



SCBWI Montana

Montana Sunset by Angel Shandy ©2020



Updates and Regional Events

Precious McKenzie, Regional Advisor

SCBWI just hosted the first ever all-virtual summer convention. The Summer Spectacular was a huge success with approximately 4800 attendees from all over the world.

The lineup of guest speakers included Kwame Alexander, Jane Yolen, Judy Blume, Jacqueline Woodson, Philip Pullman, and yes, "The Fonz" Henry Winkler—among others. Their presentations were motivational and enlightening!

If you didn't attend the Summer Spectacular, don't worry because HQ is planning to move the Winter Convention to a virtual platform. Look for more information on SCBWI's website in the coming weeks.

In Case You Haven't Heard ... SCBWI recently created a new position as part of the movement to help all children see themselves represented in their literature. April Powers was brought on to be the first Chief Officer of Equity and Inclusion. Our Executive Director Lin Oliver introduced her saying Powers, "has spent her life and career dealing with equity and inclusion. She will help make sure our policies and publications are without bias or explicit or implicit racism."

Montana Two-Step Contest Winners Announcement!

Erika Wilson, Illustrator
Coordinator

We are so excited to announce the winners of our first SCBWI Montana Two-Step Contest on page 6.

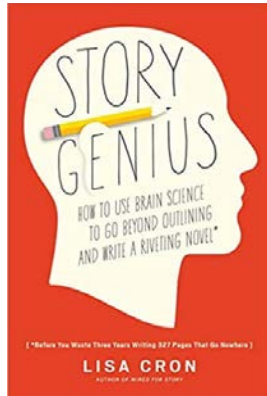


Montana Two Step Entry
by illustrator Amy Cory

Story: What's the Point?

Tiffany Spire, Newsletter Coordinator

In an ongoing effort to hone my craft, I've been reading *STORY GENIUS* by Lisa Cron. The subtitle is "How to Use Brain Science to Go Beyond Outlining and Write a Riveting Novel (Before You Waste Three Years Writing 327 Pages That Go Nowhere)" You may already be familiar with Cron's work. She wrote *WIRED FOR STORY*.



I rarely highlight, write in, or otherwise mark up my books. But my copy of *STORY GENIUS* is now more pink than not after all the highlighting I've done. I thought I would share some of my "ahas" with you even if they serve only as a refresher of what good story is.

Turns out, as humans we're addicted to story like we're addicted to chocolate. Cron says, "It's your brain's way of rewarding you for following your curiosity to find out how the story ends because you just might learn something you need to know." And then, "It is emotion rather than logic that telegraphs meaning, **thus emotion is what your novel must be wired to transmit, straight from the protagonist to us.**"

Why not What

Why do some novels, even after careful plotting according to a proven formula of beats, still fall flat? Most likely it was because the writer focused on the what instead of the why.

Cron says, "A story is about how the things that happen affect someone in pursuit of a difficult goal, and how that person changes internally as a result." ... "**And that internal change...is what the story is actually about.**"

Cron reminds us that in order to know what is going on inside our character, we have to really know our character, inside and out. We also have to know their history. What happened in their past to shape them into who they are today?

"At its most basic, a story is about how someone grapples with a problem they can't avoid, and how they change in the process." ... "You can't write about how someone changes unless you know specifically, what they're changing from. You can't write about a problem unless you know, specifically, what caused it."

So before we write about what our protagonist is going through right now, we have to flesh out their past. We have to find out everything we can about the world they came from and how they interacted with and felt about that world. What events in their life shaped them into the character they are now when we are starting the story?

In addition to knowing where they came from and who they are now, we need to know precisely what it is we want them to learn.

Cron says, "**...all stories make a point, beginning on page one.** Which means that as a writer, you need to know what that point is long before you get to page one." ... "The real question is, what do you want your readers to go away thinking about?" ... "the point doesn't stem from the events; rather, it stems from the struggle they trigger within the protagonist as she tries to figure out what the heck to do about the problem she's facing..."

"Never lose sight of this simple fact: It's not just about what your protagonist did, it's about why."

Get to the Point

Cron suggests exercises throughout her book for readers to try with their own stories. I've been using them with the main characters of both my picture book manuscript and the middle grade novel I'm working on. They have really forced me to get to the heart of the story. To get to the point.

