



# Creative TAP

Issue 6

April 2022

*"I am seeking. I am striving. I am in it with all my heart."*

—Vincent Van Gogh

## Forging Onward:

### Pat Zietlow Miller's Journey to Success

I've wanted to write picture books for as long as I can remember.



Pat in grade school

When I was in grade school, I'd flip through the card catalog and see where my card would go

if I wrote a book.

When I was in high school, I'd secretly read picture books when I was supposed to be researching something boring.

And then, when I was 19, I attempted to write a picture book—a rhyming text called "I Wish I Had a Lion." I sent it to one publisher, got a form

rejection and didn't do anything else to achieve my book-writing dream for the next 20 years.

That sounds depressing, but I did other things instead. I graduated from college, got married, worked as a newspaper reporter, wrangled kids, earned a master's degree, and worked in corporate communications for two large insurance companies.

But during those 20 years, I never stopped thinking about picture books. That probably should have told me something. But it took until I turned 39 for me to have an epiphany. And when it happened, it was like an actual light went on over my head.

This is what I realized: No New York City editor was

## From the Editor

Can you smell spring in the air? I can. That earthy, moist, loamy scent, rich in promise. A promise of new growth. A promise of beauty. A promise of the bountiful harvest.



We are like the spring, our creativity rich in promise. And like the plants pushing forth from the once frozen ground seeking sun, water, and nutrients, we reach our full potential with a little help.

The writers and artist in this edition of Creative Tap provide just that—some help for you to reach your full potential.

ever going to call me out of the blue and say, “Hey, Pat! I heard you wanted to write a picture book!”

So, unless I wanted to spend my golden years wondering: “What if . . . ,” I needed to get busy.

I worked full time, so writing during the day was out. I had two small kids, so writing once I got home didn’t work. That left when my daughters were asleep. I stopped watching TV and spent those hours reading other people’s books and writing my own.

I was not instantly successful. My first efforts were actually rather terrible—not that I realized it at the time. I thought the stuff I was sending out was publication worthy.

I soon found out I was wrong.

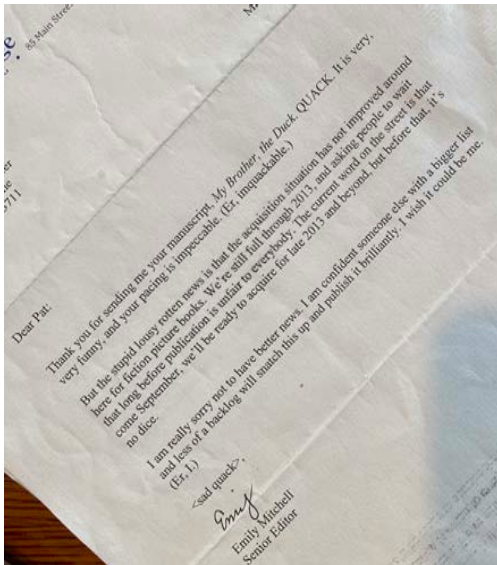
But I didn’t stop. I read more. I wrote more. I joined critique groups. I blogged about picture books. I took more classes. Went to conferences. I wanted to become a children’s book expert. And despite continued rejections from New York editors, I sent more stories out.



Pat's home office

I got just enough positive feedback to keep me going. Occasionally, there’d be a hand-written note on a rejection saying something like “Cute, but not for us.”

During the next four years, I received 126 rejections. Which was a bummer. But those “nos” forced me to improve. And one thing working as a journalist and a corporate communicator



Sample of an “encouraging” rejection letter

had taught me was how to take feedback calmly and use it to rework my writing.

Pat Zietlow Miller shares her journey as a children’s book author. Pat shares her dream of becoming a children’s book author. She exemplifies Vincent van Gogh’s inspirational words and this edition’s theme: “I am seeking. I am striving. I am in it with all my heart.” After reading Pat’s story, I reflected on my efforts toward reaching my creative goals and committed to upping my game.

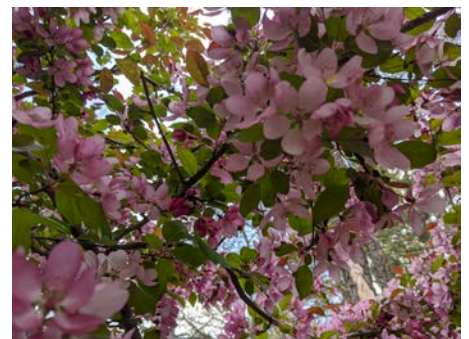
If you’re like me, you may need some help along the way.

