

SCBWI



S O C I A L

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2020 / ISSUE 4



Art by: Steve Bjorkman – [stevebjorkman.com](http://stevebjorkman.com)

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**LOCAL ARTISTS FEATURED ON EVERY PAGE! Tap on any illustration for more info**

# Rebekah **LOWELL** Contest Volunteer for Writer and Illustrator Day

By E.L. Tenenbaum

Below are excerpts from a phone interview with librarian, artist, and writer Rebekah Lowell. For more about Rebekah and her work visit [rebekahlowell.com](http://rebekahlowell.com)

Rebekah has been a member of SCBWI since 2014 and, in addition to attending conferences, now leads a monthly critique group. She credits her experiences with SCBWI, coupled with a mentorship won through SCBWI and working on her MFA, as bringing her to the right place professionally to land an agent. Rebekah's love of kidlit goes all the way back to her local library, where the librarians left a lasting impression on a wide-eyed little girl...

**"I always had in the back of my mind that I loved the role of children's librarian; thought one day I might land there . . . I've always loved the librarians at MacArthur, and it's where I went as a kid. So I used to run up the stairs, five years old, (and) dive into the room full of books. I loved going there; was just in awe of the shelves. I loved the way the books smelled, loved talking to librarians, loved seeing what they had that was new."**

Years later, while she was working through an MFA program, Rebekah visited the library one day, to catch up with her long-time librarian, Cathy. As Rebekah talked about her work and what she was up to, Cathy asked if she wanted a job. The answer: YES! Even though she was supposed to start as a sub, Rebekah immediately landed a part time job.

To Rebekah, one of the best parts of being a children's librarian is being able to share what she loves so much about books with readers, and pairing kids with books according to their tastes. She's particularly fond of writing up cards for "librarian's pick," which are tucked into the pages of recommended reads.

On the publishing side of things, Rebekah was an artist before becoming a writer. In addition to fine art, she's also an illustrator and designer, having recently picked up surface pattern

design.

A great benefit of being both a writer and an artist is that she has a chance to change gears in between and doesn't feel as if she's just writing novel after novel without a break.

**"I have always drawn. I feel like I picked out pencils as soon as I could. I had very, very encouraging parents. I was homeschooled, which created a lot of freedom and a lot of time for me to explore what I loved. My parents bought me oil paint; I think I was about seven . . . but my favorite thing was to watch these painting shows . . . and it was the biggest encouragement. My dad built me an easel; I still have it . . . so I really entered the world of art through oil painting and I always knew I wanted to go to art school. I had no plan B. Writing was there too, because I journaled a ton as a kid and as a young adult, and even now. Journaling was sort of how I entered the world of writing—just stream of consciousness, dump all your thoughts, and just pages and pages of journals—and then I stumbled into novels in verse and didn't even realize what I was writing. It was amazing. This is how I write. I write in poetry. I write in verse. But I didn't know novels in verse was a thing until I started writing mine."**

Rebekah reads the types of books she likes to write, like novels in verse and nature-oriented picture books, but has a particular love for books about resiliency and springing back. At times, she finds stories may be wrapped up too easily, and things may seem neater than they are in real life, but she believes many writers and publishers really take good care of their books and that everyone really tries to do the best they can.

Rebekah's upcoming novel, *The Road to After* (Nancy Paulsen Books/Penguin Random House, Spring 2022), is a middle grade novel in verse but, like her style of writing, she didn't always think



about writing for older readers.

**"I've always wanted to write and illustrate picture books. That marriage of picture and word, that unity of one completing the other, is what I love about picture books, because it's not redundancy. It's not like the words are showing you what the pictures show you...and it's a complete art form when you have the two that are complementing each other. So I always wanted to write and illustrate, and I had no idea I'd ever write a novel."**

Rebekah estimates that she must be closing in on about thirty revisions of her novel (including the art and cover design she's doing for it as well), including the numerous ones before landing an agent and the current "ping-ponging" with her editor. One thing she's learned is that an author has to learn how to let go of certain parts and how to be flexible, to dive into revisions so the book can be the best it can be.

*The Road to After* is a book about recovering from domestic abuse and was written from a place of personal experience. The story isn't specifically based on Rebekah's own terrible experiences, but has given her what she sees as "that voice" to write such a book. Most importantly, even though there aren't many books about this topic—and she certainly hopes most kids can't relate to it—there are too many kids that deal with a lot. Rebekah wants them to feel that they're seen, in addition to helping kids recovering from all sorts of trauma.

**"Because the book isn't necessarily about being in trauma—it's about trying to rebuild your life after something difficult—I'm hoping that that story is universal enough that kids who have been through any form of trauma can take something from it and feel like there's hope. That's the heart of my book, is that there's hope. There is life after something difficult and that you are strong enough to move**

**on, and that you can pick yourself back up and that others can pick you back up. It's not just being on your own."**

Rebekah considered not ending the book on as hopeful a note as it's currently headed toward because, in truth, there's always a part that doesn't feel safe even years after the traumatic occurrence. However, she recognizes that books for children need a more secure ending and a clear sense of hope.

She doesn't know what will be once the book hits shelves—the individual who abused her is still out there—but she also specifically chose not to write under a pen name. A pen name made her feel that she was still hiding and she doesn't want to hide anymore. Writing the story under her own name is her way of taking things back.



# Adventures in SELF-PUBLISHING

By Russ Thompson

**I began writing five years ago after retiring from a career as a reading teacher and high school principal. I wasn't having any luck finding an agent, and I wasn't getting any younger, so I decided last spring to self-publish.**

**I recently put out two easy-to-read novels for teens who are reluctant readers. I feel good about the books, and more are on the way. This is how I did it.**

**I joined organizations** to learn more about writing. SCBWI has been invaluable. The Southern California Writers Association ([www.southerncalwriters.org](http://www.southerncalwriters.org)) and the California Writers Club of Long Beach ([www.calwriterslongbeach.org](http://www.calwriterslongbeach.org)) have also been beneficial. I have made many good friends and gained a lot of writing knowledge through these groups.

