



December 2023

Spotlight



Featured Illustrator

ALISSA HANSEN

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Upcoming Events

New Year Social, January 6, 4-7pm @ Vino Mas

Indi-500 Challenge, January 26-28

Story Spinners, January 27, 10-2pm @ Cheri O's

Shop Talk, Jan 15 and Feb 12, 7pm-8pm

Regional Meeting, Jan 7 and Feb 4, 4pm-5pm

Virtual NY Conference 2024, February 23-24

[Explore All Regional Virtual Events](#)

Need Holiday Gift Ideas?

Still searching for the perfect holiday gift for the young people in your life? Don't forget about SCBWI Bookstop--a collection of books by SCBWI authors and illustrators published in the last three years. From board books to young adult, there's something for everyone!



SCBWI
BOOKSTOP

A Word from Our Regional Team



Dianna Carda
Regional Illustrator Coordinator

Do you want to make a difference in your writing and illustrating? There are many ways to do so, whether they're online or in person - and SCBWI has you covered for both!

If local events work better for you, check out the Nebraska SCBWI website: <https://www.scbwi.org/regions/nebraska>

From regional socials to exclusive events with agents and editors, in-depth workshops to study groups and write and draw-ins, the website can connect you with these opportunities and more! Kathleen Gadeken, one of our published Nebraska illustrators, makes full use of the SCBWI website and says, we need to “encourage our members to explore the site to find opportunities. There are so many.”

Ready to venture farther afield? Gather up all your writing and/or illustrations, then, gather your friends and drive to the Marvelous Midwest Conference in Davenport, Iowa this April! Nebraska RA, Alison Pearce Stevens and I have been working with the Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Indiana, and Michigan Regional Teams to bring a big, national-style conference right here to the Midwest! You will have the opportunity to hone your writing, drawing, and organizational skills and get noticed by agents, editors, and art directors. The MMW conference will include art and manuscript contests, as well as a portfolio showcase. Enter your work to win prizes!

Check out Nebraska SCBWI on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) and the region's [website](#) for all of the upcoming conference details!

And if you want something sooner, check out the [Winter Conference](#) in February (available in person in NYC or [virtual](#)). Get noticed and make a difference!





Eight Ways to Give Your Picture Book Manuscript Staying Power

Rebecca J. Gomez

Author

Do you ever wonder what it is about those special picture books that have true “staying power”? These are the books that children request regularly, flip through themselves, and often learn well enough to memorize even before they learn to read.

Over the years, in my roles as a parent, librarian, author (and now grandparent), I’ve noticed some characteristics that tend to be consistent “child pleasers” in picture books. Though every child is different, and tastes can vary widely, these characteristics seem almost guaranteed to please the majority of young readers. If you can capture a few of these in your picture books, you can capture the attention of a child.

Wonder. If a book amazes a child or captures his imagination, he will want to read it again and again. Or maybe sit there and pore over the illustrations for hours.

Humor. Every child loves a good laugh, and a book that gets a child giggling to herself or laughing out loud is sure to make it into the “read it again” pile. If you don’t consider yourself especially funny, work in a joke or something gross!

Rhythm. Whether in rhyme or prose, the best picture book texts have rhythms that naturally flow like waves that rise and fall. Rhythm in a picture book makes for a smooth reading experience that is pleasant to repeat!

Clever titles. Sometimes a title alone is enough to endear a book to a child, or at least get him interested in reading it. Of course, it helps if the story matches the title for cleverness. Creepy Carrots, anyone?





Craft Corner

Continued...



High concepts. When authors take a common or everyday concept and mash it together with something extreme, what you have is a high concept book that is sure to catch a young reader's attention. For example, a well-known fairy tale, but in space!

Interesting illustrations. When an illustrator goes beyond illustrating the text to make a book her own, adding fun or surprising details in the pictures, kids notice.