Indie children’s book author Amanda Zieba gives detailed tips for reaching your target audience.

And for other ways to grow creatively, don’t forget to read through the upcoming events and opportunities. A lot is happening around the state.

I hope these featured articles along with all the wonderful news, tips, and info in this edition of Creative Tap provide support for developing *your* creative potential. Together we are stronger.

Happy spring!



Then—finally—a real, live, New York editor called. She wanted to buy one of my books. *Sophie’s Squash* came out in 2013 and won some nifty awards.

I kept reading and writing. I found a literary agent. She helped me sell twenty-two more picture books.

Thirteen are available now, five are coming out this year, and the rest are coming in the next few years.

And, yes. I still get rejections. Regularly.

While card catalogs no longer exist, my name is on Amazon and Goodreads, and my books are in libraries and stores across the country as well as in France, China, Korea, Japan, the Netherlands, Greece, and Turkey. I’ve gone on book tours. Given speeches to aspiring writers. Gotten fan mail from kids and parents.

And until June of 2021, I was still working full time at an insurance company while I wrote nights and weekends. (Children’s books don’t usually generate pay-all-your-bills

income or provide health insurance.)

I eventually was able to leave my corporate job due to a combination of factors. Many of my books were earning royalties (which is never a given), one of my books was a New York Times bestseller, my spouse had a health plan I could join, and we spent nearly

two years doing some intense financial planning with an expert.

Looking back, I’m glad I listened to that voice inside my head saying, “You can do this. You should try.” If I hadn’t, I would have missed some cool stuff. And I want even more cool stuff to happen, so I’m going to keep trying.

If I’m an example of anything, it’s that you should do whatever you’ve always said you wanted to do someday. Even if you’ve waited 20 years to start. Even if you’ve started before and given up. Even if you get a lot of people telling you “No.”

Because, what if I had stopped after rejection number 125?

I don’t think anyone would have blamed me. They would have told me I’d tried my best. But, if I had stopped, none of my twenty-three book sales would have happened. I would have missed so many amazing things.

Often, when I get a rejection, my agent sends it along to me with a one-word comment:

“Onward!”

So, that’s the word I’ll leave you with no matter where you are in your writing journey or what you hope to achieve.

Onward!



Book signing event



*Pat Zietlow Miller is the New York Times bestselling author of BE KIND. She’s also the author of SOPHIE’S SQUASH, which won a Golden Kite Award, a Charlotte Zolotow honor and an Ezra Jack Keats New Writer honor. She has 13 books in print and 10 more coming in the next few years. Follow her on Twitter at @PatZMiller and on Instagram at @patzmill. Or, visit her website at [www.patzietlowmiller.com](http://www.patzietlowmiller.com)*

# Commandeer a Committed Crowd and Increase Book Sales

By Amanda Zieba

Every author wants hordes of raving fans, people who will buy their books like air they need to breathe. In addition to being good for the ego, it's good for the bank account. But how exactly do you do that? How do you build up an audience of devoted supporters, especially when you are Mr./Ms. No-name from Small-town-somewhere?

The answer is to tap into an already engaged audience. Take a minute and think about the diehard hobbyists in the world. Maybe you know a quilter who would drive halfway across the country to visit a renowned fabric shop. Or a hunter who would nearly sell his soul to get a particular license just to have the opportunity to “maybe” shoot the beast of their dreams. Or perhaps a gardener who would rather dig in the dirt than do most anything else. These people have already proven that they will make a commitment (with their time, energy, and money) to their hobby—that they will go to extreme lengths (and expenses) to enjoy anything within their micro-niche’s realm.

**THESE ARE THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO WRITE TO.**



Many people thumb their nose at writing “to market,” writing about what is trending or currently hot in the market, but that’s not what I’m talking about here. What I am suggesting is to write your book for a specific group of humans. (Bonus points if you can include two of those audiences!)