(Regional Updates continued from page 2)

A New Way To Outline Webinar Opportunity

SCBWI Montana is hosting a wonderful webinar with our very own Janet Fox, whose new middle grade novel, *THE ARTIFACT HUNTERS*, was just published by Viking.

Janet's webinar is "**A New Way To Outline.**" It's on **September 24, 2020, on Zoom, at 5:30pm.** Janet will teach us about a new writing tool, the "**Inside Outline.**"

It is a flexible new tool that allows all types of writers to plan their books. Janet will provide examples and take-aways to help you bring your story to the next level. Cost is \$15 for SCBWI members.

The event will be recorded. Register at montana.scbwi.org/events//webinar-a-new-way-to-outline-with-author-janet-fox/.

In other news for our region, we have four virtual critique groups up and running for the fall. I've been trying to build virtual critique groups with people who are geographically close to one another so that when we can meet again face to face, we won't have too far to go.

If you would like to join a virtual critique group, just email me at montana-ra@scbwi.org. Let me know where you live and for which age range you write.

Stay safe and well.

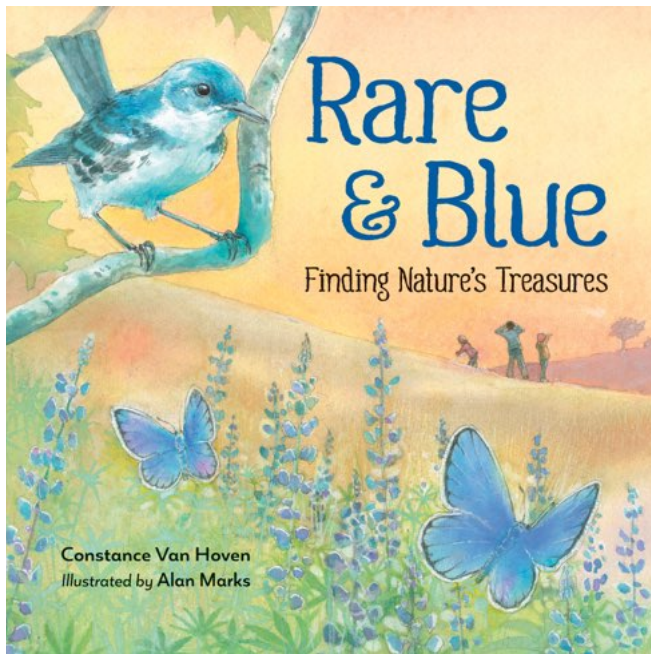
Happy writing and illustrating!

