text of this book. While the Deaf experience in two different time eras is a large subplot, the primary story is about lonely children searching for family. To the best of my knowledge, this author is not Deaf or Hard of Hearing, but he included experts and members of the Deaf community in his Acknowledgments. He also included a selected bibliography about Deafness and Deaf Culture.

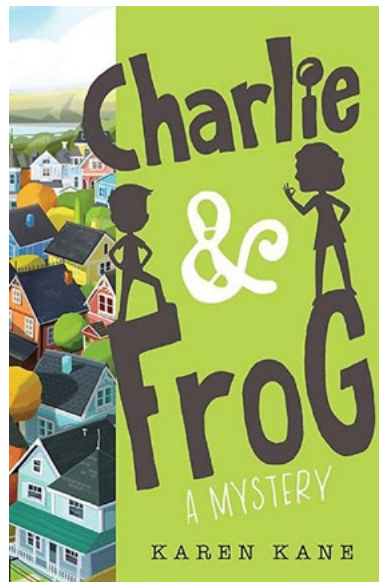


Hello, Universe by Erin Entrada Kelly

(Newbery Medal Winner)

Valencia is one protagonist in an ensemble cast solving the mystery of a missing boy. The cause of her deafness is not explained, because it is not relevant to the story. Valencia does not know sign language, but

she does use a hearing aid and has accommodations in her home. The skills Valencia brings to the search are her bravery and knowledge of nature. Her emotional arc is focused on making friends. To the best of my knowledge, this author is not Deaf or Hard of Hearing, but she included experts and members of the Deaf community in her Acknowledgments.



Charlie & Frog: A Mystery by Karen Kane

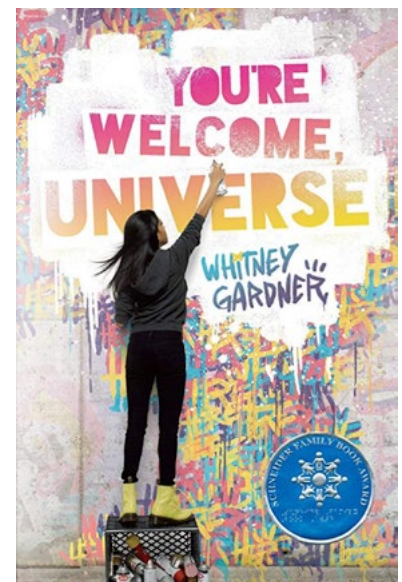
Charlie is visiting his grandparents in a town with a large Deaf community. He witnesses a Deaf woman in distress and seeks Frog’s help to understand what the woman signed to him. Frog teaches Charlie ASL signs as they solve the mystery of the missing woman, but most of their conversations are written down or use members of the community as interpreters. This book uses illustrations of ASL signs as the chapter headings. ASL dialogue is described from Charlie’s Hearing point of view. This author works as a sign language interpreter, plus she included experts and members of the Deaf community in her Acknowledgements.

3 Young Adult Mentor Texts:

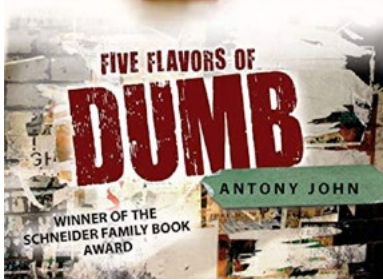
You’re Welcome Universe by Whitney Gardner

(Schneider Family Book Award)

Julia is a graffiti artist who attends a Deaf High School. The cause of her hearing loss isn’t explained, because it isn’t relevant to the story. Her Deaf community uses ASL, which is depicted in quotation marks in English sentence grammar. After Julia is kicked out and sent to a public school, the dialogue transforms. Quotation marks are still used, but the dialogue tags tell the reader when a character is signing or speaking. When Julia lip-reads, the words she can’t decode are shown with dashes. Julia uses an interpreter during class and communicates via text out of class. The primary story is a graffiti war, where Julia must solve the mystery of her rival artist’s identity. Her hearing loss does not cause her to get caught in the initial graffiti incident, nor does it hinder her ability to solve the mystery. To the best of my knowledge,



this author is not deaf or hard of hearing, but she included experts and members of the Deaf community in her Acknowledgments.



Five Flavors of Dumb by Anthony John

Piper lost her hearing at six years old due to a hereditary condition. Her mother is CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) and is desperate to “fix” Piper’s infant sister with cochlear implants. Piper, her brother, and her mother use ASL, which is depicted in italics in English sentence grammar. Her father and love interest later enroll in ASL classes to be supportive. The primary story is a quest: Piper can become the manager of a local band if she is able to book a paying gig. Her obstacles are her own selfishness and judgment of others, not her hearing loss. To the best of my knowledge, this author is not Deaf or Hard of Hearing, but he included experts and members of the Deaf community in his Acknowledgments.

Invincible Summer by Hannah Moskowitz

Chase signs ASL with his six-year-old brother Gideon. The cause of Gideon’s deafness is not explained, but there is reference to him often getting dizzy due to an issue with his ears, which is relevant to the story. ASL dialogue is shown in bold print in ASL order. The

primary story is a love triangle between Chase, his older brother Noah, and a girl whose family rents the cottage next door every summer. To the best of my knowledge, this author is not Deaf or Hard of Hearing, but she included experts and members of the Deaf community in her Acknowledgments.



Have you read any great mentor texts to add to this list? Please share on Twitter with #PrairieWindBookList.

Jennifer Kay Loescher is a *KidLit* Author and Structural Engineer. She has a VCFA MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults, is an SCBWI Rockford Network Rep, edits the SCBWI-IL Prairie Wind, and reads for a literary agency. Jennifer has been published in Scholastic Storyworks, Jr.