**I attended conferences and participated in workshops** to improve my writing skills. The Southern California Writers Conference ([www.writersconference.com](http://www.writersconference.com)), Novel Intensive ([www.novelintensive.com](http://www.novelintensive.com)), and Master Class ([www.masterclass.com](http://www.masterclass.com)) have been very helpful.

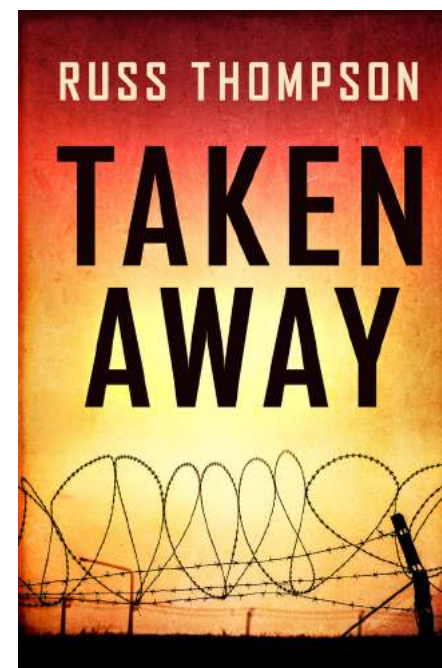
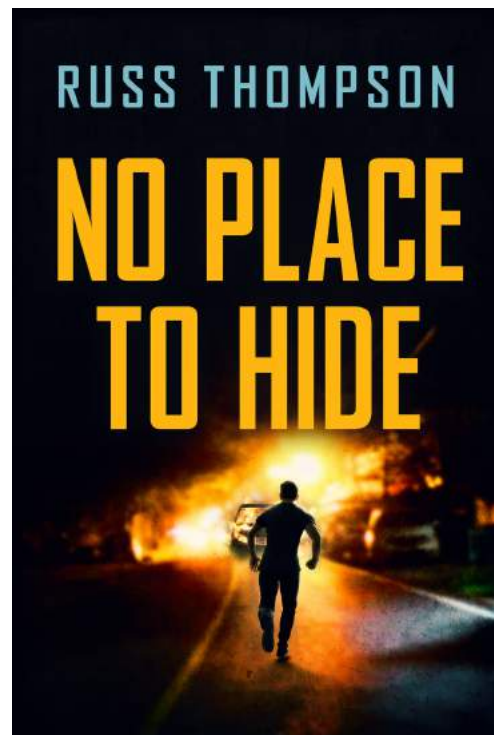
**I began reading widely in craft books.** Some of the best have been THE WRITER'S JOURNEY, by Christopher Vogler, STORY GENIUS, by Lisa Cron, SAVE THE CAT, by Blake Snyder, THE ANATOMY OF STORY, by John Truby, and STORY ENGINEERING, by Larry Brooks.

**I started reading more** young-adult fiction, literary novels, and thrillers. I also began watching Disney and Pixar animated movies to understand more about story structure.

**I participate in monthly and weekly critique groups** through SCBWI SoCal and the Coffee House Writers Group ([www.chwritersgroup.org](http://www.chwritersgroup.org)). When I meet with these groups, I listen and consider all of the feedback carefully. I also get honest feedback from my wife. She's not a writer, but she sees things that I don't see. I couldn't do what I'm doing without her.

**I found two books on self-publishing** that have helped me. HOW TO SELF-PUBLISH AND MARKET A CHILDREN'S BOOK, by Karen Inglis, provides a big-picture overview of the self-publishing process. SELF-PUBLISHING ON AMAZON, by Dr. Andy Williams, provides good information on the nuts and bolts of self-publishing.

**I made the decision to get help from professional editors,** Laura Perkins ([www.lauraperkinsediting.com](http://www.lauraperkinsediting.com)) and Pam Sheppard ([www.linkedin.com/in/pamsheppardedits/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/pamsheppardedits/)). I met them at conferences I attended. Their feedback has helped me improve my books. More important, their suggestions have helped me improve as a writer.



**I decided to have my book covers designed** by a professional cover artist (Shayne at [www.wickedgoodbookcovers.com](http://www.wickedgoodbookcovers.com)). I found her by identifying existing book covers that appealed to me. I got her name from the copyright pages.

**For marketing,** I developed a website using Wix ([www.russthompsonbooks.com](http://www.russthompsonbooks.com)). I have also become active on social media. When my third book is released, I will send emails to English-department chairpersons at middle and high schools. I will emphasize that the books will help reluctant readers. I will also point out that students can read the books on their smartphones via the Kindle App.

One of my primary goals during my time as an educator was to help students improve their reading skills. I am now moving forward to continue helping kids as a writer. I believe that self-publishing has been the right choice for me.

**Russ Thompson** is a retired reading teacher and high-school principal. He spent most of his career in Los Angeles and has a doctorate in education from UCLA. He and his wife of 38 years live in Long Beach. His books may be found at [www.russthompsonbooks.com](http://www.russthompsonbooks.com).



Art by Chuck Grieb - [chuckgrieb.com](http://chuckgrieb.com)



# Social Distance CHARACTERS

By E.L. Tenenbaum

## At Least We Needn't Social Distance Our Characters, Right?

Here's something about being a writer, while everyone else is learning how to social distance from friends, colleagues, and other people populating daily life, writers still get to spend as much time as they want with the people who are always in their lives. I mean, writers don't have to social distance from their characters, do we? Moreover, we love it when characters surprise us in new and unexpected ways! We love their perspectives, their grit, their spontaneity, their effortless charm. But what if a character isn't behaving as it should? What if it's too tricky to figure out, playing hard to get, or the like? If that's the case, some social distancing may be in order.