For example, I have a book series in which the main character is the owner/operator of a chocolate shop in Northern Minnesota. My audiences for this series are entrepreneurs, chocolate lovers, and people who are fans of the Great Lakes. Another series features a military wife who runs a bookstore with her close-knit (and humorous), over involved family. My audiences for this book are working moms, military spouses, and book lovers. Perhaps my best example of this is a kids’ chapter book

## Podcasts Worth a Listen

Searching for creative support and advice? Here are two podcasts worth a listen:

### *This Creative Life with Sara Zarr*

Author Sara Zarr describes her podcast a “conversation with other writers, with a focus on the practical and psychological aspects of creativity, the creative process, and the strange landscape where art meets commerce.”

And don’t we all need a little emotional support in our creative work?

Find out more about Sara Zarr at her website [Sara Zarr](#).

### *Picturebooking*

Picture book authors and illustrators will enjoy host Nick Patton’s discussions with “the people who make picture books.” Described as “in-depth interviews with children’s book authors and illustrators for people who believe that art and literature can have a profoundly positive impact on a kid’s life.” Check out Nick’s website at [Picturebooking](#).

with a plot that focuses on a family who travels the country in an RV going on geocaching adventures. Chances are, if I head to a geocaching event or RV convention, I'm going to find my ideal readers and a bunch of book sales. As I write, I keep the key

*You can check out my books to get a better idea of what I'm talking about at [WordNerdopolis](#). You can also listen to the first chapter of each of my books read aloud on YouTube, by clicking here: [Reading with the Word Nerd - First Chapter Read Alouds of Amanda Zieba's Books](#).*

audiences in my mind and try to include story elements I know they would like to read. Oftentimes, these are not huge plot-impacting writing decisions, but more so inclusion of setting details, pop culture mentions, and lifestyle elements.

All of these tiny details are meant to appeal to a specific kind of person—my ideal reader. These tiny details will help them relate and feel seen while reading my story and, thus, increase

their enjoyment of it. But this is only part of the goal.

Including these niche audiences will also give me specific ideas of where I can sell my books or help me to figure out where my readers hang out and spend their money. I don't just have to stick to bookstores when approaching businesses to sell my book. Touristy gift shops in La Crosse and Duluth, chocolate shops, entrepreneur groups, and military wives' book clubs, are all places I have been able to work with in selling my books. Remember that geocaching example I gave you earlier? The largest geocaching website in the world, the HUB of all geocaching activity, sells MY book on their website. Through their platform and credibility, I am able to reach interested readers that without my strategic story plotting, would have been unavailable.

My tip for you today is to think about a niche audience (or two) that you can write right into your story, so that once it is done, you can easily find and sell your book to them—and know that they will love it. (And come running back for more!)

**So here's how you do it.**

1. Identify a committed crowd: a group of people who all love a particular pastime, hobby, activity,

sport, location, career, or niche topic.

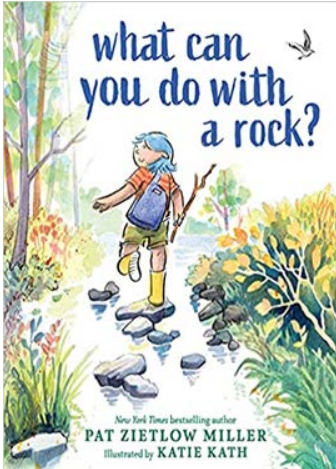
Examples (in addition to the ones included above): parrot owners, people who love going on cruises, golfers, house flippers/DIY junkies, country line dancers, Ebay sellers, stamp collectors, NASCAR fans.

2. Write a story that thoughtfully includes characters, locations, and plot elements that would appeal to and please readers of your identified niches. Remember big and obvious doesn't always get the job done. Sometimes it is the smallest details that these readers will notice and appreciate.
3. Publish your book through your chosen publication path.
4. Go (either virtually or in-person) where your readers hang out.