Precious



Janet Fox

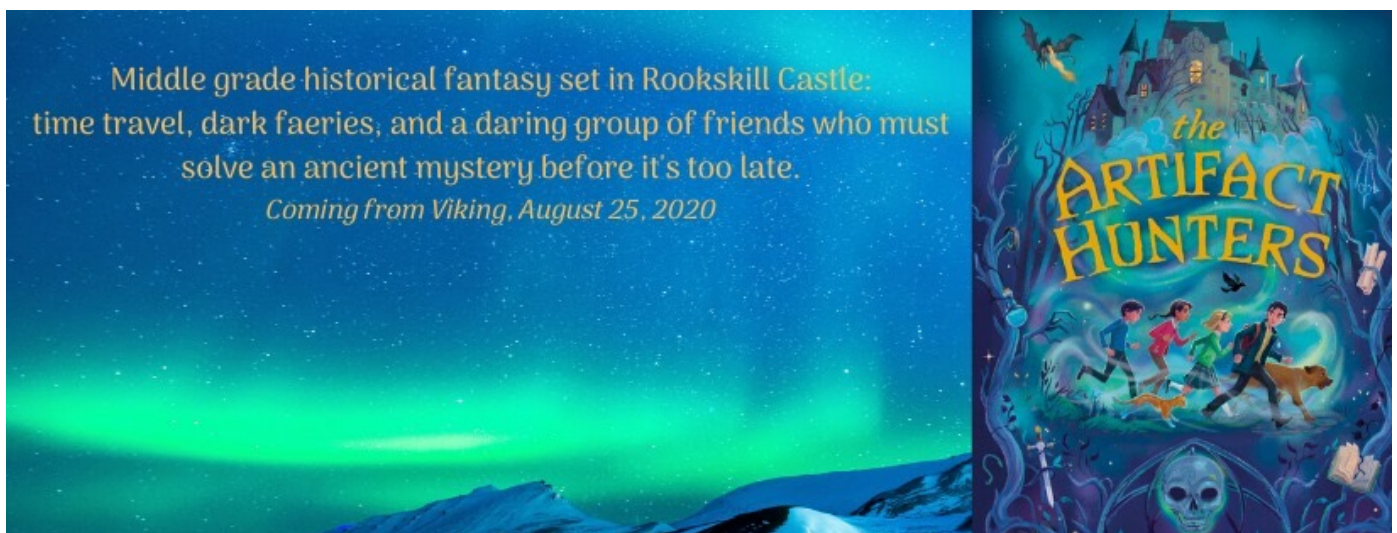




CELEBRATION CORNER!

Constance Van Hoven's nonfiction book, **RARE AND BLUE: FINDING NATURE'S TREASURES** came out on September 1st from Charlesbridge.

RARE AND BLUE is a different kind of treasure hunt. Kids search for animals and plants that are blue in color and naturally rare, threatened or endangered. With striking watercolor images from illustrator, Alan Marks.



Middle grade historical fantasy set in Rookskill Castle:
time travel, dark faeries, and a daring group of friends who must
solve an ancient mystery before it's too late.
Coming from Viking, August 25, 2020



Montana Two Step Entry
by illustrator Amy Cory

Janet Fox's middle grade novel, **THE ARTIFACT HUNTERS** (Viking 2020), is hot off the press.

Order an autographed copy from The Country Bookshelf at <https://www.countrybookshelf.com/>.

Montana 2 Step 2020 Winner!

Montana Summer

Sprinkler sprays, Long, hot sun.
Dig in dirt, Summer fun.

Colder nights, Campfires blaze,
Marshmallows, Goopy glaze.

Popsicles drip, Garden grows.
Sticky hands, Dirty toes.

Poles dangling, Worms on hooks.
Quiet lakes, Babbling brooks.

Hiking up, Climbing down.
Boating time, Swim around.

Baseball games, Barbeques,
Pow Wow dance, Sunset Hues.

Street music, Flathead cherries,
What the Hay, Huckleberries.

Summer comes, Then it goes.
Much too fast, Now it snows.

Marci Whitehurst ©2020



Montana 2 Step Entry
by illustrator Amy Cory



(continued from page 1)

Our judges had an EXTREMELY hard time making this decision because these entries were all SO GOOD!

Our SCBWI Montana Two-Step Author Winner is:

MARCI WHITEHURST!! For her **perfectly - Montana** board book: MONTANA SUMMER.

Our SCBWI Montana Two-Step Illustrator Winner is:

ANGEL SHANDY!! For her gorgeous & also **perfectly - Montana** illustration: MONTANA SUNSET. (cover illustration)

Congrats to Marci and Angel, who will both receive a free year of membership to SCBWI and a letterpress print of our contest logo!

It was such a pleasure to read the pieces and see these illustrations. We are so proud to have you all as members of our awesome region.

Great job everyone and congratulations to our winners!

(MT 2 Step continued on page 7)

(MT 2 Step continued from page 6)

Because there were so many amazing entries, the judges also wanted to select two additional entries to honor as well. We have the following two Honorable Mentions who will also receive a letterpress print of our contest logo!

DEBBIE AUSTIN!! for her acrostic poem MONTANA SUMMER (*Right*)

and

NONA BABCOCK!! for her chapter titled BAREFOOT, BAREBACK, & BUSTED.

***I want to highlight the fact that Angel's winning illustration was created in response to Debbie's acrostic poem, which shows what a wonderful collaboration this exercise was for everyone!

So many incredible pairings of work were created without even knowing who you were working with, and I am so impressed with everyone's creativity! I hope you all take some time to browse through the folders and enjoy the incredible work that was created for this contest! It is really fun to see which works go together.