Below, some tips from the medical field to apply in getting a grip on challenging characters.

### WASH YOUR HANDS OF THEM!

Maybe you've got a character that's really challenging you, maybe you've got a character with whom you just don't click. If so, ask yourself this, what would happen if you'd wash your hands of that character? What if you removed it from the story completely? How much of a difference would that make?

If the character leaves a gaping hole in its wake, then some retooling of the character is probably in order. What does this character do or add to the story that mandates its inclusion? Once you know that answer, think about the vitals of its role and then build up the character from there, starting from the basics.

Conversely, if other characters can pick up the slack that character leaves behind, then maybe that character shouldn't be in your story. If you didn't like the character anyway, then it's an easy scrub. If there's something about the character that still appeals to you, consider what would



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happen if you set it in a different story...

### MANDATORY QUARANTINE

If a character is challenging, tricky to pin down, even boring or just not feeling fully fleshed out, maybe you need to discover more about them. One way to do that is through isolation.

If your character was quarantined, who would notice? Who would care? Whose life would be different, better, less? Would they be quarantined with anyone else, children, help, spouse, parents, apartment mate, pets, frenemy? Is your character well-stocked and prepared for all the time away from others? What would your character do during quarantine time? If the character simply goes about its business, working, eating, sleeping, that's a pretty good clue it's not developed enough and might not catch a reader's eye. Consider, would quarantine lead it to trouble? World takeover plans or arts-n-crafts? Maybe it needs the silence for self-discovery, maybe it learns that no man is or should be an island.

Envisioning this sort of scenario, much as the scenario itself, forces a character to reveal hidden or unthought-of traits.

### FEELING SICK? STAY AWAY!

If you're getting a headache trying to figure out a character, maybe you need a little break. Instead of stressing, gain some distance, either by putting the story aside for a while or trying to approach it from a new angle. It might even help to view your character through the eyes of other characters in your story. What are their perceptions, conclusions, attitudes toward the character? Are they correct or does your character's behaviors/speech/mannerisms/etc. need to be tweaked to better implement your vision for it?

### KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Similar to the above, if a character's giving you a

hard time, you might be spending too much time with it. Maybe you're giving it more attention than it deserves or you could be allowing it to grab too much attention from other characters in the story. Either a break or some sort of separation may be necessary to ensure you're crafting the best you can. Take a step back from your character and view it from all angles. Don't get possessive about little quirks and details you really like but that have no place in the progression of your story. Don't hesitate to change a part you love if you know a change will be better for your story overall.

### NO HUGS PLEASE

In many ways, characters are like accomplices in getting your story told. However, no matter how much time you spend together, remember this is a professional relationship. Business always comes first!

Vital as they are, each character is only one part of a greater story. Sometimes, it's best to consider your work in terms of what you're trying to say and then change or craft your characters accordingly.

Remember, they're not calling the shots, you are.

**E. L. Tenenbaum** is the author of multiple Young Adults novels and co-host of the *Oh My Word!* podcast. She enjoys speaking to middle/high school students about how writers think and develop stories, and how the lessons of life and writing are a two-way street. Take a book off the shelf at [www.ELTenenbaum.com](http://www.ELTenenbaum.com) or find her on Twitter/Instagram @ELTenenbaum.

# Is It Ready For SUBMISSION?

By Ilana Rogel-Wieder

You wrote your masterpiece. Your family and friends love it. Your critique group loves it! But, is it truly ready for submission? The first impression you make with an editor or an agent is a lasting one. Few publishers will accept re-submissions so you want to make sure you present your best work possible.

This summer, I was grateful to have a consultation with Harold Underdown, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide To Publishing Children's Books*. As part of our consultation, I was to submit 10 pages of my work for his feedback. I submitted what I thought were two of my very best, polished, PB manuscripts. After all, I revised them a couple of times already. My critique group loved them, my family loved them. I was sure Mr. Underdown would love them as well.

Eagerly, I awaited my meeting with him. In the weeks leading up to our meeting, I would fantasize that he would love my manuscripts so much, he would refer me to the right agent or editor to have these blue-ribbon manuscripts published into a picture book immediately.

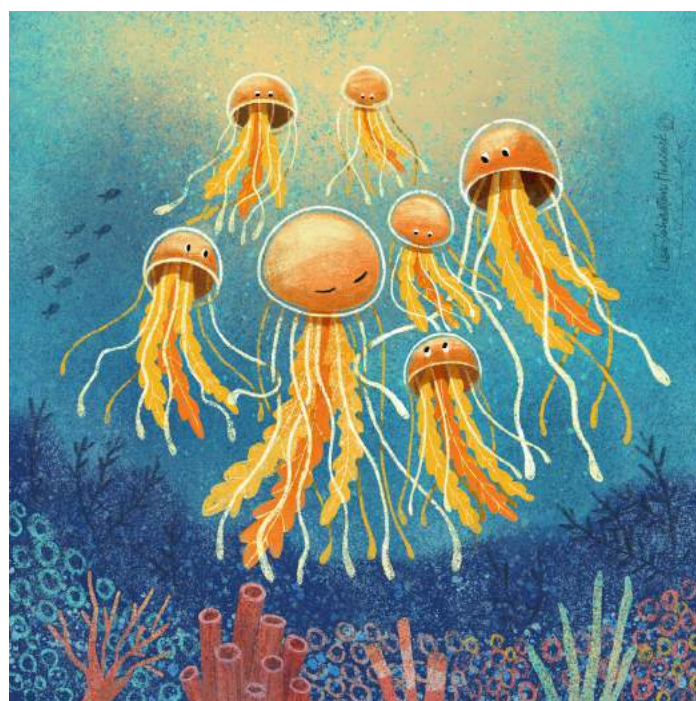
In reality, his comment was "It's not quite ready for submissions" and in his feedback, he gave me

some eye-opening pointers that I would never have thought of, but that made perfect sense.