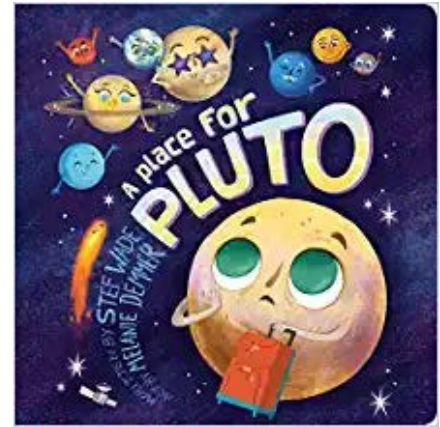
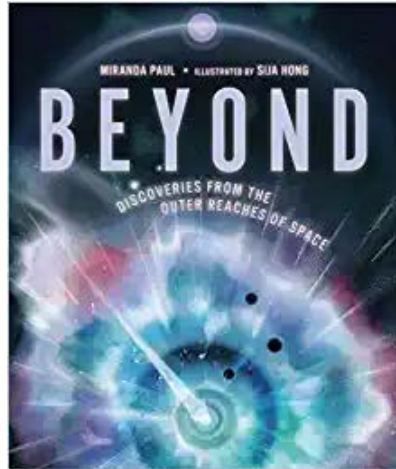
Examples: speaking at a niche-topic conference, putting a flyer for your book in a niche-topic convention SWAG bag, posting in a niche-topic Facebook group, teaching a class for a niche-topic group, speaking on a niche-topic podcast.

Here are a few books by fellow Wisconsin SCBWI chapter members that have (knowingly or unknowingly) used this strategy successfully!

Rock Collectors



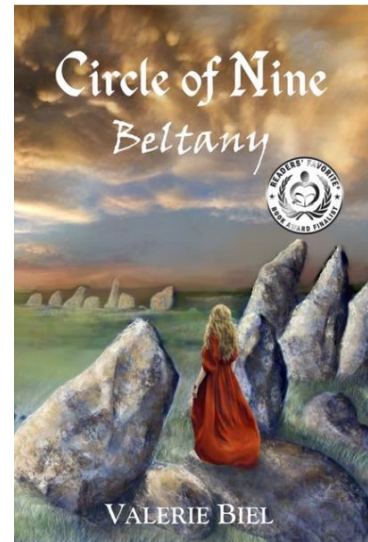
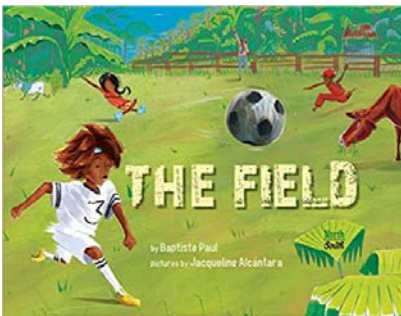
Space Enthusiasts



Irish/Celtic Groups

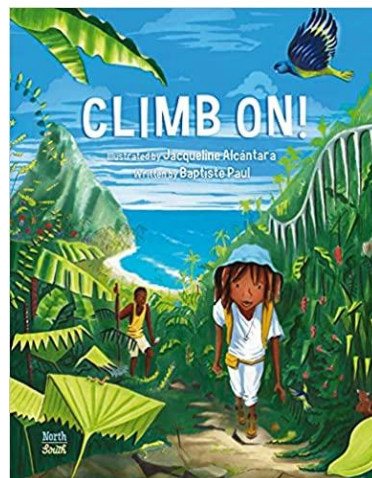
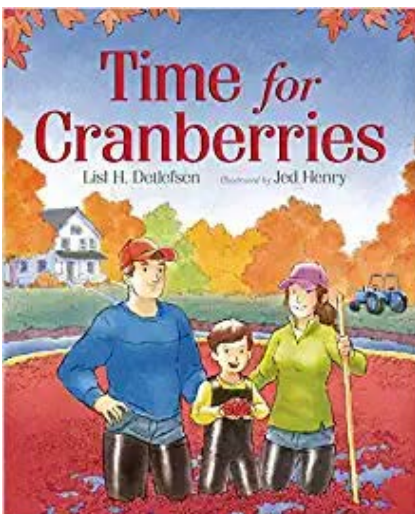
People with Disabilities

Soccer Fans

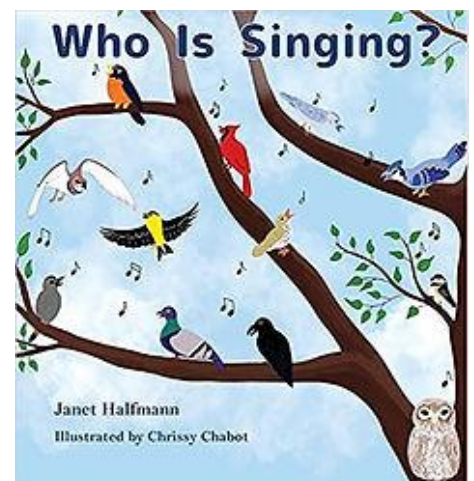


Local/State Area of Interest

Hikers/Hiking Groups



Birdwatchers/Birdwatching Groups



# Ready! Set! Write!

## A Heightened Perspective

By Pat Severin

“Ava, what are you doing? We’re gonna get in trouble! C’mon, Ava. We’ve got five more minutes before lunchbreak’s over. Besides, those workers could be back any minute! That’s a lot higher than you think it is. Ava, you’ve got to get down! I think I heard the crane motor starting up. If they start lifting, they won’t even see you. The braided wire’s at the other end! Oh, Ava, get down, *please!*”

