



Prairie Song

Nebraska Regional Newsletter



December 2021

Featured Illustrator



CHLOE BURGETT

WWW.CHLOEBARTISTRY.COM
INSTA: @CHLOEB.ARTISTRY

Chloe wants to feature YOUR work! Send your piece to nebraska-ic@scbwi.org with the subject line **Prairie Song Art** to get your illustrations in the next newsletter!

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Upcoming Events

Shop Talk - Monday evenings, 7:30-8:30pm CT (resumes Jan. 3)

January 21-23 - Indi-500 (word) Challenge for writers and illustrators

February 11-13 - Winter Conference

March 3 - Webinar (topic and faculty announced soon)

April 1-3 - Marvelous Midwest Conference

A Word From Our Regional Team

After months of planning, we are thrilled to launch our new, redesigned Prairie Song newsletter! Volunteer Sheli Petersen, who teaches a Design Studio course at Texas Women's University, tasked her students with creating this dynamic newsletter for us, so this month, we are turning this space over to Sheli, so she can tell us more about how it came to be.

A Word from Our Regional Team



Sheli Petersen, Webinar Coordinator

Creating an engaging design template for our Prairie Song eNewsletter fit perfectly into my two roles—SCBWI-Nebraska Webinar Coordinator and professor at the Texas Woman's University Community-focused Design Studio. The goal was to redesign our eNewsletter to help maximize our current membership, recruit new members and to give my graphic design majors valuable professional training for the job market.

The following students completed the project during the Fall 2021 semester: Roshad Bonner, Nely Martinez, Kelly Milliorn, McCrae Milton, Tori Nall, Edgar Obregon, Simran Prasai, Susana Pina, and Amanda Tritschler-Tucker.

In the first phase of their design process students prepared for their initial tele-conference client meeting with SCBWI-Nebraska Regional Advisor Alison Pearce Stevens, Illustrator Coordinator Chloe Burgett, and Newsletter Coordinator BettyAnn VanDeventer by researching the SCBWI organization and Nebraska children's authors and illustrators to contextualize their client's needs and audience. Based on their research, students then crafted questions regarding specifics of the Board's expectations for the eNewsletter's overall style and purpose. During the meeting, Board members provided students with instructions for including each of the eNewsletter's running features and answered their questions. With that information, students brainstormed ideas, created sketches, and investigated possibilities for free-ware that our Newsletter Coordinator could easily use to produce the bi-monthly issues.

During the second phase, students evaluated which of their ideas were the strongest to develop for a cohesive design proposal to the Board members. Their tele-conference presentation included a rationale with explanation of the overall design and styling of each page; an email teaser graphic to give SCBWI-Nebraska members an overview of the current issue and link to the full PDF newsletter on our regional website; and written instructions for editing text and images in Canva. The focal color palette for the eNewsletter, derived from the SCBWI Nebraska logo, references the navy and gold of the Nebraska state flag. Various accent elements use the yellow-green of the national SCBWI logo to convey our region's ties to our Los Angeles headquarters. The layout and text are crafted to sustain high readability.

In the third phase, several SCBWI-Nebraska members conducted a user-test of the students' eNewsletter design template for aesthetic choices and overall functionality. Board members also reviewed the Canva instructions for clarity and user-friendliness. Once this feedback was collected by Board members, it was passed along to students for implementation. Students then made the final edits and prepared their design files for production.



And, now, here it is: The grand, official debut of that redesign. We are pleased and hope you will enjoy the eye-pleasing design and all the new features!

Sheli Petersen
Webinar Coordinator



Agent's View



We are trying something a little different with this edition of Agent's View. Instead of hearing from the agent, we are profiling one and providing you with a submission opportunity! With that, a brief introduction to Tricia Lawrence of Erin Murphy Literary Agency:

Tricia Lawrence, Agent at Erin Murphy Literary Agency

Tricia is celebrating ten years as the "Pacific Northwest branch" of EMLA. She was born and raised in Oregon and now lives in Seattle. After 22 years of working as a developmental and production-based editor (from kids books to college textbooks, but mostly college textbooks), she joined the EMLA team in 2011 as a social media strategist.