So, how do you know when your manuscript is ready for submissions? In his book, *The Complete Idiot's Guide To Publishing Children's Books*, Underdown recommends the following: First, read your own work aloud to determine if there are any awkward sentences or missing transitions. It's also a good idea to have someone else read your work while you make notes on it.

Next, read to your family and friends but include a response sheet they can fill out. This way, instead of your loved ones showering you with compliments, they can focus on specific questions they need to answer: 1. Did you feel any emotions? What emotions did you feel? 2. What do you like best about this story? What do you like least? 3. Any word choices you think could be different? 4. What age group do you think would enjoy this book and why?

By providing these types of questions, you reduce the likelihood of family and friends complimenting you because they love you and don't want to offend you. Specific questions also increase your chances of getting detailed feedback that you



Art by: Lisa Johnson Hancock - [lisajohnstonhancock.com](http://lisajohnstonhancock.com)



Lisa Johnson Hancock



can use to improve your story.

Underdown suggests to join a local critique group where you can share valuable feedback with other writers. However, he notes that finding the right critique group might take a while. If the group is too supportive, everyone will feel great about their writing but won't know how to improve it. However, if the group is too nit-picky, the members won't know where they stand. His advice is to seek for a balance in the critique group. My advice is to have the group answer some of the above suggested questions for family and friends.

It's always a bit "personal" when you share your writing and open yourself up to criticism. Whether we're writing from the heart or from the head, whether we strive to educate or to entertain, our creativity is on public display as soon as it is published. After all, when we finally see our name on the front cover of a book, we're sharing our talent with the world and opening ourselves up to

criticism on a much grander scale.

After you've done all your work, it's a good idea to seek professional advice from someone you trust and someone you've researched and know is honest and reliable. A good writing consultant can provide the insight and detailed criticism that will most improve your writing.

Don't rush to submit your story. A couple of rewrites is not enough. Be patient and submit only after several critiques and rewrites. When a publisher chooses your work, there will be several more drafts to go through so being flexible is key. With each manuscript you write, with each critique you receive, you will learn more and be able to ascertain when your manuscript is ready for submission.

I look forward to seeing the published work of my fellow SCBWI members not just in bookstores, but on the bookshelves in my own home.

**Ilana Rogel-Wieder** is a storyteller. She loves writing plays, poems, and children's stories as well as directing plays and editing videos. She enjoys spending time with her family and practicing yoga. She can be reached on Instagram: [@ilana\\_rw](https://www.instagram.com/ilana_rw) and Twitter: [@ilanaRW1](https://twitter.com/ilanaRW1)



Art by: Barbara Kolberg - [barbarakolberg.com](http://barbarakolberg.com)

# Strike While THE IRON IS HOT

By Ilana Rogel-Wieder

I always wondered about the saying "Strike while the iron is hot," and what it meant for me in my life. As I listened to Jane Yolen's interview during the Summer Spectacular, I heard her speak about her muse and wondered if my muse would ever speak to me as well.

Some days when I'm writing, the words just flow onto the page. Other days, there are so many distractions clouding my mind, that even if I follow Jane Yolen's advice of B.I.C. , and put my Butt In Chair, I can't hear my muse. I slam my iPad shut after sitting for a long while and writing just one line.

And then it happened! My muse whispered a spoken-word poem, with rhythm, rhyme and flowing lyricisms like an adagio section of a symphony.

This happened shortly after a phone conversation with a friend who mentioned that she's open to accepting original pieces for her theatre performance, and to let her know in the next two weeks if I come up with something

I was in the midst of writing a new children's play and took a break to walk my dog. As my dog was sniffing the grass, my muse began to sing. It was then that I knew the play would have to wait and I needed to heed the call of my muse.

When I plopped down on my couch and began to type, the lyrics found their way onto the screen in front of me, almost effortlessly. Everything else disappeared from sight or sound. My family members walked in and out of the room, talking, having lively conversations. To me, they were mumbles in the background. I was in the world of my muse.



Art by: Hannah Sease - [hannahsease.com](http://hannahsease.com)

I sent my poem to my friend the next day, and I got a response with a link: A call for storytellers to share their stories in an exclusive Storytelling Slam and a Playwright Slam to be streamed through Broadway on Demand. This was not the theater piece my friend was speaking of. I looked at the submission deadline: it was due in two days. "The odds are slim," I thought, "Hundreds of people are submitting! Only eight will be chosen." And then my muse whispered that well-known saying, "Strike while the iron is hot." I submitted my spoken-word poem and a reading of the play I was working on as well. Within weeks, I discovered BOTH were chosen to be featured on the two different slam productions on BOD!

After the performance of my original work was featured on Broadway On Demand, I pondered: what if I had waited? My friend said she needed something within two weeks and I sent something her way the very next day! If I had waited even one week, the deadline for submissions would have, long past.



I realized how much this saying played an important role in my life. My muse will whisper to me when I'm ready to listen, when the distractions fade away. Sometimes, when the writing doesn't flow as smoothly, I must keep "striking the iron" until it gets hot. Until the words do begin to flow. And when the iron is hot, I must not delay. My "big break" is yet to come, but as Raul The Third mentioned during the Summer Spectacular interviews, always find opportunities to say "yes." Saying "yes" to my friend's theatrical project and saying "yes" to the seemingly arbitrary email that called for storyteller submissions changed my life. I will keep this lesson in my heart. For I know that it's those small changes that happen with each strike of the iron which will eventually create space for the bigger opportunities as they arrive.