[Here is the link to all the entries](#)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/155Zj7y0UaqIvTJRANKqMLwWsq5eZnIWr?usp=sharing>

Enjoy the rest of your Montana Summer, everyone, and thanks again for participating and following along!

Erika

Montana Summer

Meadowlarks trill through my rolled
down window.

Open range cattle stare and flick at
flies.

Nearer and nearer and nearer still.

Trout kiss the surface of smooth lake
waters.

Anglers cast lines at the ripples,
waiting and hoping.

Night swallows up skies streaked in
pink and gold as we

Arrive—finally!—at Grandma and
Grandpa's house.

Sun's up early and so am I while

Under covers Mom and Dad sleep on.

Me, Grandpa, and Grandma greet that
first dawn and every one after

Making memories, long and lasting.

Easy days full with sun and capped
off with dusky night. We stand

Reveling in the shimmer of a million
stars. Together.

Debbie Austin ©2020
Honorable Mention

See Cover illustration by Angel Shandy

INTERVIEW WITH JEANNE BOWMAN

by Joann Howeth, ARA

I'm excited to introduce you all to Jeanne Bowman, an illustrator and author whose debut picture book THE SELFISH GIANT hit the shelves in 2019. Jeanne lives in Savage, Montana - a gorgeous little community near The Yellowstone River.

I currently live about a 5-minute drive from the river. I cannot see it from my house, but I sometimes head down there to try to draw the sneaky pelicans. So far I have not been very lucky, but they can't hide from me forever!

Where were you born and raised?

I was born in Tennessee, but my family bounced around from Colorado, Montana, and New Mexico many times in my life. I have spent about 17 years off and on in Montana, so I suppose you could say this is my home state.

You graduated from Rocky Mountain College -- did you major in art?

Yes, I was an art major. I enjoyed my time at Rocky, though if I could do it over again I would double major or choose a degree that leaned more into graphic design or education. Technical classes would have broadened my experience and resume.

If I were to give advice to anyone thinking about going to school for art, I would say to go ahead if you have the money and if you can pay your loans back quickly (or not have loans at all), but to also supplement your learning with online resources like lynda.com, which you may have free access to via your library and double major with a technical course of study such as graphic design, computer science, or even something more hands-on like carpentry or metalworking. Also, work on cultivating the discipline to teach yourself as much as possible and make as many projects as possible because as an old boss of mine said, "The work teaches you."



Are you a full-time artist?

I am not able to be a full-time artist yet. I work at the Post Office in the mornings and supplement my income by doing newsletters and bulletins for a church in New Mexico.

If you are an artist looking to make money from your art, the advice I hear over and over again is to diversify your income streams. One way of doing this is showing your art on social media platforms like Instagram to gain as many followers as you can and begin a Patreon site (patreon.com) for support as well as utilizing other opportunities such as redbubble.com or society6.com which sell your artwork on products. [The addresses for my shops are listed at the end of this article.]

In addition to this, there are freelancing and teaching opportunities to be had as well. Be as creative as you can when thinking up ways to share your artwork with people and learn to understand the value in your work.

One way to fight this imposter syndrome is to find a creative community that will give you the confidence boost and the feedback that will



take your work to another level. This is why the SCBWI is so great because it is just one giant community of people all working towards the same kind of goal.

How old were you when you discovered your love of drawing and that you had talent?

My mom is an artist, so we grew up being supported in our artistic endeavors. I don't remember a time when I didn't make art. I think it is something all kids go to naturally, but they lose because of this idea of "good, bad and useful" that adults tend to lay on kids. Making art is something integral to being a human being and making bad art is just as valuable as making "good" (i.e. aesthetically pleasing) art.

I don't believe in talent, really. It comes down to what you're interested in and how much work you put in to build your neural pathways and muscle memory. Lynda Barry, a comic book artist and teacher, talks about her own experience with self-doubt and the world's definition of good art and bad art in her book "What It Is." Her advice? "Make useless pictures, waste time and materials, have no purpose . . ."

Are you self-taught?

I have had a whole gamut of really brilliant teachers and friends that have taught me my whole life. But there have been periods where I have also been self-taught. I think this is the way for everyone. The most effective way to learn is by doing and copying.

What mediums do you prefer?