As an agent, Tricia represents picture books and chapter books that look at the world in a unique and unusual way, with characters that are alive both on and off the page, and middle grade and young adult fiction and nonfiction that offers strong world-building, wounded narrators, and stories that grab a reader and won't let go.

She's a fierce advocate for her clients and spends time getting to know editors—so she knows the kinds of projects they want to see. Tricia works with her clients to not only make their current manuscript shine, but also guide them to set long-term, career-based goals. She wants to know where you want to be in three months—or three years. What do you have in the works, and how can she help shepherd your career as you move forward?

Tricia is looking for great storytelling that piques her curiosity and makes her want to read on. She's hungry for MG and YA narrative (investigative) nonfiction, topics that engage with politics, activism, science, history, music, medicine, philosophy, and religion. For MG and YA fiction, she's swooning over mystery (even more so lately), horror (looking at a situation and then enlarging it into something truly monstrous), and stories that show what it is like to be a tween, a teen, or an aspiring college student set in a particular world and at a particular time. For the younger readers, she also loves nonfiction, for ages 6-8, give her 500 Animals or 500 Animal Poops! With fiction, give her plot.

We've all felt a lot of emotions over the past two years, now she wants stories for readers 0 to 18 that make her feel those same emotions. Give her a rollicking picture book or early reader or a hilarious and plot-heavy chapter book. She's sold graphic versions (graphic picture books, graphic early readers, graphic chapter books, graphic novels for MG and YA) across all ages, so if you write visually, she wants to see it.

SCBWI Nebraska members can query Tricia using the contact form on www.emliterary.com or by emailing resistwithart@gmail.com with the subject line: December 2021 SCBWI Nebraska Agent Profile.

Let's Celebrate



Let's give a big round of applause to Sheli Petersen and her graphic design class for their fabulous redesign of our Prairie Song newsletter! Thank you! Wonderful work!

And a big shout-out to all our Nebraska SCBWI members who answered our call for help in reviewing the preliminary newsletter redesign. Thanks, all!



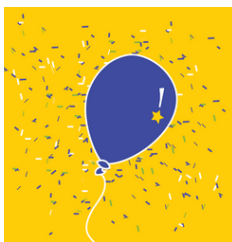
Mary Beth Rice

won a picture book critique with Lynne Marie, the Picture Book Mechanic, through the Picture Book Critique Fest in October sponsored by author Brian Gehrlein. Way to go, Mary Beth!



Nancy Sharp, Kathleen Gadeken, and Carolyn Zeisset

Congratulations on an outstanding partnership among three SCBWI-Nebraska members! Carolyn Zeisset's middle grade historical novel, THEN THE RULES CHANGED, illustrated by Nebraska member Kathleen Gadeken, has been accepted by Nebraska publisher Prairieland Press! Nice job, all!



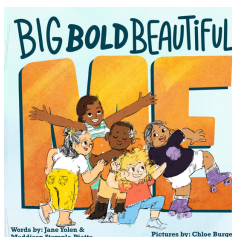
Brooke Sperry

Brooke was one of the top three winners in the SCBWI SOUTHWEST TEXAS 2021 PORTFOLIO CONTEST! She received a One-On-One Illustration Critique with Caldecott Honor Winner E.B. Lewis and Free Registration for E.B. Lewis' webinar. Amazing work, Brooke!



Chloe Burgett

Wendy McClure at Sourcebooks Jabberwocky acquired world rights to COOLER THAN LEMONADE by Harshita Jerath, illustrated by Chloe Burgett. Publication is planned for March 2023. Yay, Chloe!