“Oh, Lily, loosen up. Live a little. The view is spectacular! Being up here is so freeing! Listen, it’s our senior year. What are they going to do? Huh? Tell me that. Graduation’s next week, and I, for one, can’t wait. I’m gonna slam the front door of this restrictive school behind me and ditch this mask, *forever!*”

“Ava, Mr. Edwards was just in the window! He’ll be down here any minute! C,mon, I’m gonna go inside. I’m sorry, but I can’t get a detention, not the last week of school. Please, get down! I’m starting to worry about you. Get down—*please!*”

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*“The photo elicited shades of a high school senior perched atop the bottom of a soon-to-be erected abstract monstrosity of a statue that the school board commissioned to symbolize the ever-changing landscape of education, a statue every student hates.”*  
- Pat Severin

**Pat Severin has been writing stories and poems since the third grade. Pat’s a retired elementary school teacher and a member of SCBWI since 2018. A self-published poet, Pat’s poems have been featured on the online Christian journal **Agape Review**. Collections of Pat’s poetry, *Words of Witness, An Age Old Story, A Lifetime of Poetry*, can be purchased on the website **Blurb**. Her true joy is her mission of regularly sending original cards with poems of encouragement to those going through difficult health struggles.**



## Gemini Climbs High

by Susan Twiggs

Gemini liked to climb. At three she climbed on kitchen countertops. At four the apple tree. By six the garage roof.

Her father yelled. Her mother pleaded. Her grandmother prayed.

When she was eight, Gemini and her dad built a tree house. She spent the summer reading, sketching, and daydreaming.

One sultry afternoon the neighbor, Mrs. Patel, hurried into Gemini’s yard. “Help, help!” she cried. “Please rescue my cat.”

Gemini woke with a start, tied her climbing shoes, and slid down the tree. She followed Mrs. Patel.

“Mew! Mew!” Patches cried from the highest tree.

## Ready! Set! Write! Fall Challenge



Ok, writers, here’s the challenge. Look at the visual and write a scene of 250 to 500 words.

How to get started? Writing-coach Lisa Cron in her best-selling book *Story Genius* advises against thinking “What if?” This leads to a neutral, pointless series of events. Instead, turn a neutral “What If” prompt into a compelling story by asking the key question.

Cron states when that idea strikes, ask yourself, “What’s the point?”

“What If’s” are missing the protagonist’s internal conflict. Cron points out the protagonist’s internal conflict is what it’s all about, the heart of the story.

Ready to start? Choose a character in the photo prompt. Make that character your protagonist. Ask yourself “What point do I want my story to make?” The point is always expressed in a full sentence:

Stand up for what is right even when the world is against you. (Think *Harry Potter & the Order of the Phoenix* by J.K. Rowling.)

Our lives are enriched by accepting other’s differences. (Think *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio.)

Once you have your protagonist, identified their internal conflict, and answered the question, “What’s the point?”, it’s time to **Ready! Set! Write!**

Gemini sized up the climb. Difficult, but not impossible. Not for Gemini. She stretched her arms. She stretched her toes. She reached. But Patches climbed higher. Tree branches creaked. Patches clung.

Could Gemini reach her?

She stretched her arms. She stretched her toes. She *reached*—and at last, she cradled Patches in her arms. Gemini hesitated. Should she jump?

Down

Down

Kaboomp!

Gemini and Patches safe and sound on the ground.

To celebrate, her parents drove Gemini downtown. She scrambled to the top of the Whipped Cream sculpture, Gemini’s favorite place to climb.

