

Spring 2022

# Highlighter

SCBWI Mid-Atlantic Journal

Style



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Spring 2022 // Style

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The *Highlighter* is a quarterly journal published by the Mid-Atlantic Region (DC/Virginia) of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI).

For more information on our region, see <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/>

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To see the full list of regional volunteers, visit <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/meet-our-volunteers/>

### Submissions

Are you interested in contributing an article, illustration, or other content to *Highlighter*? Please send your ideas and/or portfolio link to Denise Taranov at [MidAtlanticHighlighter@gmail.com](mailto:MidAtlanticHighlighter@gmail.com)

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## About the cover (a.k.a., the yellow warbler project)

For this *Highlighter* issue, 12 Mid-Atlantic illustrators contributed a yellow warbler to the flock on the cover. Sharing the same subject and color (HEX #FBF089, "yellow Crayola"), these illustrations give us an opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the uniqueness of artistic expression. As the Martha Graham quote goes, "There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost."

Many thanks to all who contributed!



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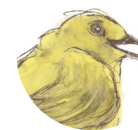
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(flew to page 26)

Cover design and non-bird illustration elements: **Denise Taranov,** [denisetaranov.com](http://denisetaranov.com)

For more information on the yellow warbler (a migrating bird native to our region), see [Yellow Warbler](#) and [When Will Yellow Warblers Return? Check Our Animated Map](#) (All About Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology).





SCBWI Mid-Atlantic

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## Creativity is in bloom

Welcome to the spring 2022 *Highlighter* issue on style. The cover alone, featuring yellow warblers rendered by Mid-Atlantic artists, demonstrates that each of our voices is unique, even when we are bringing the same object to life. In this issue, meet featured writer NoNieqa Ramos and featured illustrator Juana Medina. Study the guidance on navigating writing style by Lisa Rowe Fraustino, head of the graduate program in children's literature at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia. For visual artists, illustrator coordinator Tami Traylor tackles the "s-word" with practical advice. *Highlighter* content editor Denise Taranov offers a concrete guide to figuring out our own respective styles, complete with examples and questions for writers and illustrators. We hope you enjoy this amazing issue as much as we do.

There is a lot to celebrate within our region. Pamela N. Harris won SCBWI's Golden Kite Award for her debut young adult novel, *WHEN YOU LOOK LIKE US*; Joyana Peters won SCBWI's Spark Award for excellence in self-publishing for *THE GIRL IN THE TRIANGLE*; and Dionna Mann won the SCBWI Magazine Merit Award Honor in the category of nonfiction for her article "Snot-Copter: Drone at Work" in February's issue of *Spider*.

With spring, hope returns for in-person gatherings. In April, we're offering sketch-ins for illustrators, and the annual fall conference will be held in-person at the Holiday Inn in Dulles, Virginia. We're honored to host young adult author Jeff Zentner (*IN THE WILD LIGHT*) as our keynote speaker.



We're still hosting online events as well. April's webinar features poet/author writing team Irene Latham and Charles Waters on how to create and maintain a successful creative collaboration while remaining friends.

As we think about the challenges of the past two years and the hardships that remain here and around the world, we hope that you find inspiration to call forth your own voices. To quote Kate DiCamillo, we are responsible as writers, illustrators, and interpreters to "tell the truth and make life bearable."

May your creativity and unique style bloom like DC's cherry blossoms for the world to see—and take hope from.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin".

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Val".

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NoNieqa Ramos

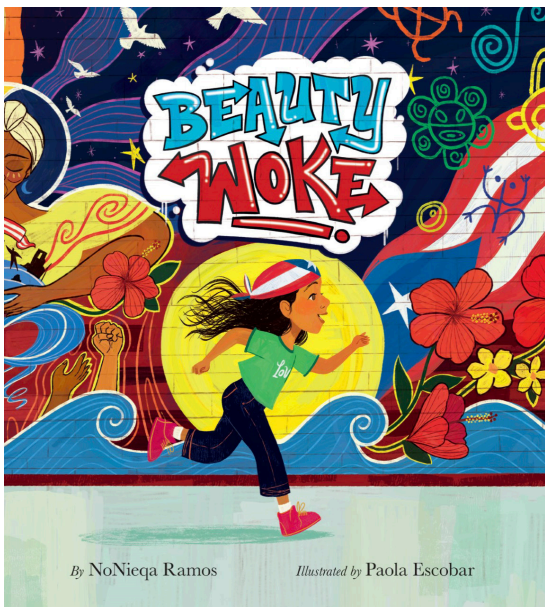


# Crafting Books that All Children Deserve

by NoNieqa Ramos

## Inspiration

The inspiration for BEAUTY WOKE came from despair. In the original story of "Sleeping Beauty," the parents love their daughter, Aurora, tremendously. But they don't invite the sorcerer Maleficent to her christening, and she crashes the party to levy a curse. Aurora will prick her finger on a spinning needle and die on her sixteenth birthday. Her godparents, who are fairies, save her with a counter curse—that she will not die, but sleep, and that a prince can break the curse with a kiss. The king and queen proceed to burn, destroy, and ban every spinning wheel in the land.



By NoNieqa Ramos

Illustrated by Paola Escobar

In BEAUTY WOKE, Beauty's family loves her tremendously. Despite their nurturing and care, they cannot burn all the spinning wheels. They cannot keep racism from entering their household. When Beauty listens to the news, she hears anti-immigrant rhetoric for the first time. She hears brown and Black people stereotyped and denigrated. But the story of BEAUTY WOKE does not end in despair. My mission in writing this book was to provide validation, healing, and hope to children. With the love of

her family and community, Beauty is validated, healed, and renewed.

BEAUTY WOKE also came from dreams. I stared out the window on a windy day musing about the state of the planet, impending play dates and teacher's conferences I needed to schedule, and whether my rooftop furniture would again fly into the air like Dorothy's house in the tornado. (Feel free to picture me the first time this happened, when I had to chase a ten-foot umbrella that had torpedoed off the roof into

<https://nonieqaramos.com/>

 @nonieqa.ramos

 #NoNieqaRamos

## Favorite resources

- Latinos in Publishing (<https://latininpublishing.com>)
- Las Musas webinars (<https://www.lasmusasbooks.com/webinar-series.html>)
- Meg Medina's one-minute video series for writers ([https://megmedina.com/2021/07/20/a-one-minute-video-series-for-writers-on-instagram/?utm\\_source=rss](https://megmedina.com/2021/07/20/a-one-minute-video-series-for-writers-on-instagram/?utm_source=rss))
- NPR Science Fridays podcast (<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/583350334/science-friday>)
- SCBWI podcasts (<https://www.scbwi.org/podcasts-new>)



## Meet a Writer

(continued)

the street, without getting impaled.) I doodled on my chalkboard. I daydreamed what-ifs. A writer is always writing, whether they are stirring in the sofrito for habichuelas, picking up the trail of their child's Spider-Man underpants from the basement to the bedroom, or sitting rigidly at their desk, their fingers a flurry. That's not to say that we don't need the discipline of putting words on the page for at least thirty minutes before we reward ourselves



From BEAUTY WOKE, Paola Escobar (Illustrator) (Versify, 2022)

with jalapeño chips—or whatever is your go-to “I’ve written a paragraph!” reward.

### Dreams that fly

Publishing BEAUTY WOKE was really a dream-come-true type of situation. Kwame Alexander’s imprint Versify sent out a Twitter invitation for writers to submit picture books, and I had my agent jump on the opportunity and send YOUR MAMA. It’s so important to find the right match with an editor and a publishing house. I’ll never forget receiving the call from Kwame with an offer for a two-book deal during a staff team meeting at my middle school. I worked with Kwame and Erika Turner through the formative process of YOUR MAMA before Erika left for other publishing prospects. Because of the fluidity—and volatility—of the publishing industry, I’ve learned it is typical to work with several editors!