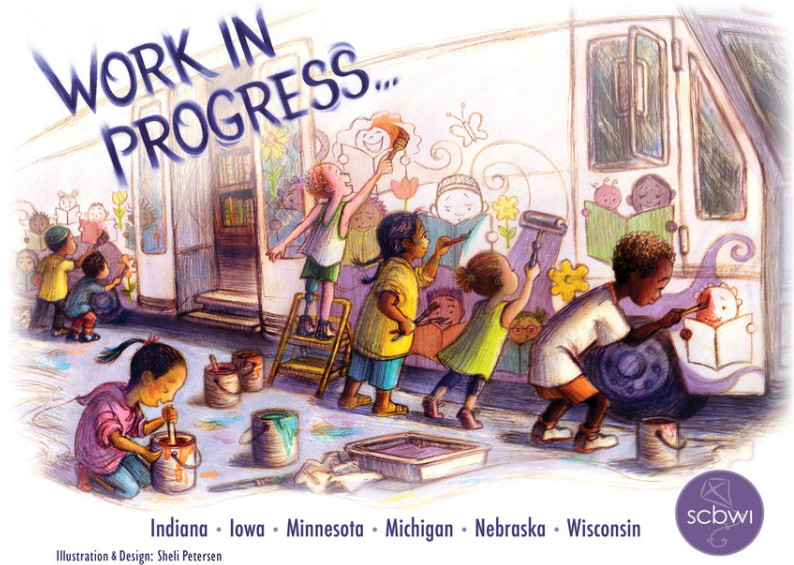
Chloe Burgett

Kristine Enderle at Magination Press bought world rights to BIG BOLD BEAUTIFUL ME by Jane Yolen and her granddaughter, Maddison Stemple-Piatt, illustrated by Chloe Burgett. Publication is slated for fall 2022. Congrats on the deals, Chloe!

Coming Attractions

It's been a long slog through this pandemic, and Zoom has been our light in the darkness, but we have some exciting news to share: an in-person conference is coming this spring! We are one of six regions planning the **Marvelous Midwest Conference**, which brings a big, national-style conference to the Midwest, making it both more accessible and more affordable. From **April 1-3**, we will be able to hang out in Davenport, Iowa (safely—there will be COVID protocols in place); learn from a stellar suite of agents, editors, art directors, authors, and illustrators, make new kidlit friends; and finally spring forth from our long digital slumber.

April 1-3, 2022 **Marvelous Midwest Conference** Davenport, IA



If you haven't attended an in-person conference before, there are many reasons why in-person is more meaningful than online.

Connections: It's not only a chance to meet agents or editors who might be interested in your work, it's a chance to network with other creatives who can help you through the journey to publication. Many long-lasting friendships start at SCBWI conferences.

Learning: Online conferences can be great—you can watch when it's convenient. But it's also easy to get distracted by what's happening around you and forget to go back to finish. (Be honest: how many of you wait until the last minute to watch a replay? I know I do.) When you attend in-person, you are completely focused on what's transpiring around you, elevating the experience and providing a deeper level of learning. Discussions often continue beyond individual sessions, taking that new information to a whole new level.

Fun: Conferences are a blast. We laugh, we learn, we party, and we make memories that carry us through until the next cherished moment when we can gather with friends old and new.

Should COVID throw us another curveball before April, we will modify as needed. But for now, mark your calendars for **Marvelous Midwest**. It will be here before you know it.

Coming Attractions continued



Recharge your creative skills in January after the upcoming busy weeks! Nebraska is once again holding its Indi-500 (word) Challenge, and this year, we are adding a contest for illustrators as well as authors! What is this challenge? It's a 48-hour writing/illustrating spree resulting in short (500-word) stories OR illustrations that incorporate a specific theme and two randomly-chosen prompts. The theme and prompts will be selected during our kick-off event on Friday, January 21.

This 48-hour creative bonanza will take place the weekend of January 21-23. The winner in each category will win a free critique with an editor or art director. Runners-up will win a free webinar. [Sign up to participate here.](#)



Brooke Sperry
www.sperrystudios.com



Kathleen Gadenen
www.kgadegen.com

Just Ask



Q: How many queries should I send at one time?