**Ilana Rogel-Wieder** received her MFA in Theatre Arts from UC, Davis and studied at the St. Petersburg Theatre Arts Academy in Russia. Ilana worked as a motion capture actress in L.A. for over 10 years, appearing in numerous children's TV shows like BRATZ and STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE and performing in her own original One-Woman stage show called, "Drunk with Russian Love". Currently, Ilana enjoys directing plays as well as writing screen and stage plays, poetry, and children's books.



Art by Irina Mirskaya - [irinamirskaya.com](http://irinamirskaya.com)

# Contest Winners

## QUESTIONNAIRE

By E.L. Tenenbaum

Congrats to the winners and runner ups of this year's Writer Illustrator Day!

### PICTURE BOOKS

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Runner Up Scott Sussman, *My Best Friend, Whale*

**Member of SCBWI Since:** 2009

**A favorite book and a reason why:** *Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick for the voice, the humor, and its example of flawless story telling

**Secret writing indulgence motivator:** The cathartic, quiet time alone with my imagination.  
**In short, what creatively inspires you the most?:** The idea that I can enrich children's minds with positive life messages and encouraging words while hopefully making their worlds a little more wonderful.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> First Place Moni Ritchie Hadley, *Zan Loves D*

**A favorite book and a reason why:** *Baby Monkey, Private Eye*. I love this kids' book because of the unusual chapter-book format. It's a big hunk of a book, almost 200 pages, with sparse text for early readers—a real I'm a grown-up kid feeling book!

**Secret writing indulgence motivator:** Classes, webinars, and podcasts! In short, what creatively inspires you the most? Kids' conversations and a new pile of picture books!

### MIDDLE GRADE

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Runner Up Desi St. Amant, *In the Middle of the Sea*

**Member of SCBWI Since:** 2018

**A favorite book and a reason why:** From my childhood: *The Babysitter's Club Series* by Ann M. Martin. It got me through some rough and lonely middle school years and took me to a place where I could experience friendship vicariously through the characters.



**Secret writing indulgence motivator:** Just a simple, quiet satisfaction that I wrote a little that day. In short, what creatively inspires you the most? Music (especially LoFi beats) and going on long runs—I brainstorm ideas, scenes, and plot development to ignore the pain, lol.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> First Place Jennifer Parsons, *The Originals*

**Member of SCBWI Since:** February 2018

**A favorite book and a reason why:** *Rain Reign* by Ann M. Martin. The main character makes an excruciatingly (excuse my adverb) painful, but moral choice. The author finds humor in an otherwise bleak situation, and loads of heart. And, our hero, falling somewhere on the high-functioning spectrum, has an obsession with homonyms—which is just clever and fun.

**Secret writing indulgence motivator:** It used to be a nonfat latte, but lately, it is simply to find the time—a quiet time—all to myself where I can listen to my own thoughts. But some days I just have to struggle through the noise of work and family and ready my five pages to meet my SCBWI critique group's Friday deadline. Truth is, that is just about my best motivator. In short, what creatively inspires you the most? I would say a young, analytical mind because there is still so much to discover and make sense of. Stories of resilience and overcoming. And, of course, my cats are a constant inspiration.

### YOUNG ADULT

#### 1<sup>st</sup> First Place Heather Inch-Desuta, *Zero-Love*

**Member of SCBWI Since:** 2007

**A favorite book and a reason why:** *Efren Divided*. Efren and his family opened my eyes to immigration in a way that no one else had done.

**Secret writing indulgence motivator:** Being in nature

More Next Page!

# Contest Winners

## QUESTIONNAIRE

By E.L. Tenenbaum

### PORTFOLIO CONTEST

#### 2nd Runner Up Susi Schaefer

Member of SCBWI Since: 2013

**A favorite book and a reason why:** A Little Space For Me by Jennifer Gray Olson. It is beautiful, clever, and very timely. Secret writing indulgence motivator: That early morning cup of coffee when the house is still quiet.

**In short, what creatively inspires you the most?** Reading, daydreaming, children, animals, and nature.



#### 1st First Place Shiho Pate

**A favorite book and a reason why:** This is so hard... Anything by 林 明子 (Akiko Hayashi). I grew up reading her books so part of why I like it is because of nostalgia. Her stories are about daily lives of Japanese kids and families. She is so good at depicting kid's emotions. **Secret writing indulgence motivator:** Daily goals and routines is my biggest motivation. It sounds boring but when I set a daily goal or weekly goal, I can make steps to achieve it. And motivation comes naturally.

**In short, what creatively inspires you the most?** Music. I listen to music a lot. I search on Spotify, have a dance party with my daughter, listen to music while I'm working etc. It's the best escape and source for my daydreaming. My daughter and I are really into 妖怪 (Yokai), Japanese monsters right now too.







Art by: Lisa Johnson Hancock - [lisajohnstonhancock.com](http://lisajohnstonhancock.com)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SoCal SCBWI extends a debt of gratitude to Maria T. Middleton, Pamela Martinez, Rebekah Lowell, and Erin Rivera for their generous support and contribution of time, talent, and expertise to the SoCal Author Illustrators Day 2020

## Maria T. Middleton

Art Director for Candlewick Press and Walker Books US

Maria T. Middleton, Art Director for both Candlewick Press and Walker Books US, brought not only her talent to the table in support of the SoCal SCBWI Authors Illustrators Day 2020, but also her belief that books make people better.