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*“The photo prompt reminds me of the giant-sized spoon sculpture in downtown Minneapolis. I paired that with the joy my boys had in climbing high.”*

—Susan Schartz Twiggs

**Susan Schwartz Twiggs’ early diaries foretold her interest in the written word. Over the years, she’s narrowed her focus to non-fiction and has set a recent challenge for herself: write frequently and enter writing contests. Susan has entered six contests so far in 2022, one of which awarded her an honorable mention. Her goal is to have four polished manuscripts by the end of the year with the editing support of her critique group Kids at Heart, the judges at Rate Your Story, and the elves at 12X12 Picture Book Writing Challenge.**



## Submission Guidelines

- Send writing submission to Sandra Nichols at nichols.five@hotmail.com
- Type “Ready! Set! Write!” in the subject line
- Include submission as Microsoft Word attachment
- Submissions must be between 250-500 words plus a title
- Include your name and a three-sentence bio describing your writing journey, writing accomplishments, and goals.
- Write one sentence describing how the photo prompt inspired the scene.
- Share one unique interest or fact about yourself.
- Submit by Sunday, September 11.
- NOTE: Authors retain all rights to their writing.

### Artists and Illustrators Tip

*Artists and writers will serve themselves well by seeing the professional journey (submitting work, being published, getting paid for the work) and artistic journey (learning the craft, creating a process, making work, and improving it) as two separate things. The professional journey ebbs and flows; it's conditional. But the artistic journey needs at least some small amount of time and focus every single day, unconditionally.*

—Eliza Wheeler, award winning illustrator-author

Find out more about Eliza, her art, and writing including info on her latest book *Home in the Woods*, at her website [Eliza Wheeler](#).

After many suggestions that her art would be perfect for illustrating children’s books, Terri was fortunate to have an author contact her in 2019 to do just that. She’s now working on her tenth book using both traditional and digital mediums. Terri is a shining example that you are never too old to learn something new. At the age of 62, Terri retired from the 9 to 5 grind and taught herself digital illustration. Terri says, “I am loving this new journey!”

Check out Terri’s other illustrations at her website [Terri Einer – Einer Arts](#).

### Illustrators’ Gallery

“When I saw the theme of this post, I immediately envisioned a child soaring to new heights with a balloon heart. This is a digital illustration created with Photoshop.”

- Terri Einer



## Illustrator’s Gallery Fall Challenge

Looking to flex your creative muscle? Get your work in front of a wide audience of authors and artists? Creative Taps’ Illustrator Challenge is the answer.

So what’s your challenge? Create an illustration based on the upcoming fall newsletter theme:

*“It’s not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.”*

- William Shakespeare



### Submission Guidelines

- Send a JPEG of your artwork to Sandra Nicholas at nichols.five@hotmail.com
- Type “Illustrators’ Gallery” in the subject line.
- Include your name, description of your artwork including medium, and how the illustration relates to the theme.
- Include a three-sentence bio describing your artist journey, accomplishments, and goals as well as your illustrator website if you have one.
- Share one unique interest or fact about yourself.
- Submit by Sunday, September 11.
- NOTE: Artists retain all rights to their artwork.

### Publishing Updates

*Publishers Weekly* reported a 12.9% increase in children’s/ YA book sales from 2020 to 2021.

Authors are beginning to see an uptick in face-to-face school visits evidenced by Matt de LaPena’s recent visit to a school in Arlington, Texas where the Newberry Medal-winning children’s author spoke to an audience of hundreds of school children.

### Upcoming Events, Workshops and Retreats

#### SCBWI Sponsored Events, Workshops, Retreats

SCBWI’s free digital workshops are back! Yes, FREE!

#### **Marketing for Authors: From Self-Promotion to Getting the Most of Your Publisher**

Presenter: Author and publishing insider Margot Wood

When: April 21, 2022  
Where: Online  
Time: 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CST

#### **Using Texture as a Tool for Creating Pictures**

Presenter: Illustrator Rahele Jomepour Bell

When: April 28, 2022  
Where: Online  
Time: 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CST

**An Illustrator and Author Walk into a Bar...**

Presenters: Illustrator Benson Shum and author Meg Fleming

A look at the end-to-end process of creating and revising a picture book from two sides of the picture book-making desk: casting characters, honing voice, solidifying theme, and managing creative expectations.

When: May 5, 2022  
Where: Online  
Time: 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CST

**Stop Waiting for Inspiration and Start Becoming an Idea Generator**

Presenter: Author Naz Kutub

Gain idea-generating techniques to help you start actively seeking ideas everywhere.