A: Great question! The first step is to write a strong query letter that has been revised multiple times based on feedback from other writer friends. Next, I take my time to research the agents/agencies I'd like to query, making a spreadsheet about the specifics on that agent. I rank them as my top choice, middle of the road, or backup. I focus on ten agents at a time, taking a few from each ranking, rather than sending to all my top choices at once. That way, when I receive feedback from my queries, I have a chance to revise again before I send it to the next batch. When I'm deep into query mode, I shoot for sending ten queries per month. This gives me time to do the necessary research on the next batch and personalize those letters while I anxiously wait for the responses from the others. Good luck!

What's your kidlit question? Send it in to the [Prairie Song Newsletter submissions!](#)

Maximizing Your Membership

You've paid your dues and now you are an official SCBWIer—a member of both the national and state KidLit groups! Maybe you joined a decade or two ago? Or maybe just last month? Whichever—your membership offers a wealth of resources that can connect you to new opportunities and to an international KidLit community. You just opened the door to the world of children's publishing, both traditional and independent.

Recharge your creativity! Find answers to your questions! Reach out and connect!

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

Don't skim the front page! It's important. Start by exploring the **Member Benefits** to learn what SCBWI has for you and then drill down.

REGIONAL CHAPTERS

Reach your new KitLit home—the Nebraska Regional Chapter—where you can connect with children book writers and illustrators across the state. There are numerous ways to make those connections happen. Zoom to Shop Talk every Monday evening—beginning again in January—to learn about important aspects of publishing and to meet zoom-face to zoom-face your Nebraska colleagues. That's a perfect place to start! Catch up on all the regional news by clicking into the [Prairie Song Newsletter](#) to explore learning opportunities and meet up with agents. It's all at your fingertips.

Maximizing Your Membership

..... continued

INFORMATION RESOURCES

On the SCBWI.org homepage, check out the Publications menu. The first item is The Book: Essential Guide to Publishing for Children. The Book is one of your most valuable membership resources, offering you up-to-date information on children's publishing.

AWARDS AND GRANTS

Fifty-two grants and awards waiting for authors and illustrators like you!

Help other authors and illustrators as well as agents and publishers find you! On "My Home" page, complete your profile so your new colleagues can learn about you and what you do.

BettyAnn VanDeventer
Newsletter Coordinator



Kathleen Gaden
www.kgaden.com

Nebraska Discussion Board

Are you looking for someone to critique your hook, pitch, logline, or query letter?

Search no more!

You will find one or more of your Nebraska Kidlit colleagues to share their expertise.

Post your work on our Nebraska Discussion Board.

[Click here to post.](#) (Log in first!)



Illustration Submission

Would you like for your art to be featured in our future newsletter?

Please send to: Chloe Burgett at nebraska-ic@scbwi.org

Label file as **firstname_lastname.jpeg**. (no bigger than 8 mb)



Shop Talk Recap



Sandy Mickey recently presented *Elevating Voice at Shop Talk*. Here is a recap of Sandy's presentation.

"Your voice is not something mystical. It's not airy fairy and undefinable. It's something you can work on, strengthen, and improve." - Linda Sue Park, 2021 Summer SCBWI Conference

You can also measure voice - and replicate it.

WHAT IS VOICE?

Tone + Tempo + Terminology = Voice

Voice is why you know Ford from Tesla. Ben and Jerry's from Breyers. Nickelodeon from PBS. Tone, tempo, and terminology are tools just like illustrators use brushes, canvas, and colors.

STONE

Tone is usually found by asking two questions: "How is the person feeling?" and "What is their personality?" Tone words include brave, empathetic, sad, sweet, surprised, calm, flippant, or joyful.

TEMPO

Tempo is the rhythm of the writing. It's sentence length combined with punctuation choices.