After YOUR MAMA’s acceptance, I had to decide what to submit next. I had the fortunate (and nerve-racking!) surprise invitation to visit Kwame Alexander in his studio and read my draft for BEAUTY WOKE aloud. He read me a selection from a favorite

NoNieqa Ramos



childhood book and made brilliant suggestions—of course. The book was accepted shortly thereafter. During the editorial process, I worked with the Versify team, which included founder Kwame Alexander and editors Erika Turner and Weslie Turner. Boricua writers Mia García (THE RESOLUTIONS) and Carmen Rodriguez (THE UNIVERSAL LAWS OF MARCO) gave me critical feedback. Together, they all helped me to ensure factual, respectful, and dynamic Puerto Rican representation. It is so important to me in all my work to show that Latinidad is not a monolith.

### Nourishment

There’s no question community is key to elevation of craft, publishing success—and sanity. No one will understand, empathize, challenge, or cheerlead you harder or better than your writing community. We continually need to invest in our craft. I recommend exploring the website of Las Musas Books—the collective to which I belong—for innumerable resources, including mentorships for Latinx writers and FREE webinars for all. One of my favorite Musa webinars is called “CRAFT INSIGHT: How to outline, plot, and structure your novel.” Authors Mayra Cuevas (SALTY, BITTER, SWEET) and Ismee Williams (THIS TRAIN IS BEING HELD) discuss the nuts and bolts of narrative structure, which was helpful since I’m a young adult writer, as well! My debut YA novel was THE DISTURBED GIRL’S DICTIONARY. In another, authors Jenny Torres Sanchez (WE ARE NOT FROM HERE), Mia García (THE RESOLUTIONS), and moderator Alexandra Villasante (THE GRIEF KEEPER) conduct a webinar titled “CRAFT INSIGHT: Writing Multiple POVs LIVE Discussion & Q & A” (<https://www.lasmusasbooks.com/webinar-series.html>). I am attempting my first novel-in-verse with multiple points of view!

# Meet a Writer

(continued)

SCBWI has numerous resources, including agent listings, regional and national conferences, and podcasts! You can soak in the writing wisdom of authors like Raúl the Third, the Pura Belpré medal recipient and award-winning illustrator of graphic novels and author/illustrator of picture books and early readers, and Namrata Tripathi, vice president and publisher of Kokila, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers.

Check out Latinx in Publishing for resources on Latinx editors, Latinx-owned bookstores, agents, conferences, residencies, scholarships, and more (<https://latinxpublishing.com>)! Head over to Instagram to catch the One-Minute Video Series for Writers ([https://megmedina.com/2021/07/20/a-one-minute-video-series-for-writers-on-instagram/?utm\\_source=rss](https://megmedina.com/2021/07/20/a-one-minute-video-series-for-writers-on-instagram/?utm_source=rss)) from Newbery Medal-winning author Meg Medina (MERCY SUAREZ CHANGES GEARS).

I also want to share my quirkiest resources. If I admire an author, I read them twice. Once for pleasure and again for craft. Among many other elements, I study Aida Salazar for expertise on crafting analogy, metaphor, and complexity of character; Michelle Ruiz Keil for her gleaming sentence architecture; Meg Medina for cadence, voice, and versatility in genre; N.K. Jemisin for her ability to craft a crystal clear stream of consciousness, etc. I have not found myself disappointed at gleaning any of the secrets behind the magic we all experience reading great literature. Instead, I am entranced, enchanted, and inspired.

Another way to improve your writing is—drumroll—to do things worth writing about. What are you passionate about that doesn't involve writing? I recently competed in a ballroom dance competition to raise money for affordable day care for parents of young children in my community. What better way to understand how awkward a middle schooler feels in their own bodies than trying something that was out of my comfort zone, fun, and would most likely be completely embarrassing? That experience was my research for the first middle grade book I am drafting.

[Return to Contents](#)

NoNieqa Ramos



Are you into roller skating? Candlemaking? Sourdough making? You get the idea. Start your writing with what you are passionate about. Listen to podcasts about how to write and get published, but also listen



From BEAUTY WOKE, Paola Escobar (Illustrator) (Versify, 2022)

to podcasts on what you like to nerd out about! My interest in NPR's Science Fridays is fueling a new young adult book I'm drafting.

## Banding together

Each book is an opportunity to validate and empower children. Because BEAUTY WOKE deals with the sensitive topics of racism with a young audience, I labored feverishly to ensure I was treating my future readers with tender loving care. While YOUR MAMA was purely a work of joy and exultation, BEAUTY WOKE was a labor of pain and joy. All my books are messages of unconditional love to all children.

This is why we are riding this roller-coaster of a writer's life. This is why we are fighting tooth and nail against book banning. This is why librarians, writers, and educators are banding together. To craft the world LGBTQIA+ children, children with disabilities, BIPOC children, ALL children deserve. //H//



# MEET AN ILLUSTRATOR

Juana Medina



## Self-portrait



<http://www.juanamedina.com/>

[facebook.com/ijuanadraw](https://www.facebook.com/ijuanadraw)

[@juana\\_medina](https://www.instagram.com/juana_medina)

[#juanamedina](https://twitter.com/juanamedina)

### Favorite tool

Fountain pens

### What inspires me

I've noticed inspiration tends to come from the least expected places (the shower, for example) and activities (sometimes it's washing dishes, sometimes meeting someone new), but there are a number of things that have constantly offered inspiration: reading, conversations, walks, travel, music, and swimming.

### Design influences

So many! Quino, Saul Steinberg, Ann Telnaes, Marit Törnqvist, Quentin Blake, Ronald Searle, Olga Cuellar, Ted van Lieshout, Dick Bruna, Annemarie van Haeringen, Saul Bass, Paul Rand, Jean-Jaques Sempé, Serge Bloch ... to name a few.

# Meet an Illustrator

(continued)

Juana Medina



## A peek into the process



**Favorite things to illustrate**  
Cats, despite loving dogs.

**What I'd like to explore in the coming year**

I'm starting a few new projects, and I am eager to play around with two aspects of design, one that I feel comfortable with and excited by—looseness of line—and one I'm terribly intimidated by: color. We'll see what comes out of this, but I'm excited by the prospect of learning and having fun combining these two. //H//



# From Scribbles to Glass Slippers

by Lisa Rowe Fraustino

In my fantasy I'm getting an award, and I've chosen a flattering little black dress for the celebration. But what about the shoes? Maybe the glittery silver spike heels I wore to my son's wedding? No, I practiced wearing those every day for three weeks so I could dance in them until midnight. Not doing that again. What if I go in the other direction and wear my rainbow-variegated Chuck Taylors? Nah, they hurt the balls of my feet when I land wrong, and there could be dancing. I know, cowboy boots! But which ones? The classic pair I bought in Angels Camp, center of the California Gold Rush? Definite conversation starters, those. Or my new L'Artiste boots I couldn't live without after my friend Ellen posted pictures on Facebook? When I looked them up at the online boot store I couldn't choose just one pair. I bought two.

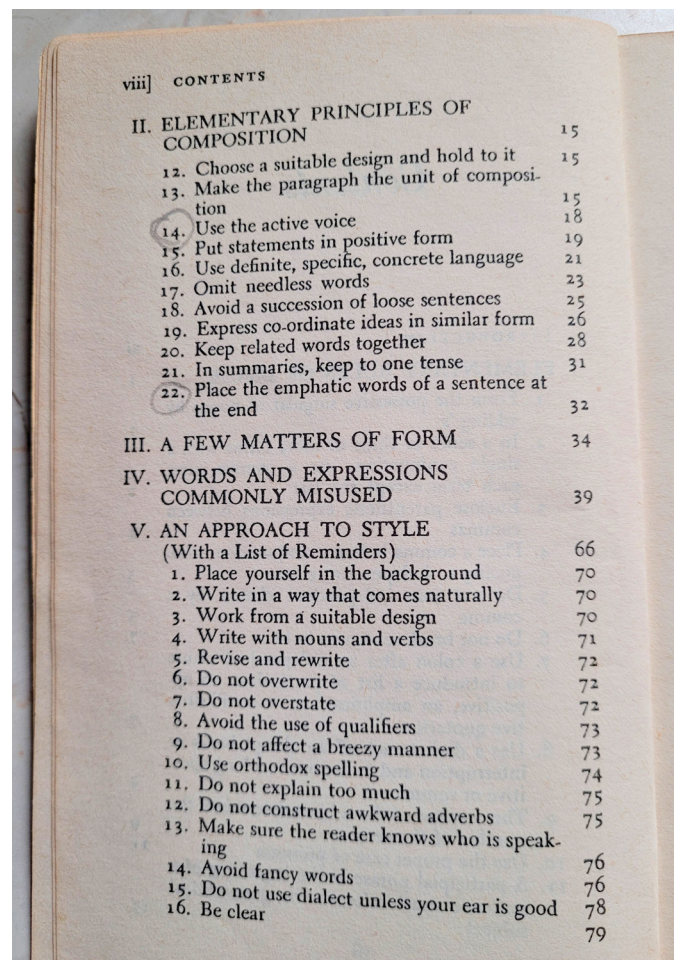
You see my dilemma. It's the same one writers have. Style. So many choices!