When: May 12, 2022  
Where: Online  
Time: 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CST

To access the free online webinars:

Log-in to <https://www.scbwi.org/>

Click events, on drop down menu, click digital workshops.

Scroll down and click on the zoom session link.

If you are unable to make the live webinar, video recordings will be posted to the SCBWI website 24 hours after each workshop concludes and will remain up on the Digital Workshop archive page for one month.

**Description begins in the writer's imagination, but should end in the reader's. —Stephen King**

**Non-SCBWI Sponsored Events, Workshops, Retreats**

Looking for an evening out? The Books and Beer book club has you covered.

**An Evening with Authors Nancy Jorgensen and Elizabeth Jorgensen**

When: April 21, 2022  
Where: Cercis Brewing Company, 140 N. Dickason Blvd, Columbus  
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Join SCBWI-WI author Nancy Jorgensen and co-author Elizabeth Jorgensen as they discuss their book, *Go, Gwen, Go: A Family's Journey to Olympic Gold*, a true story of an

athlete's and her family's journey to the Olympics and the importance family plays in a young athlete's struggle to earn the gold.

The event will also stream on zoom. Register [here](#) for the online option.

**Storyteller Academy Free Children's Book Challenge Week**

Storyteller Academy is a subscription based, pool of live and on-demand classes, but a few times a year they offer a free, preview week of some of their cornerstone classes from various industry professionals. While their broad archive is impressive, having free access to basically the first lesson of all of these classes is helpful on its own. Worth checking out!

When: From April 25th to 30th: one free seminar a day for one week  
Where: live webinar online  
Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. CST

Sign up [link](#).

**Madison Writers: Fourth Lake Writing Retreat**

Madison Writers organization believes inspiration and energy come from feeding ourselves creatively. They've

designed this intimate three-day retreat to do just that. Attendees can expect to generate new work, deepen their creative goals, and connect with other writers.

Each day, individual workshops limited to 6-8 writers total will host craft talks and focused feedback. Writers will then meet as a larger group to foster connections and investigate creative questions. Time will be blocked out for independent writing and offer prompts. The cross-genre workshops will explore craft issues including character, structure, scene building, dialogue, point of view, plotting, and more. When I asked whether the workshops would benefit SCBWI-WI MG and YA authors, Madison Writers spokesperson Susanna Daniels said yes. “. . . we'll have a good number of MG, YA, and New Adult writers in our midst at the retreat. Since the groups are small (eight writers per workshop) and our focus is on the writers' original material, we find it's pretty natural to speak to genre distinctions -- and commonalities. It's likely we will group MG and YA writers together at least once during the weekend, but even when they're not isolated, we'll still be speaking to YA- and MG-

*specific craftwork at the table.”*

When: June 24 to 26, 2022

Where: Pyle Center, downtown Madison

Time: begins Friday afternoon through Sunday afternoon

Go to [Madison Writers Fourth Lake Writing Retreat](#) for more info and registration.

**Wisconsin Writers Association (WWA) Conference**

WWA members and nonmembers are welcome to attend the Wisconsin Writers Association 2022 Annual Fall Conference. This year's event, The Craft of Writing: Celebrating Northland Diversity and Nature, will be held on beautiful Lake Superior in Superior, Wisconsin.

When: September 30- October 1, 2022

Where: Barkers Island Conference Center, Superior, Wisconsin

Time: begins Friday through Sunday afternoon

Plan to gather with writers from across the state and beyond to experience Wisconsin's stunning

**Call for Submissions: Wisconsin Writers Association Jade Ring Writing Contest**

Open to members and nonmembers, the Wisconsin Writers Association's 73rd Annual Jade Ring Writing Contest is accepting submissions.

Entry categories are poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. Winners will each receive an esteemed Jade Ring plus \$200.

All Jade Ring Contest finalists and honorable mentions will be published in WWA's annual *Creative Wisconsin Anthology* and receive a complimentary copy of the journal.

**Submission Deadline: June 5, 2022.**

Read more about the contest categories, guidelines, and prizes at the WWA website.

Last year's non-fiction award went to our very own Lora Hyler, author of the middle grade fiction book, *The Stupendous Adventures of Mighty Marty Hayes* (2018) and *Our Bodies Stay Home, Our Imaginations Run Free* (2020), a children's book

Northland lakes, forests, history, and culture to see how they can inspire our craft.