This is the most subtle and difficult part of voice. Dramatic shifts in tempo mimic riding in a stick-shift with a new driver—you're riding along smoothly when suddenly you feel a violent jerk. When something is "off" about voice, it's usually tempo.

TERMINOLOGY

Terminology is usually judged by grade level (K-12), but it's also the length and origination of the word. Do you use "question" or "inquiry"? Do you say "put that in the laundry basket" or "throw it down"?

PERSPECTIVE INFLUENCES VOICE, TOO

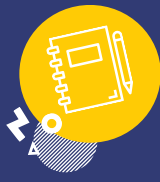
Voice is created by the lens through which a person observes the world:

- Background
- Interests
- Attitude
- Upbringing
- Socio-economic status
- Culture
- Education
- Personality



Chloe Burgett

www.chloebartistry.com



Shop Talk Recap

continued



Who is your character? Are they soothing or grating? Do they talk in questions? Use Disney references? Do they swear a lot? Take pauses as they talk or ramble without saying anything new?

MEASURING VOICE

Voice should be defined and honed in the revision process, not as you write. Once you are ready to edit, you can use the following tools to measure voice:

- AnalyzeMyWriting.com
- HemingwayApp.com
- Grammarly

EXERCISES:

- What do you notice about the passage below?

Today I was walking along the sunlit streets of Manhattan, enjoying the majestic shadows created by the towering structures overhead, when suddenly a clumsy man passing by brushed my arm causing my coffee to tumble.

Not cool, man. Not cool. At all.

However, I brushed off the moment and continued my stroll, determined to have a pleasant morning.

Now, rewrite this passage in a different voice. How would Toni Morrison say this versus James Patterson?

- Pick up your favorite book. Rewrite a passage in your protagonist's voice. Then rewrite in your antagonist's voice.
- Write a letter from your character to you (the author). What do they have to say to you? How do they say it?
- Change the point of view of the scene. Write it from a different character's viewpoint and perspective.
- Read your characters with the sound of an actor. Are they James Earl Jones or Fran Drescher?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CHARACTERS

- How is their world different from other characters in your story?
- What secrets and burdens do they have?
- What do they avoid doing?
- What compensating behaviors do we see?
- What are their values and beliefs?
- What tics do they have?
- What happens when confronted by a bully?

Take Flight With Help From Our Volunteers



LEADERSHIP



Regional Advisor

Alison Pearce Stevens
nebraska-ra@scbwi.org



Regional Illustrator Coordinator

Chloe Burgett
nebraska-ic@scbwi.org

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH



Social Media Coordinator & Webmaster

Tim Hantula
scbwi.nebraska.socialmedia@gmail.com



Published Author Liaison

Shelly Nosbisch
scbwi.nebraska.pal@gmail.com

PROGRAMMING



Webinar Coordinator

Sheli Petersen
scbwi.nebraska.webinars@gmail.com



Retreat Coordinator

Nancy Sharp Wagner
scbwi.nebraska.retreats@gmail.com



Promotional Coordinator

Rosalind Reloj
scbwi.nebraska.promotion@gmail.com



Critique Group Coordinator

Judith Snyder
scbwi.nebraska.critiques@gmail.com



Shop Talk Co-Coordinator

Mary Beth Rice
scbwi.nebraska.shoptalk@gmail.com



Shop Talk Co-Coordinator

Ashley Karges
scbwi.nebraska.shoptalk@gmail.com



Newsletter Coordinator

BettyAnn VanDeventer
scbwi.nebraska.newsletter@gmail.com

FOLLOW US AND FIND MORE ON:



Credits: Fall 2021 Texas Woman's University Community-focused Design Studio
Layout Design: Nely Martinez, McCrae Milton, Simran Prasai | Banner Design: Roshad Bonner, McCrae Milton |
Feature Title Designers: Kelly Milliorn, Edgar Obregon, Susana Pina, Amanda Tritschler-Tucker | Teaser Layout Designer: Roshad Bonner
Art Director: Professor Sheli Petersen