I scribbled my first children's story on the toilet seat lid when I was three and asked my mother what I had written. "Nothing," she said, and handed me the cleaning rag. That was my first lesson in writing style. Scribbling, an illegible style, was the only one in my control at that tender age—the equivalent of going barefoot, if writing wore footwear. I had to learn how to string the alphabet together into words and sentences to tell stories in a voice with tone and mood that would convey my intentions to readers.

During my first week in college, I found out that one of my favorite authors, E.B. White, whose Charlotte I adored, was also famous among certain sets as the coauthor, with William Strunk Jr., of a little book called *THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE*. My first-year writing professor required us to bring it and a dictionary to every class, where we would write to prompts every day. We started with the sentence. Dr. Reiss was old school and used archaic terms like subject, verb, subordinate clause,

participial phrase, and appositive, all of which we were asked to use to a desired effect. We would write our sentences on the board, and the class would discuss which worked best and why. After we could style our sentences to Dr. Reiss's approval, we graduated to paragraphs and from there to essays.

That first-year writing experience built from Strunk and White was the writing-style equivalent of *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. I still have my yellowed copy from 1979 and was surprised to find that I had actually written in



Page from *THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE* by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White (Macmillan, 1979)

# From Scribbles to Glass Slippers

(continued)

it, something I didn't like to do back then. Very lightly in pencil, eighteen-year-old Lisa circled two elements of style that she lives by to this day (numbers 14 and 22—see *photo above*).

My favorite line comes from the last chapter: "A careful and honest writer does not need to worry about style." Then Strunk and White give twenty-one "suggestions and cautionary hints" that will help the writer get to the place of not needing to worry. Ten of those tips resonate with me today as essential for a children's book author. Being able to do these things now means my writing can wear anything from flip-flops to glass slippers. No more barefoot scribbles.

- **Place yourself in the background** and keep your focus on the child character
- **Write in a way that comes naturally** because that's how kids talk and think
- **Work from a suitable design** and follow the conventions of a particular form or genre of children's literature
- **Write with nouns and verbs** since concrete nouns and action verbs make writing lively and vivid for child readers to picture
- **Do not overwrite** as children's literature keeps the style simple without the ideas being simplistic
- **Do not explain too much** to let the young reader interpret and imagine based on carefully selected details
- **Make sure the reader knows who is speaking** by using plenty of dialogue to bring characters to life, and clear punctuation/paragraphing along with speech tagging since emerging readers can easily lose their place
- **Avoid fancy words**, which doesn't mean not to use a robust vocabulary, but do write within the young protagonist's verbal range and at the target reader's level
- **Be clear** since murky meaning frustrates readers of any age and quickly loses kids with plenty of other fun things to do
- **Revise and rewrite** to achieve all of the above—and don't worry too much about style in early drafts because character motivation, the plotting of conflict, consistent narrative viewpoint, believable dialogue, accuracy of setting, and scenic development aren't all going to come together like CHARLOTTE'S WEB in one or two drafts, and the style will sculpt itself as you focus on these other craft elements

Some authors develop a strong, distinctive style that carries across all of their work—the kind of writing that you could pick out of a lineup. Think Dr. Seuss. On the other end of the spectrum, some children's authors prefer to write in what my first editor called "standard children's book prose," a straightforward and accessible style found in many packaged or work-for-hire series by multiple authors.

Other authors write in a variety of styles depending on the genre or form, adopting the voice of a sarcastic young adult narrator, perhaps, or taking on an omniscient voice in an animal fantasy, or shifting to multiple viewpoints in different chapters of a middle-grade school story.

The goal is to fit the style with the needs of the story. You probably don't want a voice- or character-driven style that draws attention to itself in a mystery or a thriller where the plot has to pull hard, for instance. On the other hand, figurative and lyrical style will sing in a verse novel, especially if it's poetry and not just prose broken into lines and white spaces.

Many writers, with practice, can learn to control a range of styles. Others find it a struggle to write outside their own voice, or outside a particular form or genre. If that happens to you, there is no shame in it. You could be the next Beverly Cleary.



# From Scribbles to Glass Slippers

(continued)

So if you keep hearing from your beta readers or agents that a manuscript isn't working, and if your efforts to satisfy everyone's concerns just don't do the trick, consider the possibility that there's a mismatch between your intrinsic style and your conscious aims. In that case, it helps to remember Strunk and White's suggestion to write in a way that comes naturally. Find the form and genre that best fits your style, and let it flow.

As for the boots, I've selected my options. I'll try each pair on with my dress the day of the party to see which style best expresses my mood. When the award call comes, I'm just one revision away from hitting the stage.

//H//



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Above: Notable books by current student and graduates of the children's literature summer graduate programs.

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# The S-Word

by Tami Traylor

"Style..." There. I said it out loud.

**S** Finding and establishing an illustrative style is an ever present topic of discussion in the illustration community, especially among students and illustrators beginning their careers. Advice abounds in books, on blogs, at webinars, during conference intensives, and beyond. So when I was asked to write about it, I almost demurred. What could I add to the conversation? I am, by no means, an expert. I can only speak to my own love-hate relationship with the s-word.

These are some lessons I've learned regarding style in my practice and pursuit of a career in kidlit illustration, mixed with wisdom I've gleaned from others along the way.

## ***Be inspired by others, but don't imitate***

Have you ever tried to fake an accent? It's hard, even if you're a seasoned actor with a voice coach, and it's especially tough if you try to maintain it for any length of time. Your natural accent will rise to the top.

The same principle applies when trying to force a way of mark making that does not come naturally to you. Though it may be tempting, squeezing your artwork into the constraints of a popular illustration trend isn't sustainable.

I remember the '90s, when many young editorial illustrators emulated Brad Holland's work. It was ubiquitous in that industry, from spots to spreads, in every magazine. The trend hit its peak, then disappeared, and most illustrators who had styled themselves as Brad Holland knockoffs were relegated to stock illustration, never having realized the success

of Holland himself. Trying to fit into someone else's idea of what sells will only take you so far.

## ***Practice your "handwriting"***

My son didn't learn cursive writing in school, and his print handwriting was an abomination. (I wept for his teachers!) When it came time for him to start signing official documents, like his learner's permit, he had no *real* signature. Embarrassed by his printed signature, he sat down and practiced signing his name in cursive, over and over. He signed everything in sight, from notebooks to napkins, until his signature became part of his muscle memory. When he finally got his license, he proudly showed me his very grown-up signature—a striking improvement in comparison with the one on his learner's!

So what does this have to do with your illustration style?

PRACTICE!

You have to do the thing. Put BIC ("Butt in Chair," in the words of Jane Yolen) and make art. Make bad art. It really doesn't matter. You don't have to share it. You will see improvement if you're consistent. My kid's first tries at his signature were not great, but every time he made a mark on paper with intent, it got better.