I work traditionally with watercolors using mainly a glazing method where I add color slowly in layers. I sometimes like to make painted paper cut images, where I dissect a figure or environment into pieces. I paint them each separately and then reassemble them into layers to create a slightly dimensional image.

I'm also trying to make myself get into digital painting, but I don't really like it. I am only 32 years old, but I feel like a dinosaur with technology.

Your illustrations are so detailed and some of them are quite deliciously scary. They remind me of illustrations that often accompany Brothers Grimm fairy tales and others of that era.

***I strongly recommend everyone promptly go to [Jeanne's page](#) on the SCBWI website to see what I'm talking about.**

What are your sources of inspiration?

I get most of my inspiration from my own childhood. I have not changed very much from when I was a kid and like to spend as much time as possible doing the same things I loved when I was about 12 or so.

James Victore, a designer I follow, says, "The things that made you weird as a kid make you great today." He has the philosophy that we were our purest, most creative selves when we were children and that as we grow, we build up a lot of walls to protect that self. His goal is about getting back to that free creative spirit by embracing the exact things we may have been teased or mocked for as a child.

I'm also inspired by fairytales and the old works where monsters ran rampant in the forests. I love medieval bestiaries and fairy tales about creatures that aren't exactly benign, but aren't totally evil either. I love stories where there is a lot of ambiguity and strangeness that require deeper consideration.

Your debut picture book THE SELFISH GIANT by Oscar Wilde was originally a short-story written in 1888. What was the catalyst for you to illustrate such an old story?

The job came about because I sent off my first-ever round of marketing postcards to a list of Art Directors. It was funny because while I was researching where to send the cards, I didn't think Familius, the publisher of my book, would like my style very much, so I almost didn't send them one. But I did, and David Miles, the former Art Director, reached out and asked if I would like to illustrate the story.

How long did it take you to prepare the illustrations?

I had a year to make the illustrations.

Can you tell us about your process?

Specifically, did you and the art director work closely together spread by spread or were you given the freedom to "run with it?"

Before this job, I had had only one other illustration job, which was to illustrate a book cover for a local writer when I lived in New Mexico. They allowed me almost total free-reign with the project.

The project I am currently working on is different still. There have been many revisions and close communication to make this project as good as it can be. I prefer this style of working.

I begin every project the same way. I receive the story, read it, research it, then I always begin by designing the characters. I love assigning attributes to appearances or thinking how to express a facet of a character's personality through their fashion or body shape or whatever. This, for me, is the gateway into the story. They might change later on, but I need to be attached to the characters to spend a whole year working on them.



After getting feedback on the characters, then it is time to make a rough storyboard and dummy for myself.

I spend a lot of time gathering pictorial references and researching. After a while, this becomes a method of procrastination because the idea in my head is perfect and I know that the actual work will erase this image in my brain and it will become something else. But once I have a little freak-out over procrastinating (usually several hours to a day of moping around), I sit down and start sketching. I do as many thumbnails as possible until I have the idea down. I do no less than twenty and usually end-up with fifty or more trying to get the composition right, the value pattern right, and exploring different options.

Then I spend a bunch of time narrowing down the options and fretting over which one is the "right" one. This could take several hours to a whole day. But once I have made a decision, I begin taking photos for pose reference (I usually use family members) and spend yet more time looking online for poses until I finally realize how much time I have spent

researching and finally get down to work doing rough sketches. That process is about transferring the image over and over, adjusting sections on my lightbox until it is just right. I worry over it a bit more, flipping it around and looking at it backwards and in the mirror and upside down and whatnot to make sure that I am drawing everything in proportion and that the composition is good, etc. before I move on to transferring it to the watercolor paper.

In the first picture book project, I broke up the text for the pagination. But for the project I am working on now, the designer has decided what text goes on what page, so my job is to create illustrations that correspond to the text but also make good pacing through the story. One of the things I learned from working on THE SELFISH GIANT was to vary the beat throughout so it isn't dull. This changes from story to story, but I learned that full page spreads throughout the whole book aren't quite as impactful as breaking it up with half pages and spot illustrations and then going into a full page spread during really dramatic or emotional arcs of the story.