*Candlewick Press has operated as an independent children's publisher since 1992, and they publish the highest quality books for all ages, sustain a strong commitment to their authors and illustrators, and are the recipients of more than 2,000 awards and accolades.*

## Pamela Martinez

Youth Services Librarian at the AK Smiley Public Library in Redlands California



A.K. Smiley Public Library was built in 1889 thanks to the philanthropy of the Smiley twins, Albert and Alfred. A beautiful asset to the community still today, we are one of the jewels of Redlands, California. In 1920, Daniel Smiley, the half-brother of Albert & Alfred donated funds to the city to create a children's library, someplace that the children of the city could read, check out books and learn in an atmosphere of knowledge. We are visited by thousands of tourists each year who seek to study the Spanish Mission Architecture from days of old. A beautiful building, wonderful, dedicated staff and a city of readers keep us going. We invite everyone to visit our young readers room at <https://www.akspl.org/yrr/>

## Rebekah Lowell

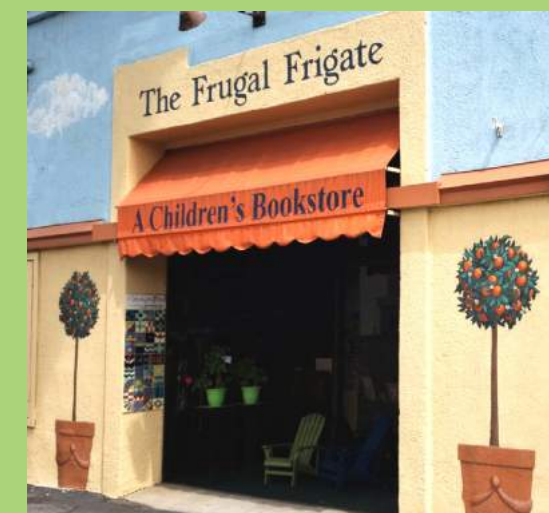
Librarian at the McArthur Library in Biddeford, Maine, and SCBWI member in the New England Region



McArthur Library is a public library that has served the community of Biddeford, Maine for more than 100 years in its current location, and has been a private non-profit organization for more than 75 years. McArthur offers community members access to a rich collection of print and audio titles as well as e-books for all ages. We offer DVDs, video games, music, newspapers, magazines, and a Recreation Collection that includes items as diverse as e-readers, snowshoes and lawn games. Those who work, live or study in Biddeford have free access to borrow all of these resources. Our Local History archival collection of printed material, maps, photographs, postcards and digitized content is treasured by researchers around the State and beyond.

## Erin Rivera

Owner of The Frugal Frigate, A Children's Bookstore Redlands, California



When the Frugal Frigate was built as a carriage house and pony stable in 1904, no one thought it would one day become a beloved community bookstore. And certainly not one with a name pieced from an Emily Dickinson poem.

Over a century later, the Frugal Frigate has entered its third decade as an iconic independent children's bookstore located in what's since become Historic Downtown Redlands. In addition to its rich history, the store is home to a marvelous selection of children's books (and will special order titles for adults), and features a separate non-fiction room, virtual storytimes, and build-a-friend workshops. Fun and unique stationary, journals, and gift items for lovers of the written word are also found on their shelves. Perhaps what's best of all is the amazing, personal attention offered by owner Erin Rivera.

For more, explore [www.frugalfrigate.com](http://www.frugalfrigate.com)



Art by Jon St.Amant - [jonsaintamant.com](http://jonsaintamant.com)

# SOCAL *Fall* MEMBER NEWS



**Irina Mirskaya's** watercolor art was used on the cover of a book, *My Piano Hands*, which was published by Outskirts Press.

Instagram: [@Irina.Art.Studio](https://www.instagram.com/Irina.Art.Studio)  
Facebook: [Irina-Art-Studio](https://www.facebook.com/Irina-Art-Studio)  
Website: [IrinaMirskaya.com](http://IrinaMirskaya.com)



**Julie Abe** has published a whimsical and enchanting new book, *Eva Evergreen, Semi-Magical Witch*, which was released on August 4th of this year by Little, Brown and Company.

Website: <https://www.julieabebooks.com/>



**Angela Shanté's** picture book, *The Noisy Classroom*, published by West Margin Press in May 2020, is now an award-winning book! American Book Fest Winner: Best Cover Design: Children's Books; American Book Fest Finalist: Children's Fiction.

Website: <https://www.angelashante.com/>

**Ilana Rogel-Wieder's** spoken word poem, "Unbound," was selected by AATE (American Alliance of Theatre Education) to be featured at their VISION 2020, which is streamed through Broadway On Demand! Also, a five minute reading of a children's play she wrote, called *Through A Magical Forest*, will be featured on their website.



Illustrator **Shiho Pate** was a featured artist on the SCBWI website! Go to <https://www.scbwi.org/illustrator-gallery/> to see her playful, bold style that combines gouache, watercolor and digital media.

Instagram: [@shihopate](https://www.instagram.com/shihopate)  
Twitter: [@shihopate.com](https://twitter.com/shihopate.com)  
Website: [shihopate.com](http://shihopate.com)



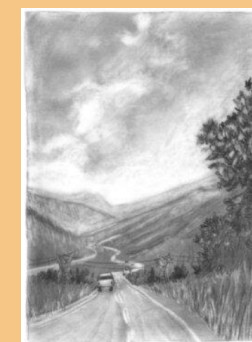
**Tim Burke** has a short story that will be published in the Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine, a monthly crime fiction magazine. "Mr. Jolly Gets His Jollies" will be featured in their January 2021 issue. It has been scheduled for the January/February 2021 issue of Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine, which goes on sale 12/15/20. He was also interviewed on the Oh My Word! Podcast (co-hosted by E.L. Tenenbaum).

Website: <https://www.timburketales.com>



**Linda Lee Rogers** recently released a children's rap song to coincide with her picture book, *When Grandma Comes to Play*.