A daily art practice is immensely helpful in developing your illustrative *signature*. Even if you only have 15 minutes daily to make lots of awful, zero-guilt art, you will not regret it. It will be fun. I promise!

## ***Hear your own voice***

Your visual "voice" is as unique as your signature. No one else can be the illustrator you are, and you



# The S-Word

(continued)

cannot be the next [insert name of prolific published illustrator here]. Only *you* can be the next [insert *your* name here] and, trust me, you will be amazing at it.

The way you choose to tackle a problem with mark making and visual storytelling is wholly a product of your abilities and your proclivities (shout out to [Tom Froese](#) for that little nugget.) All the things that have ever happened to you—all your favorite foods; the quirky stuff that gets you excited, like that collection of vintage glass bottles or skeleton keys you found; all the shows you binge-watched twice; your pets, your family, and every other element of your existence plays a part in your illustrative voice.

No one else has your hands, your eyes, your brain. You make marks, lines, and brushstrokes in a way that is yours alone. It may not be where you want to be as far as skill and your ability to meet your own aesthetic expectations right now, but as you grow and put in daily practice, you'll begin to hear your voice, loud and clear. So will others, as it will be recognizable by unique characteristics, even as you mature and change as an artist.

Illustrator [LeUyen Pham](#) has a distinctive voice that spans her whole body of work. She recently talked about shifting her style for every project in [a recent](#)

[SCBWI webinar](#). Regardless, every book is unmistakably recognizable as her work. Her illustrations can be a simple ink line with flat color like in the [FRECKLEFACE STRAWBERRY](#) books, or traditionally rendered like in [VAMPIRINA BALLERINA](#), or they can even have a very stylized look like in [BEAR CAME ALONG](#). You can still see her hand in every work; her voice unites her art across mediums and genres.

Some other well-known illustrators with a strong, unmistakable voice include Dan Santat, Leo and Diane Dillon, Sophie Blackall, Rebecca Green, and Felicita Sala. There are so many more. I'm sure you could name a few you know.

The big takeaway and what I most want to share with you is this ...

## ***Stop worrying about the s-word***

Be true to yourself because you are wonderful and unique. When you reframe your focus to consistently doing the work, honing your signature through practice, and creating illustrations that speak with *your* voice from *your* heart, you will find that the elusive s-word—style—was with you all along. //H//

## **My own illustration evolution from the last decade** (see next page)

When I look back through my work, I see threads that connect the "me" of a decade ago with who I am now as an illustrator. I see my signature in a love of dramatic line, movement, and color—regardless of theme or medium. I hear my voice in a love of light and natural elements, animals and strong emotions.

I've matured as an artist, but I'm still growing and learning about my art and myself. I don't intend to stop that process until I stop entirely.

As artists, we are constantly evolving—being influenced by our outside world and inner, emotional lives.

Make a practice to look back at your work from time to time and ask yourself what are the overarching elements you see that flow through your work. What are the unmistakable marks of your signature ... your voice? I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

# The S-Word

(continued)

Selected illustrations by  
Tami Traylor



2012



2014



2018



2019



2020



2021



2022



## Navigating Style

by Denise Taranov

Style wasn't something I figured out by getting a creative writing degree. For me, having a reading list organized by country of origin or ethnicity rather than style or genre made me wonder, Is how we write and what we write about really determined by our genetics and childhood address? As a Midwestern student, I felt I needed to adopt a regional flat voice and a plotline that tended to cause characters to stare at bodies of water, have internal dialogue in the presence of relatives, and pause on everyday things for readers to find them weird or ironic. My voice didn't fit, even if my accent and physical features resembled the authors'. I attempted

### *Is how we write and what we write about really determined by our genetics and childhood address?*

literary off-roading, blindly building styles into stories that blossomed and contracted like free-form [Shrinky Dinks](#) melting in the oven. After reading a couple of my completed assignments, one teaching assistant said it was as though they were written by different people.

A few years later, facing the fiction stacks in Kramerbooks & Afterwards in Dupont Circle in DC, I decided to buy a book based on loving the author's writing style rather than the book being written by a best-selling author, or having a "classic" status or award. I pulled out books at random and flipped through them to read lines. After a few samples, I happened to grab WORDS ARE SOMETHING ELSE by David Albahari<sup>1</sup>, a Serbian writer from what is now Kosovo. Scanning pages, I found lines like, "boats crammed with escaping refugees topple like walnut shells," and, 1 WORDS ARE SOMETHING ELSE (Northwestern University Press, 1996), translated by Ellen Elias-Bursac.

[Return to Contents](#)

"'Ha,' says Ruben Rubenović, and for a moment he looks as he used to look in my earlier stories," and, "Suddenly, one day, all my buttons were loose. They hung on slender threads and swung in the gusts of the autumn wind." The author was a different age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity than me, and his book connected to my voice. Reading it in full, I discovered great leaps in perspective, the retelling of the same incident at different points in the narrative, and "Godzilla the Sea Monster" as a tertiary character. I was stunned by what felt like the writer feeling unencumbered, which liberated me: Style could be as effortless as capturing the story as we feel it, even if that's different than what's typical or currently popular.

When I decided to learn how to illustrate, the question of style inevitably surfaced again. Atop the vast sea of illustration, there are buoys— aesthetic trends and the particular criteria of illustration awards, like the Caldecott Medal—that

### *Atop the vast sea of illustration, there are buoys ... mark[ing] proven pathways.*

mark proven pathways. Whenever a successful book sets up a new buoy for a style or method (like the flat Elephant, Piggie, and Pigeon speaking directly to you—yes, you!—in what is known as breaking the fourth wall), a school of artists follows the way. How do we figure out what our own style should be?

On the following pages, I've put together writing and illustration style elements, along with questions, to help us see how artists achieve their design objectives. These elements are dials we

# Navigating Style

(continued)

can adjust to find our own creative frequency. Recognizing these and how they impact storytelling can help us be more deliberate in our choices. Feel free to try these out and take notes on what you discover to fine-tune them for your own needs.

Ultimately, as many accomplished authors and illustrators advise<sup>2</sup>, finding our style requires lots of reading others' work and lots of making our own. After all, if we don't like consuming

<sup>2</sup> Like Stephen King in ON WRITING, "If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that." Pocket Books, 2000.

the things that we aim to create, do we truly like the forms? If we aren't willing to practice, we'll be stuck in theory (and have nothing in our portfolio).

What I learned from doing a style taste test with books I hadn't yet met is that we can more fully feed ourselves as artists by foraging beyond the best-seller and award lists. True discovery lies off the well-worn trail. If you're still finding your style, be willing to search for what speaks to you so it can mirror back a piece of yourself.



Let's begin our journey of discovery with **Figure 1**. This illustrates that as a prism spreads light to make rainbows, style elements can shape voice and marks to make whatever we imagine come into being.