Once I am happy with the pacing, I send the publisher a cleaned-up version of the storyboard for feedback. Then it is on to rough sketches, revision, and final linework. Each stage needs approval. Once final linework has been accepted, then I spend a period of time doing value studies – both basic 3-tone value pattern studies to emphasize the focal point and a lighting study to determine where shadows will lay. Then I lay out some blobs of color in photoshop to make a color storyboard, rather like what Pixar does (check it out in The Art of Pixar) and get feedback for that. After adjustments, THEN I finally start painting.

In THE SELFISH GIANT I began by first painting all of the elements that needed to remain consistent, like the characters. Because I paint with watercolors, it can sometimes be difficult to match batches of certain colors when mixing. A person can combat this either by making HUGE batches of certain colors and storing them in containers, or painting them in a series, as I do, or writing down the exact

recipes for mixing color. Once consistency has been achieved, then it is on to the backgrounds, a round of adjustments, and then another period of scanning, photo-merging, sending for feedback, and waiting. Then maybe a round more of revisions and finally the book is done, and I lay face down in the middle of the floor for a while.

As everyone knows, Oscar Wilde was a wit – famous for his one-liners. Do you have a favorite Oscar Wilde quote?

“An idea that is not dangerous is unworthy of being called an idea at all.”

I know for illustrators it's important to get your work in front of art directors. For other Montana illustrators who've not broken into the industry yet, do you have any specific advice to share with them from your experiences so far?

Postcard mailers have worked very well for me. But because of COVID, many illustrators are finding work by cold emailing and also finding ADs on Twitter where many put out calls for work. The best way to get started with this is to find the name of a particular AD and follow them on Twitter. Look into their follows and followers and research the names there to find other ADs. After a while, Twitter will begin suggesting them to you once you have built your list. Follow other illustrators you admire on there as well – the same principle applies. There are also regular call-outs such as #visiblewomen and #drawingwhileblack where you are free to promote your artwork in the thread. Some artists have found work this way. #Kidlitchat is a great way to meet fellow illustrators. Tuesday at 9pm EST there is a meet-up via Twitter about specific kidlit topics.

Finally, for illustrators interested in knowing more about working with Art Directors, I want to recommend a [website](#) where real ADs answer your anonymous questions about the industry. [Dear Art Director website](#)

<https://dearartdirector.tumblr.com>

Do you find inspiration in other illustrators' work?

Too much inspiration! It is almost paralyzing how good some artists are.

Who are some of your favorite illustrators working today?

Brian Froud is more of a fine artist now than an illustrator, but he was the spark that started my creative voice a long time ago. I will drop everything to look at anything that Jillian Tamaki, Eleanor Davis, or Julia Sarda post online. I am also in love with Dave McKean, Paul O. Zelinsky, and Clive Hicks Jenkins to name just a few.

How would you describe your style?

I have no idea. I am blind to my own style, I suppose. I often find old artwork and forget that I was the one who made it. This has caused me a lot of self-doubt, frustration, and anxiety because I don't feel as if I make anything consistent.

The kind of assignments or personal projects that I would love to illustrate always have an element of humor in them, usually in the form of a character's expression or motive. I like to paint and draw things that look as if they are on the verge of doing something naughty, or as if they have discovered someone's juicy secret and are deciding how to use it to their advantage.

I love fantasy and transformations and anything that looks as if it came out of an old Russian forest, strange and dangerous but irresistible. I'm a big fan of Joseph Campbell and so anything that has to do with mythology or archetypes is fine with me, and I have a weird obsession with drawing bones or creatures fighting and gnawing at each other. I also have always adored theater and took puppetry classes in school, so anything that reminds me of marionettes, shadow puppets, or masks inspires me.

Thank you so much, **Jeanne!** It's been great getting to know you!

Montana Two Step Entries



by illustrator Michelle Weltz



by illustrator Jenn Ard



by illustrator Jackie M Beyer



**Kidlit Creators
Connect on
Instagram**
@scbwimontana

Sue Lawrence, Kidlit Creator

We love #kidlit. We love reading it, writing it, illustrating it, and publishing it. Creating books for children and teens is what we do, and it's why we joined SCBWI to begin with.

SCBWI Montana's Instagram page is one way to connect with other writers and artists. Follow us to learn what's happening in our region: upcoming workshops, new book launches, book award winners, and member spotlights.