Social Media: [@llrogersauthor](https://www.instagram.com/llrogersauthor)



**Rebekah Lowell** --a children's librarian at the McArthur Public Library in Maine, author/illustrator, and one of our SoCal SCBWI Conference volunteers--is debuting her first MG novel *The Road to After*. It will be published with Nancy Paulsen Books/Penguin Random House in the spring of 2022.

Website: <https://www.rebekahlowell.com/>

Author of the *Dead Is* series, **Marlene Perez**, has a new trilogy, starting with *THE AFTERLIFE OF THE PARTY*, in which a snarky teen must rescue her best friend from going on tour with a vampire band before she turns into a vamp herself, plus sequels *I'M WITH THE BANNED* and *A SUCKER FOR YOU* with Entangled Teen. *The Afterlife of the Party* comes out February 2021. Website: [www.marleneperez.com](http://www.marleneperez.com)

**More Member News Next Page!**



# SOCAL *Fall* MEMBER NEWS

Art by Jon St.Amant - [jonsaintamant.com](http://jonsaintamant.com)



**E.L. Tenenbaum** is the co-host of a podcast called Oh My Word! It explores books, musicals, films, and other interesting topics. In addition, this podcast has featured several SoCal chapter members. Check it out these episodes and more on your favorite podcast player app!

Website: <https://www.eltenenbaum.com/>

BONUS! Episode 10.5:

"The Importance of Being a Librarian" with Kelly Powers - May 21, 2020

BONUS! Episode 17.5:

"Octo-Parts of KidLit" with Scott Sussman - July 9, 2020

SPECIAL! Episode 2:

"The (Theme) Music Man" feat. Tim Burke - July 22, 2020

BONUS! Episode 19.5:

"Beyond the (Big) Break" with Heather Buchta - July 23, 2020

BONUS! Episode 20.5:

"The Large Impact of a Small Story" with Ernesto Cisneros - July 30, 2020

BONUS! Episode 21.5:

"What We Write in the Shadows" with Marlene Perez- August 6, 2020

BONUS! Episode 25.5:

"Licensed to Write" with Stacia Deutsch- September 3, 2020



**Desi St. Amant** is a high school English teacher and an aspiring middle grade novelist. **Send your member news** to her email at [dstamant07@gmail.com](mailto:dstamant07@gmail.com).



Art by: Cyndi Wojciechowski - [cwojo.com](http://cwojo.com)

## Ask the *Librarian* By Kelly Powers

Dear Mrs. Powers,

**"I like books that bring me into a world that's way different. I don't like things on "mars", but a planet that is made up is fine. Romance is good but I would also like the book to be focused on another thing like a goal or a war or even trying to find out something. :)"**

Thank you,  
Student

Dear Student,

I love books that bring me to another world too! Places so vivid, I can close my eyes and go there even long after I've finished the book. I think that's my favorite part about reading. Whether it's on a So Cal beach down the street from my house or to the multiverse, books help you travel without having to move at all, and here are some of my favorites:

**Graphic Novel series, *Amulet***, by Kazu Kibuishi - After the tragic death of their father, Emily and Navin move with their mother to the home of her deceased great-grandfather, but the strange house proves to be dangerous. Before long, a sinister creature lures the kids' mom through a door in the basement. Em and Navin, desperate not to lose her, follow her into an underground world inhabited by demons, robots, and talking animals. Together, they face the most terrifying monster of all, and Em finally has the chance to save someone she loves.

**Book series, *Everland***, by Wendy Spinale - London is a ruin, destroyed by German bombs, ravaged by the Horologia virus, and ruled by the ruthless Captain Hanz Otto Oswald Kretschmer, whose

Marauders search for and seize the children who are immune to the virus in the hope that their blood will produce a cure. Their latest victim is sixteen-year-old Gwen Darling's younger sister and Gwen will do anything to get her back. Even join up with Pete and his gang of Lost Boys living in a city hidden underground.

**Book series, *Mistborn***, by Brandon Sanderson - For a thousand years the ash fell and no flowers bloomed. For a thousand years, the Skaa slaved in misery and lived in fear. For a thousand years, the Lord Ruler reigned with absolute power and ultimate terror. Then, when hope was so long lost that not even its memory remained, a terribly scarred, imprisoned Mistborn, Kelsier, escaped. A brilliant thief and natural leader, he turned his talents to the ultimate caper, with the Lord Ruler himself as the mark.

Kelsier recruited the underworld's elite, all of whom relish a high-stakes challenge. But, even with the best criminal crew ever assembled, Kel's plan looks more like the ultimate long shot, until luck brings a ragged girl named Vin into his life. Vin has learned to expect betrayal from everyone she meets, and gotten it. She will have to learn to trust, if Kelsier is to help her master powers of which she never dreamed.



*back to school bear*

Art by: Cyndi Wojciechowski - [cwojo.com](http://cwojo.com)



# NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Art by: Hannah Sease – [hannahsease.com](http://hannahsease.com)

## This exciting writing opportunity for SCBWI members only was shared by Lin Oliver in the October 01, 2020 digital INSIGHT newsletter

Godwin Books, an imprint of MacMillan Publishers has offered the SCBWI a book contract for a new childrens' trade book of scary stories. They are putting together a collection of fifty-one short stories that are to represent each of the fifty U.S. states along with Puerto Rico in a book called **THE HAUNTED STATES OF AMERICA**.

Whether infamous or unheard of, based in fact or in local lore, the stories are to be written exclusively by members of the SCBWI. This is to include authors from underrepresented communities with the goal of having diversity of authors, and the unique telling of the tales from both new and established authors. You are not required to live in the state you are writing about, but they are seeking authentic voices with an attachment to the region.