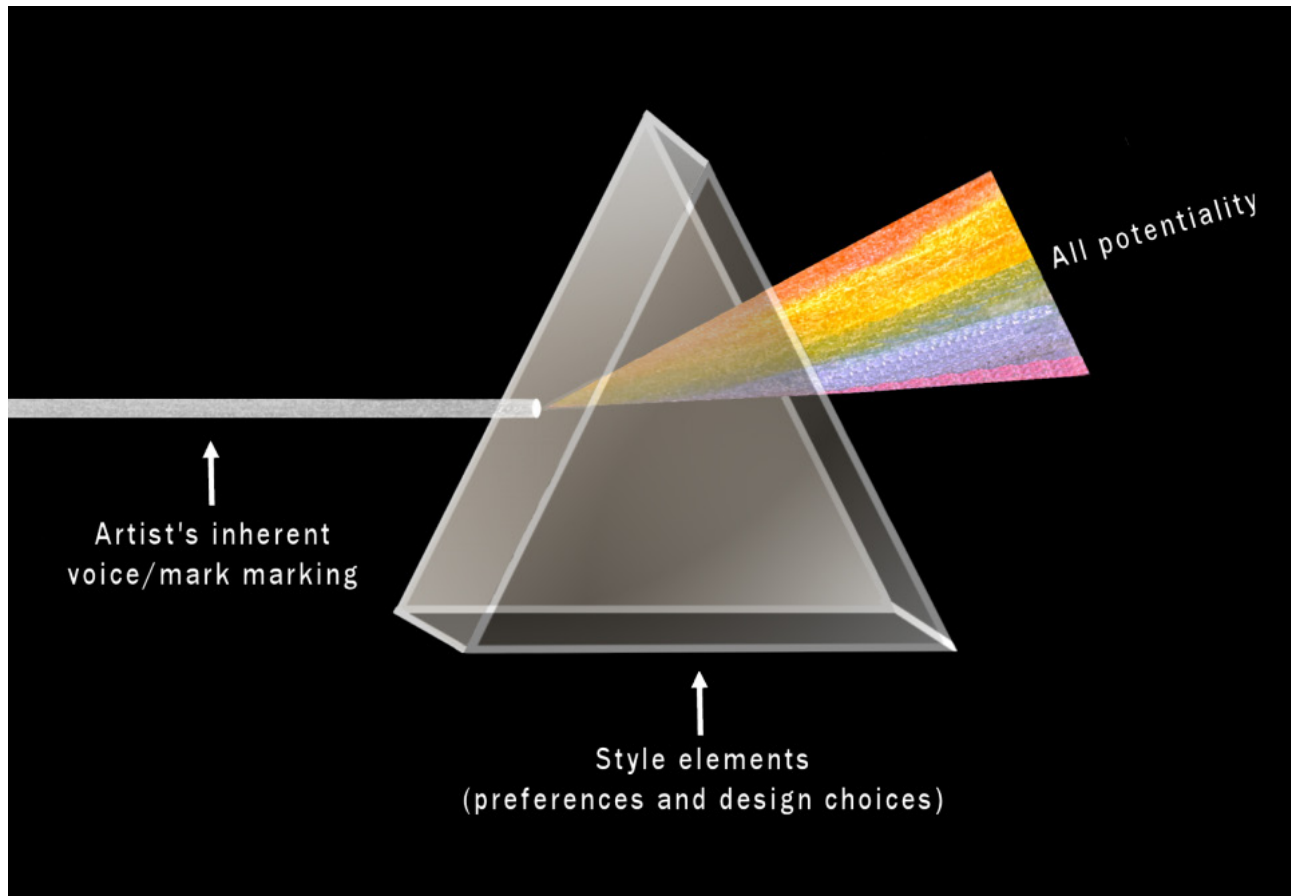


Fig. 1. Generating artistic wavelengths



# Navigating Style

(continued)

The following are definitions for the components of Figure 1:

## **Voice:**

The "you" inside

"To me, your writer's voice is the expression of YOU on the page. It's that simple—and that complicated. Your voice is all about honesty. It's the unfettered, non-derivative, unique conglomeration of your thoughts, feelings, passions, dreams, beliefs, fears and attitudes, coming through in every word you write. Voice is all about your originality and having the courage to express it."

—*Rachelle Gardner, Literary Agent, Gardner Literary, "What is Writer's Voice?"*

(<https://rachellegardner.com/what-is-writers-voice>)

## **Mark making:**

The "fingerprint" of how you uniquely make things (e.g., lines, shapes, patterns, smudges)

"In art, mark making is a term used to describe the different lines, patterns, and textures that are made visible as a manifestation of applied or gestural energy. It is the gestural 'language' of the artist, and it is a term that can refer to any art material applied to any surface ... they possess unique characteristics that have the power to identify artists, almost as fingerprints do."

—*Lynette Ubel, Ubel Arts, LLC blog, "Mark Making: Inspired by the Masters to Find Artistic Voice" (<https://www.ubelarts.com/blog/mark-making-inspired-by-the-masters-to-find-artistic-voice>)*

## **Style:**

The way you combine content and form to express your voice and convey the intended meaning

"[Style is] a particular manner or technique by which something is done, created, or performed"

—*Merriam-Webster, definition of "style" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/style>)*

## **Potentiality:**

Able to come into existence

"Never ask whether you can do something. Say instead that you are going to do it, then fasten your seat belt."

—*Julia Cameron, THE ARTIST'S WAY (TarcherPerigee, 2016)*

The pages that follow describe writing and illustration style elements.

See what you think. Check if you can spot these in others' work. Try them out in your own work to find what you love.



# ***Writing Style Elements***

Everything has a voice.

Even lack of voice is a voice.

It's almost like how we talk about accents sometimes. 'She has a strong accent and he has no accent.' The reality is both people have accents.

Everyone has an accent, but what is considered standard or not flashy is often normalized as the absence of something when actually it's another style ...

There are all these choices.

—Angeline Rodriguez, Associate Editor, Orbit and Redhook Books, "Finding Your Voice" panel, 2022 DVCon

# Elements of Writing Style and Examples

(featuring DC- and VA-based authors)

The following are style elements and questions we can use to investigate writing to make style intentional and tailor it to best fit the story, with examples from books by area writers. (Table by Denise Taranov and Alicia Meyers)

Style element and questions	Examples		
<p><b>Use of language</b> Are words simple or complex? Are grammar rules followed or broken? What does the language or word enunciation convey or imply? Is more than one language used?</p>	<p>“I THIG YOO LOO GOO!” ‘HUH?’ ‘AH ZEDD AH THIG YOO LOO GOOOO!’ ‘EH SOUNZ LAH YUR UNNAH WAWAH!’” -Excerpt from <i>EL DEAFO</i> by Cece Bell (Amulet Books, 2014)</p>	<p>“One group of ladies was involved in an excited conversation, their voices rat-a-tatting like machine guns. I grabbed Kenny by the elbow. ‘Don’t leave me,’ I begged. I was terrified that someone might try to start a conversation with me. If we got past <i>How are you?</i> and <i>How old are you?</i> I was in deep trouble in the Chinese-speaking department. <i>Wo shi-yi sui</i>, I practiced in my mind. <i>I’m eleven.</i>” -Excerpt from <i>THE GREAT WALL OF LUCY WU</i> by Wendy Wan-Long Shang (Scholastic Paperbacks, 2013)</p>	<p>“See what I mean?! I can take a perfectly normal situation and make it EMBARRASSINGLY AWKWARD! Sure, I walk around with a big smile on my face like I’m in control and everything is just fine! But the world has no idea WHATSOEVER how lost, insecure, and confused I REALLY feel. YES! I KNOW! I need to just CHILLAX ...” -Excerpt from <i>DORK DIARIES: TALES FROM A NOT-SO-BEST FRIEND FOREVER</i> by Rachel Renée Russell (Aladdin, 2019)</p>
<p><b>Sentence structure/syntax</b> Are sentences long or short, complex or simple? Are they parallel? Do they drop down into additional detail (cumulative) or reveal their meaning with the last word (periodic)?</p>	<p>“Back by the beanbags, Stanley and I start assembling our toothpicks row by row like Lincoln Logs. We’re both silent again. I’m starting to feel like an egg. Fragile and ready to crack.” -Excerpt from <i>STELLA DIAZ DREAMS BIG</i> by Angela Dominguez (Roaring Brook Press, 2021)</p>	<p>“Commodities pass through my hands like water—term papers, drugs, fake IDs—but they don’t hold value the way information does. Real wealth is measured in secrets, the secrets of other people, and my own. Secrets are power. Every time someone paid me cash for something, they also unwittingly paid me with their secret.” -Excerpt from <i>SWAY: A NOVEL</i> by Kat Spears (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2014)</p>	<p>“I hurry to the end of our dock. An egret startles away like a pale ghost. I’m on the lookout for the white Y-shaped scar on Missy’s back, my eyes almost hurting from the strain. It’s awful how manatees are recognized by the scars they get from being hit by boats.” -Excerpt from <i>MANATEE’S BEST FRIEND</i> by Sylvia Liu (Scholastic Inc., 2021)</p>



# Navigating Style / Elements of Writing Style and Examples

(continued)