An emotional arc. A picture book that tells a story a child can relate to on an emotional level is one that will not soon be forgotten. And it is often those books that help a child fall in love with reading and become lifelong readers.

High stakes. Give your reader someone to root for! Perhaps your character will need to escape a predator, rescue his loved ones, or find her way home through a creepy forest. These kinds of stories, especially when also using some of the things mentioned above, will keep young readers coming back for repeat adventures.

Try this: Go through your children's favorite books. Or, if you don't have your own kids, ask friends about their kids, or ask a children's librarian for titles of popular books. Then read them! Which of the traits mentioned above apply? How might you use some of those traits to strengthen your own stories?



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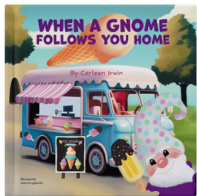
Let's Celebrate



TAMMY STUHR'S book, *Jax Finds His Talent* was listed as an Amazon Top New Release and best-seller in two categories: Children's Book on Social Skills (#24) and Children's Book on Peer Pressure (#22). Tammy is currently running a campaign for every 2nd grader to have the book. To date, she has 24 donors sponsoring books for students. Hooray, Tammy!



SHELI PETERSEN'S illustrations for the middle grade short story "Sideways Infinity" by Noah Weisz will run in the January 2024 issue of Spider Magazine. Way to go, Sheli!



CARLEEN IRWIN'S debut children's picture book, *When a Gnome Follows You Home*, is now available for purchase! You can find the book on Carleen's official [website](#). We can't wait to read it, Carleen!



Laura Godwin at Godwin Books/Henry Holt acquired ALISON PEARCE STEVENS's debut picture book *When Beavers Move In*, to be illustrated by Métis illustrator Natasha Donovan. The book showcases the extraordinary ways the Tulalip Tribes are restoring their ancestral lands by relocating beavers into the Cascade Mountains. Congrats, Alison!



KATHY RYGG is excited to share the release of her latest chapter book, *The Ollie & Gus Pizza Bus*. This adventure-filled story was inspired by Izzy's Pizza Bus, a local family-owned business in Omaha that has made a huge impact in the community and cooks up delicious Detroit-style pizza. We are so thrilled for you, Kathy!



HEATHER DAWN TORRES was selected as one of the upcoming 2024 Featured Authors on [Chelsea's World of Books Blog](#). Heather's interview will be released on November 6th, 2024 with details about her forthcoming picture book, *Meet the Tractor Squad!*, published by Marble Press. Well done, Heather!

Featured Member



James Solheim



James Solheim grew up in Maryville, Missouri. He met his future wife, Joyce, when he sat by her at a regional spelling bee in eighth grade. After earning an MFA from the Writer's Workshop at The University of Iowa, he taught writing at Southern Illinois University and now writes, illustrates, and gives presentations to encourage success through books.

In 2023, James' book *Eat Your Woolly Mammoths* won two Nebraska Book Awards in the categories of Children's Design and Children's Non-Fiction sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Book. The book explores wacky and amazing food facts throughout history and includes his own illustrations.

The Wall Street Journal and PBS named James' first book, *It's Disgusting—and We Ate It*, as one of the best books for getting boys to read. It was a Junior Library Guild selection, an American Bookseller Pick of the Lists, and a Blue Ribbon Book of The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library gave away 446,000 copies of James' book *Born Yesterday* as part of its free-book program to help kids learn to love reading before starting school.

His book *Grandmas Are Greater Than Great*, illustrated by New York Times best-selling artist Derek Desierto, explores history through twelve generations of grandmotherly love. Kids learn about how tiny caring gestures grow and spread exponentially throughout time.



Coming Attractions

The new year always brings with it new grants, new awards, new contests, and a slew of new regional events to welcome a fresh start to the year. So, grab your art supplies and your writers' hats and help us kick-off an amazing 2024!