Submission opened the beginning of October, and the **deadline for submission is December 1, 2020**. The SCBWI will vet the stories and make their recommendations to the team at Godwin Books. Ultimately, the SCBWI will also be seeking an illustrator for the book.

## Each story should follow these guidelines

- Up to 1,300 words
- For middle-grade audience (9-12 years old)
- Inspired by local/regional events or myths
- Written by someone who has a personal connection to the state featured in their story, (i.e., lives in that state currently or previously lived there for at least three to five years)

For more details, remuneration, and other pertinent information, please see the **October 8, 2020 email from Lin Oliver**, SCBWI executive director and co-founder.

Please address any questions to Avery Silverberg at [averysilverberg@scbwi.org](mailto:averysilverberg@scbwi.org).

# New Bilingual Critique Group BEGINS in 2020

By Cynthia De La Torre

The idea of creating a bilingual (Spanish/English) critique group materialized in mid-July of 2020. One of our members, Nydia Armendia-Sanchez, approached me and asked if we had a bilingual critique group in the SoCal region. I asked around. When I learned that a bilingual critique group did not exist, I knew it was the perfect opportunity to create one.

Nydia and I met and strategized. We decided to hold the **meetings on the first Saturday of each month via zoom from 9 AM to 11 AM PT**. The group meeting would be conducted in English, but the manuscripts shared would be bilingual and/or from a Latinx/Hispanix experience. We were then joined by Marcela (aka Mace) Cespedes-Alicea, who has become a fantastic addition to the team, along with Malena F. Alzu, the SCBWI Spanish Language Coordinator, and many other SCBWI volunteers.

The bilingual critique group's first virtual meeting took place on September 5th. We had eight participants who shared manuscripts that included PB, MG, some YA, and even a graphic novel. There was some terrific feedback, and the meeting was a great success.

Participants indicated that it was a rewarding experience to read and share stories with characters who looked like them and shared their experiences. It was an opportunity that most of us, who are underrepresented in children's books, don't often get to enjoy.

We look forward to seeing this group grow, and as it does we plan to add breakout rooms—one for pb and the other for higher reading levels.

We encourage other bilingual members to join our group. More importantly, we encourage members from other chapters to create more groups like this in their regions.

We need diverse stories. Groups like this bring us one step closer to achieving the goal of creating and publishing diverse literature.



Art by: Cynthia De La Torre – [cynthiadelaTorre.com](http://cynthiadelaTorre.com)

# Grammar NERD

By Tim Burke

For this issue, I'm going to cover a variety of unrelated topics.

1. Most of us are unaware of this even though we see it every time we open a book. Do NOT indent the first line of a chapter or a new section.
2. Use italics rather than quotation marks to show direct inner thoughts. The use of italics indicates that the character is saying these exact words in his/her head.

Sedgewick watched the new substitute teacher struggle to get through the door into the classroom. *Oh, I'm going to chew you up and spit you out.* He chuckled at the thought.

You can also use italics if you write something like this:

*Oh, I'm going to chew you up and spit you out,* Sedgewick thought.

3. Do NOT use a question mark with an exclamation mark (despite the existence of the INTERROBANG). Often, the exclamation mark can imply the question.

**CORRECT:** How did you manage to finish all this! What in the world are you doing!  
**INCORRECT:** How did you manage to finish all this?! What in the world are you doing!?

Adding a question mark is considered substandard English. But use sparingly since your phrasing or use of certain words can suggest the excitement or surprise without the need for an exclamation mark. And, of course, use only one at a time!!!! (yes, I'm being facetious)

*An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke — F. Scott Fitzgerald*

4. A commonly misused idiom: by accident/on purpose possibly because of the correct expression "on purpose," we often hear people say "on accident."

**CORRECT:** I did it on purpose. I did it by accident.  
**INCORRECT:** I did it on accident.



5. REVIEW TOPIC: I'm still hearing daily mistakes with LIE/LAY. It's all explained in our Summer 2019 Newsletter issue. But here's a brief test (correct or not?):

- a) I saw a guy laying in the street.
- b) He told me he had laid there most of the night.
- c) I helped him up and sat him on the park bench, but he wanted to lay down again.
- d) I must have lain the book down in the other room.
- e) Laying like that will give you a stiff neck.
- f) She would have lain on the carpet for the whole morning if the phone hadn't rung.



Art by Wendy Grieb - [wendygrieb.com](http://wendygrieb.com)

## ANSWERS

- a) Lying    b) Lain    c) Lie    d) Laid    e) Lying    f) CORRECT

# Lit HUMOR

Collected By Tim Burke

## "JOKE 1"

I read an article that said that humans eat more bananas than monkeys... I was about to object, when I remembered that they're probably right... **I can't remember ever eating a monkey...**

## "JOKE 2"

A cop just knocked on my door and told me that my dogs were chasing people on bikes. What the heck?  
**My dogs don't even own bikes.**

## NEWSLETTER STAFF

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### PROOFREADER Christine Henderson

A two-time Author of the Month for her stories in Highlights magazine, Christine Henderson is currently revising her first middle grade novel. During the school year, Christine works as an instructional aide for the Corona-Norco school district. Twitter [@cm\\_henderson](https://twitter.com/cm_henderson).

### PROOFREADER Heather Inch-Desuta

Heather Inch-Desuta writes about everything from teenage problem stories to magical realism for the middle grade reader. In a prior life, Heather worked in advertising and non-profit management. She can be found on Twitter [@HLIInch1](https://twitter.com/HLIInch1)

### PROOFREADER AND TECH ADVISOR Niki Blois

Niki Blois is a YA writer who works in marketing and moonlights as an editor. She writes about witches, mermaids and traveling storytellers. Twitter [@nikiblois](https://twitter.com/nikiblois)

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