Style element and questions	Examples		
<p><b>Detail</b> Are many details given or is the narrative sparse? What is described in-depth (when and why)? How much is stated versus filled in by the reader? How are the five senses engaged?</p>	<p>"In the window of their hardware store, a dust rag hangs from Grampa's hand. The display of paint cans and hanging brushes was spotless. Ailey was sure nothing even had a sprinkling of dust on it because Grampa had probably already cleaned the display more than once." -Excerpt from THE MAGIC IN CHANGING YOUR STARS by Leah Henderson (Union Square Kids, 2020)</p>	<p>"I close my eyes again and savor. Basil, cream ... and a pop of something. I take another bite but still can't place it. 'Buena says something and I chew slowly, trying to hear her past the rush in my ears.' -Excerpt from WITH THE FIRE ON HIGH by Elizabeth Acevedo (Quill Tree Books, 2021)</p>	<p>"00:01:01 00:01:00 00:00:59 Screaming static squawked through unseen speakers before morphing into cheery uptempo jazz. Shopping music. Opening time was near." -Excerpt from THE LAST MIRROR ON THE LEFT by Lamar Giles (Author) (Versify, 2021)</p>
<p><b>Dialogue</b> What do the characters say, and how do they say it? How much does the dialogue reveal? How is it combined with characters' facial expressions, movements, or internal thoughts? Does the dialogue have subtext?</p>	<p>"Garcia and Colette were having a disagreement. 'Space!' said Garcia. 'Sea!' said Colette. 'Stars!' said Garcia. 'Sand!' said Colette." -Excerpt from GARCIA &amp; COLETTE GO EXPLORING by Hannah Barnaby (Author) (G. P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2017)</p>	<p>"Darlene pushes up her glasses and tells me the whole rumor: 'Yaqui Delgado hates you. She says you're stuck-up for somebody who just showed up out of nowhere. And she wants to know who the hell you think you are, shaking your ass the way you do.' Darlene lowers her voice. 'She even called you a <i>skank</i>. Sorry.' I'm stunned. 'I shake my ass?' Darlene studies her egg-salad sandwich for a second. 'Definitely, yes.'" -Excerpt from YAQUI DELGADO WANTS TO KICK YOUR ASS by Meg Medina (Candlewick Press, 2013)</p>	<p>"My cell phone rang just as I was about to crush the Emperor of Doom's trebuchet and save the villagers from certain annihilation. It was the ominous beats of Beethoven's Symphony no. 5. Da-da-da-daaaa. 'Yes, Dad, what is it?'" -Excerpt from THE ABSOLUTE VALUE OF MIKE by Kathryn Erskine (Puffin Books, 2012)</p>

# Navigating Style / Elements of Writing Style and Examples

(continued)

Style element and questions	Examples		
<p><b>Literary devices</b> Are writing techniques used to reduce complexity or make comparisons (allegory, metaphor, simile, analogy)? Play with opposites and contradiction (irony, oxymoron, paradox) or throw things off-kilter (anachronism)? Create tension (foreshadowing, cliffhanger, suspense) or suspend disbelief (verisimilitude, personification)? Add meaning (allusion, motif, symbolism, vignette, imagery) or humor (humor, satire)?</p>	<p>"Carrot was bright, grounded, and great at rooting for friends ... Cookie was sweet, warm, and cheerfully chipper ... Carrot taught Cookie to dip ... Cookie taught Carrot to dunk. They were the best of friends." -Excerpt from WHEN CARROT MET COOKIE by Erica S. Perl (Author) (Penguin Workshop, 2021)</p>	<p>"Her hands and feet swelled like plastic gloves full of water, heavy and tight, ready to burst. Her muscles felt like they'd become wood and she imagined her bones were splintering and growing bones of their own." -Excerpt from LOOK BOTH WAYS by Jason Reynolds (Author) (Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2019)</p>	<p>"This is a secret chapter. I can't put it in the case file because that would be extremely rude to a certain person. But it IS an important chapter to have because, as Origami Yoda said: 'Fate of the field trip rest on this will ...' He said this one morning in homeroom about a week before the field trip. I didn't like the ominous sound of his voice. Miss Bauer just didn't like hearing his voice at all." -Excerpt from EMPEROR PICKLETINE RIDES THE BUS: AN ORIGAMI YODA BOOK by Tom Angleberger (Amulet Books, 2014)</p>
<p><b>Rhythm</b> How is the writing's flow and movement? Does the writing use repetition or alliteration? Are there single words or sentence fragments?</p>	<p>"Sirens screaming, horns are blowing. Engines rushing, none are slowing. Tractor-trailers, rough and rumbly. Concrete-mixers, tough and tumbly." -Excerpt from SUNNY'S TOW TRUCK SAVES THE DAY! by Anne Marie Pace (Author) (Abrams Appleseed, 2019)</p>	<p>"At the top of the key, I'm MOVING &amp; GROOVING, POPping and ROCKING— Why you BUMPING? Why you LOCKING? Man, take this THUMPING. Be careful though, 'cause now I'm CRUNKing CrissCROSSING" -Excerpt from THE CROSSOVER by Kwame Alexander (Author) (Clarion Books, 2019)</p>	<p>"Ruth has disagreed, disapproved, and differed. She has objected. She has resisted. She has dissented. Disagreeable? No. Determined? Yes. This is how Ruth Bader Ginsburg changed her life—and ours." -Excerpt from I DISSENT: RUTH BADER GINSBURG MAKES HER MARK by Debbie Levy (Author) (Simon &amp; Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016)</p>

# ***Illustration Style Elements***

Uniqueness doesn't come from a style, it comes from being brave and from experience.

It's reliant on your ability, and willingness, to express yourself.

Style is the siren on the rocks.

—Joe Cepeda, 2021 SCBWI Mid-Atlantic Fall Conference, Illustrator Lunch Social



## Elements of Illustration Style

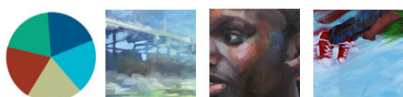
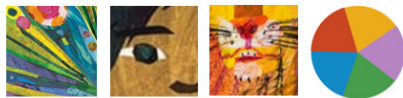
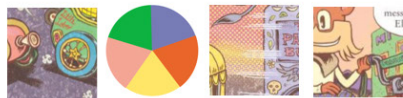
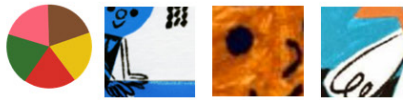
The following are elements and questions we can ask to better understand our illustration style and preferences, and apply those to meet each story's particular needs.

Style element	Questions
<b>Line</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the lines straight or curved?</li> <li>• How do the lines convey shape/form and delineate space?</li> <li>• Does the image use outlines or are edges implied or abstract?</li> <li>• Are lines informal or formal, and how do they feel (e.g., gentle, bold, fleeting, fast)?</li> <li>• Is handwriting used?</li> </ul>
<b>Shape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the shapes geometric (precise) or amorphous (shapeless, unstructured)?</li> <li>• How do shapes interact in the composition?</li> <li>• How is negative space (empty space around and between objects/forms) used?</li> </ul>
<b>Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well defined are the forms?</li> <li>• Are the forms rendered in 3D or are they semi-flat or flat (2D with minimal detail)?</li> <li>• Are forms angular or rounded?</li> <li>• How are shadows and light used (selectively or in a tailored or highly realistic way)?</li> </ul>
<b>Realism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where does the piece fall on the spectrum from highly realistic to highly simplified or abstract? (see <a href="#">"The Big Triangle" by Scott McCloud</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>Color</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What colors (hues) are used, and at what level of intensity (saturation)?</li> <li>• What emotions do the colors convey?</li> <li>• Is color used symbolically?</li> <li>• What overall mood does the palette create?</li> </ul>
<b>Value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is value (lightness and darkness of color) used?</li> <li>• How does value impact the mood or composition?</li> <li>• Is contrast used to convey meaning?</li> </ul>
<b>Texture and pattern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the sense of touch used and/or is a design element repeated?</li> <li>• How does texture support or undermine the shapes or forms?</li> <li>• What feeling or meaning does the pattern convey?</li> <li>• How do texture and/or pattern impact the composition?</li> </ul>
<b>Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the placement of lines, shapes, forms, and color affect the image?</li> <li>• Is there a sense of depth?</li> <li>• What perspective is used (one-, two- or three-point or multipoint)?</li> </ul>
<b>Composition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is white space used?</li> <li>• How does the composition feel—e.g., lighthearted, bold, calm, somber, active, engineered, spacious, tense?</li> <li>• Is the composition designed to add any humor or irony?</li> </ul>
<b>Media and tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which medium was used, or is it a combination of media (multiple traditional methods, digital formats, or a traditional-digital hybrid)?</li> <li>• Which tools/resources were used, and how do those reinforce or add to the story?</li> </ul>