January 6: New Year Social - We love New Year's! There's nothing like a shiny new year, just waiting for us to make the most of its potential, so let's harness that energy to support each other in our creative pursuits. Join us at Vino Mas in Omaha on January 6 from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. for food, fun and free books! Because how often do you get to hang out with other creatives while raising a toast to the hope and promise of a brand-new year? Please [register online](#) so we know how many to expect.

January 12: Registration Opens for Marvelous Midwest Conference - This multi-region event is back and better than ever! With a stellar faculty line up and sessions packed with craft and business-focused information, you will walk away inspired and ready to take your work-in-progress to the next level. SCBWI Nebraska is offering TWO scholarships for MMW: [Equity & Inclusion Scholarship](#) and [First Timer Scholarship](#). Scholarship applications will be accepted from December 18-January 10. Don't miss out on what will be an amazing weekend that's all about children's literature!

February 9-11: In-Person New York SCBWI Conference - Come and be inspired by renowned authors and illustrators, learn about the state of the children's book publishing industry from panels of agents, editors and art directors, dive deep into your craft with TWO three-hour Creative Labs, and get your work in front of industry professionals!

February 23-24: Virtual New York SCBWI Conference - Can't make it to the In-Person Winter Conference in New York City? Join us at this online event featuring recorded keynotes and panels, deep-dive Creative Labs, and a live marketing pitch-off!



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Maximizing Your Membership



January 2024 brings the 4th annual Indi-500 Challenge and we're excited to have two contests again: one for writers and one for illustrators. It's an event for SCBWI Nebraska and we'd love to have you participate!

Based on themes and prompts selected during our kick-off event on January 26th, contestants will have 48 hours to create a 500-word story or spot illustration. The winner of the writing contest receives a free critique of a polished PB manuscript or the first chapter of an MG/YA novel from an editor. The winner of the illustration contest gets a free portfolio review from an art director.

In the meantime, polish up those manuscripts and portfolios and get your registration in by January 25th. You must be a premium member of the Nebraska region and registered for the event in order to participate.

Nebraska Critique Groups

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

Join a critique group today!

Email Judith Snyder, Critique Group Coordinator
scbwi.nebraska.critiques@gmail.com



Illustration Submission

Would you like for your art to be featured in our future newsletter?
Please send to: Dianna Carda at nebraska-ic@scbwi.org
Label file as `firstname_lastname.jpeg`. (no bigger than 8 mb)



Shop Talk Recap



Ashley Karges
Shop Talk Co-Coordinator

October - Points of View in Picture Books

In October's Shop Talk, participants reviewed points of view and put their writing skills into practice. If you've ever asked yourself what point of view would be best for your manuscript, the answer of course is: It depends!

Point of View Review:

First Person – MC is talking about themselves or their group. *I live in Nebraska. (I, me, my)*

Second Person – MC is addressing the listener directly. *You live in Nebraska. (You, your, yours)*

Third Person – MC is talking about someone or something else. *She lives in Nebraska. (He/him/his, she/her/hers, they/their/theirs)*

Consider how the point of view changes the reading experience – the flavor – of your manuscript. A first person text can help us get to know a character quite well, as we are reading their direct thoughts and feelings. Since second person is directed at the reader, this point of view can feel more personal. With third person, the author can describe scenes and themes as well as a character's thoughts and feelings with an "all-knowing," broader perspective.

Challenge yourself to choose a work in progress and write a version using a different Point of View. How does the story change? Does it become more heartfelt, lively, or in-the-moment? Have fun with it and happy writing!

Upcoming Shop Talks, 7pm-8pm CST:
December 18 - End of Year Virtual Social
January 15, 2024 - Making Book Trailers
February 12, 2024 - Better Critiquing



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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

Take Flight With Help From Our Volunteers



LEADERSHIP



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Discussion Board Moderator
Kim Ziemann

Want to join this amazing team? We are currently looking for a Social Event Coordinator and a Newsletter Coordinator. Watch your email for details about these two fun volunteer positions.