Also, SCBWI is an international community of 26,000 members—as other SCBWI regions offer digital workshops of interest, we'll post about it so you can see if it's a fit for you, too.

We're a community of #kidlit creators with a common goal: to encourage, inform, or inspire others with our words and art. We want to connect with you. Follow us @scbwimontana so we can follow your page, too.

And, please Instant Message us with a brief note so we can promote YOUR new book or announce the book award you've won.

Or, email me at phototaker6198@gmail.com.

As @scbwimontana's Instagram social media maven, I enjoy sharing good news!

Sue



Montana Two Step Entry by illustrator Angel Shandy!



Montana Two Step Entries



by illustrator Jenn Ard

CHECK OUT JEANNE’S RECOMMENDED RESOURCES!!!

JEANNE’S WEBSITE:
<https://www.jeannebowmanillustrates.com/>

JEANNE’S SHOPS:
<https://society6.com/jeanneillustrates>

<https://www.redbubble.com/people/Jeanne-B/shop?asc=u>

Other resources for online learning:
skillshare.com; udemy.com; svslearn.com;
rookieup.com; creative.com

And for illustrators who may find themselves stuck, Jeanne recommends Sterling Hundley’s ideation method, which you can find on YouTube.



by illustrator Michel Weltz



by illustrator Jackie M Beyer



[Join us on Facebook to stay updated](#)

Online VIRTUAL CONFERENCE Opportunity from SCBWI Houston

Together (yet apart!), we're Going the Distance and we want you to join us!

October 1-4, 2020

We're thrilled to announce our keynote speakers for this year: Award-winning author of multiple novels and picture books (FAT KID RULES THE WORLD and THE NEXT GREAT JANE), educator, and former editor and agent: K.L. Going and Popular middle grade author of THE MAGNIFICENT MYA TIBBS series and HOW LAMAR'S BAD PRANK WON A BUBBA-SIZED TROPHY, self-proclaimed Black Goddess of the Galaxy, and fellow Houstonian: Crystal Allen!



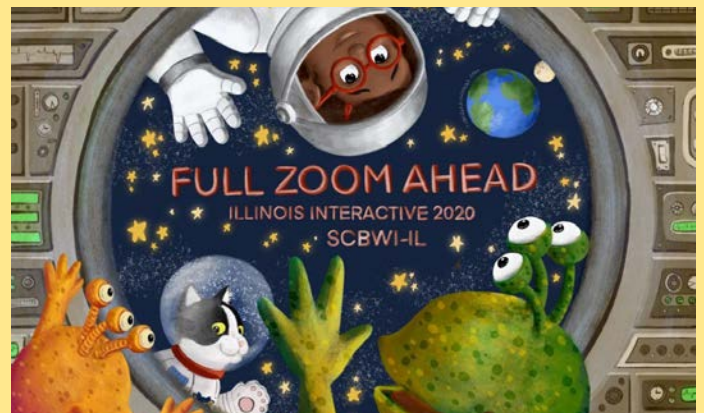
Online VIRTUAL CONFERENCE Opportunity from SCBWI Illinois

SCBWI-Illinois Interactive offers multiple ways to interact with professionals and new ways to get feedback. It's a conference that is virtually perfect in every way!

November 13-15, 2020

Launch Ticket Includes

- **SUBMISSION OPPORTUNITIES**
- **KEYNOTES:** John B. Herrington, PhD CDR, Vanessa Brantley Newton USN(Ret) Astronaut & Author SCBWI PAL Author-Illustrator
- **CRAFT BREAKOUTS**
- **OFFICE HOURS**
- **LIVE Q&A** with Craft Breakout Faculty Speak with Faculty in Your Choice of
- **LIVE & INTERACTIVE SESSIONS** Pages/ Pitch / Chat
- **FREE EXTRAS** Faculty-Moderated Peer Critique Groups / Contest Entry / Portfolio Showcase
- **ONLINE BOOKSTORE:** PAL & Independently Published Authors, Illustrators, Translators and Faculty
- **LIVE SOCIALS:** including our celestial SCBWI-IL CRYSTAL KITE GALA



Newsletter design by Jackie Marie Beyer
www.jackiebeyer.com