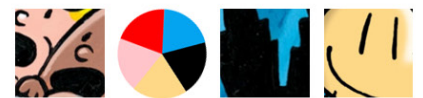
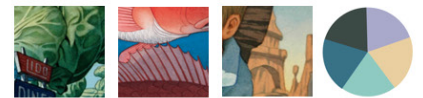
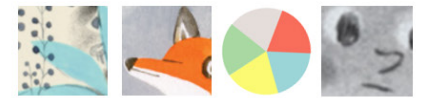
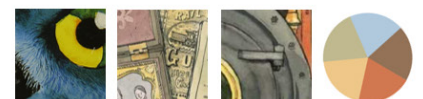
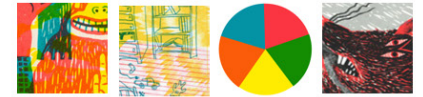
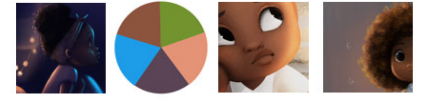
## Illustrator Matching Game

Are illustrators recognizable from mere snippets of style elements? See if you can match these illustrators to the details.

(Spoiler alert: The answer key is on the next page.)

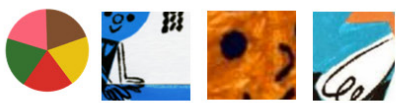
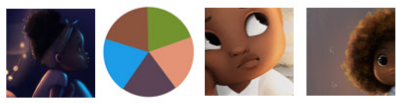
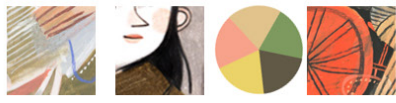
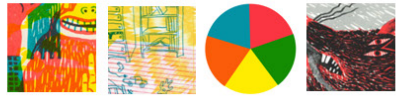



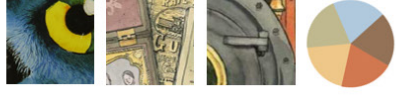


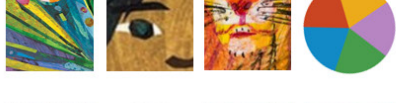
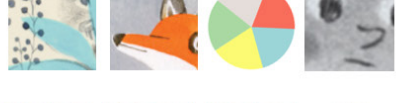

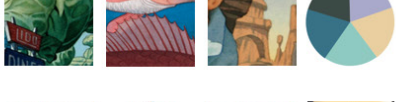
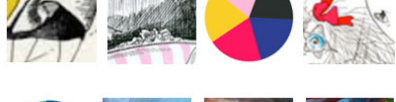

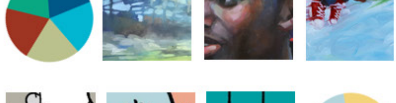





- a. Oliver Jeffers
- b. Isabelle Arsenault
- c. Dan Santat
- d. Dav Pilkey
- e. Jerry Pinkney
- f. Hilary Knight
- g. Eric Carle
- h. Jon Klassen
- i. Mo Willems
- j. Christian Robinson
- k. Rebecca Green
- l. Vashti Harrison
- m. Brian Floca
- n. Yuyi Morales
- o. LeUyen Pham
- p. JooHee Yoon
- q. David Wiesner
- r. Rafael López
- s. Raúl the Third
- t. Gordon C. James



# Illustrator Matching Game

## Answer Key

	j. Christian Robinson	l. Vashti Harrison	
	k. Rebecca Green	p. JooHee Yoon	
	c. Dan Santat	n. Yuyi Morales	
	e. Jerry Pinkney	m. Brian Floca	
	s. Raúl the Third	o. LeUyen Pham	
	g. Eric Carle	b. Isabelle Arsenault	
	h. Jon Klassen	q. David Wiesner	
	f. Hilary Knight	d. Dav Pilkey	
	t. Gordon C. James	r. Rafael López	
	i. Mo Willems	a. Oliver Jeffers	

//H//



## **Hone craft and learn about kidlit publishing from DVcon** *(free online recordings)*

DVcon YouTube channel, DiverseVoices, Inc.

"DVcon, a product of #DVPit, is a free, two-day virtual writers conference for self-identifying marginalized book creators. The mission of DVcon is to educate and connect authors & illustrators who have been historically underrepresented and marginalized in the book publishing industry." <https://www.youtube.com/c/DVconWritersCon>. For additional information, see <https://www.dvpit.com/dvcon>.

## **Try out poetry devices for your verse novel** *(free online blog post)*

Cordelia Jensen for the Highlights Foundation, "Auditioning Poetry Devices for Your Verse Novel's Voice"

"Opening up the poetry toolbox and finding the precise tools you need to create a dynamic voice for your narrative style is one of the most exciting aspects of writing verse novels ... Before you decide how you want your character to sound, take time to audition and experiment. Here are some ideas to get you started." <https://www.highlightsfoundation.org/17721/auditioning-poetry-devices-for-your-verse-novels-voice>

## **Learn how to listen for your creative voice** *(free podcast episode)*

Andy J. Pizza, "How to Hear Your Creative Voice and Trust It with Rebecca Green," Creative Pep Talk podcast

"Your creative voice isn't something you go OUT to find, it's something you go IN to find. In this special guest episode of Creative Pep Talk, we chat with incredible illustrator Rebecca Green about how to hear your ideas when you have them, storytelling and the struggle to own your strengths without having to do it all." <https://www.creativepeptalk.com/episodes/337>

## **Explore illustration styles from books published in 2020-2021** *(free online articles)*

Adolfo Córdova Ortiz, "Palabras Conocidas Otras Nunca Oidas—Selección de Libros Ilustrados 2021" (Known Words, Others Never Heard—Selection of Illustrated Books of 2021) and "Los Mejores Libros Ilustrados Que Leí en 2020" (The Best Picture Books I Read in 2020), Linternas y Bosques

"I go for books that are singular in the how and/or what, where we can find different ways of seeing, for example, a grandfather or grandmother (that family member who as we get older, makes us feel strange) or different ways of being a boy, girl or non-binary child that are seldom portrayed in books." *To read the articles in English, when the "Translate page from Spanish?" window pops up, verify that "Translate to" is set to "English," and click on "Translate" (rough translation)* <https://linternasybosques.com/2022/01/09/palabras-conocidas-otras-nunca-oidas-seleccion-de-libros-ilustrados-2021> and <https://linternasybosques.com/2021/01/09/los-mejores-libros-ilustrados-que-lei-en-2020>

## **Contextualize styles using realism, abstraction, and symbolism** *(free online article)*

Scott McCloud, "Big Triangle"

"In UNDERSTANDING COMICS, I was looking for a way to put all of comics' visual vocabulary (pictures, words, specialized symbols, etc.) into some kind of easily understood map of possibilities. Chapter Two's 'Big Triangle' was the result." <http://scottmccloud.com/4-inventions/triangle/index.html>. For additional information, see Scott McCloud's book, UNDERSTANDING COMICS: THE INVISIBLE ART (William Morrow Paperbacks, 1994).

## **Learn about challenges with translator recognition on book covers** *(free online article)*

Avery Fischer Udagawa, "Why Writers and Illustrators are Supporting #TranslatorsOnTheCover," SCBWI.