As more details become available, they will be posted at <https://wiwrite.org/>

### ***Sheboygan Children's Book Festival (SCBF)***

The SCBF has brought thousands of children and teens together with world-class authors and illustrators at schools and at our beautiful, welcoming festival venues

When: October 7-8, 2022

Where: Mead Public Library, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, and Bookworm Gardens

The Sheboygan Children's Book Festival, established in 2010, is presented in partnership with community volunteers and local organizations that believe in the transforming power of reading and the literary and visual arts.

NOTE: Keep checking the SCBF website for updates regarding presenter proposals and festival news: [https://](https://www.sheboyganchildrensbookfestival.org/)

[www.sheboyganchildrensbookfestival.org/](https://www.sheboyganchildrensbookfestival.org/)

\*Covid updates may impact this event.

focused on helping kids deal with the Covid pandemic. Lora won for her essay, "The Bill of Rights, One College-Educated Negro Man, and a 1955 Protest by 39 White Wauwatosa Women."

*"I encourage everyone with a story to enter this well run contest."* —Lora Hyler



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## Call for Proposals: Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA)

Children's book authors and illustrators know the joy reading brings to kids of all ages. Now is your opportunity to take your passion for children's books to the classroom teacher who can become an advocate for your books.

WSRA is recognized throughout the US as a leader in promoting children's literacy through research and professional training.

The 2023 WSRA Reading Conference is looking for workshop proposals. Strong proposals are those that present teachers with activities promoting student literacy/writing: think "deconstructing kidlit to help students master story structure," "sparking a love of poetry using picture books," "the role of picture books in improving middle grade writing," "using non-fiction books to spark critical inquiry and

research," "using books on environmental topics to spark student ideas for building a healthy local community." I think you get the idea.

A great place to begin is the Wisconsin State Common Core Standards for ELL. By linking your proposal to any of these standards, you will strengthen the chance your proposal will be accepted. Check these out at [Wisconsin Common Core Standards for ELA](#).

Still not sure if you should submit a proposal? Here are some thoughts from SCBWI-WI members who have presented at WSRA in the past:

Hello, friends.

I encourage you to check out the process, themes, and possibilities for submitting a proposal to be a presenter at the WSRA conference in Milwaukee in February, 2023. I've submitted many times, and more than once I've had my proposal accepted over the past 19 years. My topics ranged from using the illustrations in picture books to improve motivation and comprehension, to effective ways to use picture books with older students in content area studies, and as a panel member focused on intermediate/middle grade learners using historical fiction as literature and as portals to the study of periods of history. In each case, the point was to offer the attendees a mix of

resources and activities that they could immediately use in classrooms, and to encourage them to make connections with a wide range of excellent books (mine among them, but not as the featured titles). This is a reading/writing conference, and so practical and exciting approaches to both strategies and craft will be warmly welcomed.

Take a look and give it a try. There's still time to talk with some peers to consider a paired or panel proposal, too, making it easier to be a first-timer. Good luck! —**Sandy Brehl**

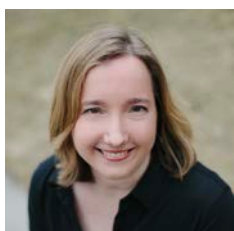
I consider every chance to connect with educators worthwhile in some way. WSRA is one of those consistently high-value opportunities to meet with other adults who directly connect kids with books. Sharing one's own knowledge of writing, reading, and books with these attendees through a conference session often

works out as mutually beneficial. Spending some time mingling in the exhibit hall can prove useful, too—especially after the past couple of years with minimal in-person interactions. You never know who you might connect with. —**Miranda Paul**

Need more help? Use the SCBWI-WI listserve to call out to fellow members. Many have presented at WSRA in the past and would be willing to answer questions.

#### **To access the WSRA proposal form:**

1. Go to <https://www.wsra.org/>
2. On the top ribbon, Click submit
3. Click the link to submit a proposal
4. This will take you to a "Membership" page, just Click next
5. Complete the online proposal form and submit.



Newsletter Designer Erica Dimka has been a writer for as long as she can remember, from short stories for her dad to news articles as a former journalist and copy editor. Now, in addition to teaching English, Erica loves writing YA fantasy and science fiction, as well as traveling and hiking. A member of SCBWI since 2017, she enjoys connecting with other authors.