"Lack of crediting perpetuates a lack of awareness that feeds neglect of key working conditions ... For translators' rights to be honored, translators must be seen." <https://www.scbwi.org/why-writers-and-illustrators-are-supporting-translatorsonthecover>

## ONGOING

### **SCBWI regional events**

Various dates (*paid virtual events*)

Events with children's literature industry professionals from all around the world. <https://www.scbwi.org/regional-virtual-events/>

### **Virtual Spanish or bilingual (Spanish-English) critique group**

En Español: Online via Zoom, miércoles a las 5:30 p.m. CT (Maria J Cuesta coordina) (*free online event*)

Bilingüe: Online via Zoom en el primer sábado de cada mes a las 9 a.m. PT (Cynthia de la Torre y Nydia Armendia Sánchez coordinan) (*free online event*). <https://mailchi.mp/fa23d522814d/la-cometa-n-13545187> (*La Cometa* issue number 56)

## APRIL

### **Camp NaNoWriMo**

April 1-30, 2022 (*free online event; register to use tools/platform*)

For those familiar with NaNoWriMo, Camp NaNoWriMo uses a similar format, with writers setting their own creative goal for the month (for example, completing a novel rewrite). <https://nanowrimo.org/what-is-camp-nanowrimo>

### **African American Book Festival**

April 16, 2022, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (*free in-person event*)

The Virginia Business Expo Associates and Richmond Public Library are organizing Richmond's first annual African American Book Festival to give established and emerging African American authors a platform to spread the messages embedded in their iconography and educate, entertain, and impact the Richmond community through African American literature. <https://www.therichmondexperience.com/happenings/african-american-book-festival-event>

### **SCBWI Mid-Atlantic Spring Sketch Meet-Up in Alexandria, VA**

April 23, 2022, 2 to 5 p.m. (*free in-person event; register in advance*)

Meet at Windmill Hill Park (501 S Union St., Alexandria, VA 22314)

Plein air sketch event in Northern VA/Metro DC area. Bring a sketchbook and preferred materials (e.g., pens, paints, pencils). Cynthia Cliff will be the in-person POC; contact Tami Traylor with any questions. <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/events/spring-mid-atlantic-sketch-meet-ups-norva>

### **SCBWI Mid-Atlantic webinar, "The Key to a Better World is WE: The Power of Collaboration"**

April 26, 2022, 7 to 8 p.m. ET (*paid virtual event; register in advance*)

Writing team Irene Latham and Charles Waters (whose collaborations include CAN I TOUCH YOUR HAIR? POEMS OF RACE, MISTAKES, AND FRIENDSHIP) will share how to create and maintain a successful collaboration while remaining "Poetic Forever Friends." <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/events/the-key-to-a-better-word-is-we-the-power-of-collaboration>

### **SCBWI Mid-Atlantic Spring Peer Critique Event**

April 28, 2022, 6 to 9 p.m. ET (*free virtual event; register and submit pages in advance*)

Mid-Atlantic SCBWI critique coordinator Terry Jennings will host the critique event. Participants submit either the first 10 pages of a novel or a complete picture book manuscript. <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/events/spring-peer-critiques>

# GET CONNECTED (*continued*)



## APRIL (*continued*)

### **SCBWI Mid-Atlantic Spring Sketch Meet-Up in Richmond, VA**

April 30, 2022, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET (*free in-person event for SCBWI members, register in advance*)

Meet at Maymont Park (1000 Westover Road, Richmond, VA 23220)

Plein air sketch event in the Richmond area. Bring a sketchbook and preferred materials (e.g., pens, paints, pencils). Tami Traylor is the POC for in-person logistics and any questions. <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/events/spring-mid-atlantic-sketch-meet-ups-rva>

### **SCBWI Mid-Atlantic Spring Sketch Meet-Up in Norfolk, VA**

April 30, 2022, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET (*free in-person event for SCBWI members, register in advance*)

Meet at the Norfolk Pagoda & Oriental Garden (265 W Tazewell St., Norfolk, VA 23510)

Plein air sketch event in the Tidewater area. Bring a sketchbook and preferred materials (e.g., pens, paints, pencils). Lisa Anderson will be the in-person POC; contact Tami Traylor with any questions. <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/events/spring-mid-atlantic-sketch-meet-ups-tidewater>

## MAY

### **Literary Hill Bookfest**

May 1, 2022 (*free in-person event*)

This festival celebrates the literary culture of DC's Capitol Hill area. The program features authors across adult and children's literature, and activities like a community-penned poem, origami, and panel discussions (a poetry open mic will be held at Tunnick's Tavern following the event). <https://www.literaryhillbookfest.org>

### **Central VA Write-in for SCBWI Members**

May 3, 2022, 1 to 3 p.m. (*free virtual event; register in advance*)

Chris Bailey is hosting this co-working virtual event for SCBWI members in central Virginia. Participants will connect and share their writing or illustrating goals for the day and then do two 30-minute timed work sprints, checking in as a group between sessions. <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/events/central-va-write-in-4>

### **Gaithersburg Book Festival**

May 21, 2022, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (*free in-person event*)

The festival celebrates the written word and its power to enrich the human experience to foster interest in reading, writing and literary conversation. In the Children's Village, award-winning children's and YA authors will speak about their recent books and what inspires them. Presentations will be posted on the festival's YouTube channel through the month of May. <https://www.gaithersburgbookfestival.org/gaithersburg-book-festival-2022-live-in-person>

## JUNE

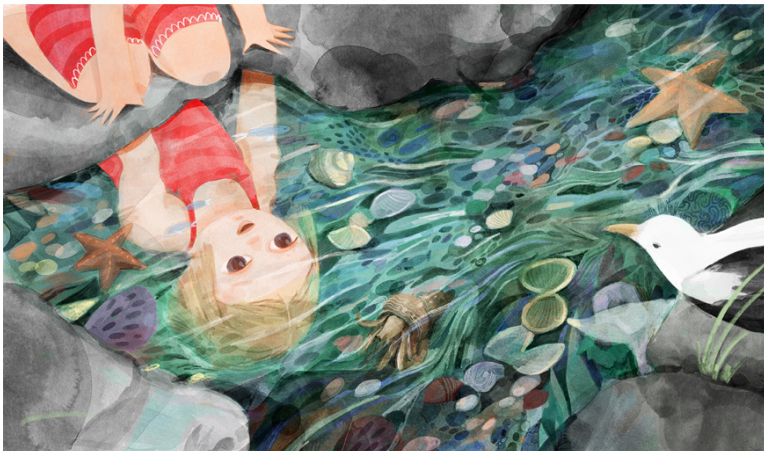
### **Central VA Write-in for SCBWI Members**

June 7, 2022, 1 to 2:30 p.m. (*free virtual event; register in advance*)

Chris Bailey is hosting this co-working virtual event for SCBWI members in central Virginia. Participants will connect and share their writing or illustrating goals for the day and then do two 30-minute timed work sprints, checking in as a group between sessions. <https://midatlantic.scbwi.org/events/central-va-write-in-5>



# MOOD BOARD



ANNIE BOWLER

No one's sure who held her first.  
 Things got bad. Then things got worse.  
 She was tiny. She was cute.  
 She was also quite a brute.

- Excerpt from FEROCIOUS FLUFFITY: A MIGHTY BITE-Y CLASS PET by Erica S. Perl (Author), Abrams Books for Young Readers (2016)

## Make Your Muse

(paper bag puppet)

- 1 paper bag
- Materials to decorate

### Steps:

1. Combine.
2. Play!



YEN MOOI



“Mail this card right away to receive your free ants! Watch them work! Watch them play! Watch them eat! Live ants!”

Truman mailed his card right away. Oh, boy. Live ants! Live ants for his very own!

But he didn't get ants. He got *aunts*.

- Excerpt from TRUMAN'S AUNT FARM by Jama Kim Rattigan (Author), Clarion Books (1996)



MIKE PAUL