

SCBWI Montana

Summer Newsletter • June 2021



Cover Illustration by Montana Illustrator Amy Cory ©2020

SCBWI
SUMMER
CONFERENCE
THE

BIG FIVE-OH!
7/29-8/2, 2021
LIVE ON ZOOM

A CELEBRATION OF **SCBWI'S**
FIFTY-YEAR ANNIVERSARY



Regional Events

PRECIOUS MCKENZIE
REGIONAL ADVISOR, MONTANA

I hope you are doing well!

Our two-day virtual Spring Conference, "Bloom," was a tremendous success. We hosted extraordinary writers and an art director including Maria Middleton, Connie Van Hoven, Dorothy Patent, Sarah Albee, Tammi Sauer, Beth Bauman, Steven Dos Santos, and Stacie Ramey.

Attendees came from all over Montana, the US, Canada, and the UK!

The [BIG FIVE-OH SCBWI Summer Conference](https://www.scbwi.org/events/summer-conference-2021/) will be virtual this year. It is July 29 through August 2, 2021. Registration is open and there is a great lineup of presenters. Over fifty speakers covering fifty different topics! To register, visit <https://www.scbwi.org/events/summer-conference-2021/>.

Save the Date: Your Montana Regional Team is busy planning the Fall Virtual Conference, "Harvest." The Zoom event will take place on October 16 and 17, 2021.

There will be sessions featuring editors, agents, and a few of our very own Montana PAL members. Registration will open in July. Let's take those creative ideas that "bloomed" this spring to "harvest."

You can keep track of our regional events and upcoming webinars on our [Facebook page](#) and on [Instagram](#).

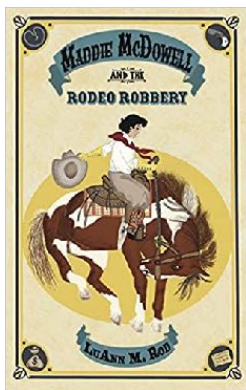
SCBWI Headquarters is also updating their website to include all of the webinars offered in the entire international organization. You will find the list here <https://www.scbwi.org/regional-webinars/>.

If you are a current SCBWI Montana member, we'd like to share your good news. If you had a kid-lit book published between 2020-2021, email me your brief bio, a two-sentence blurb about your book, and an image of your book's cover. We want to share your good news on social media (Facebook and Instagram). We have a lot of talented folks in Montana and it is time to celebrate you!

SCBWI Montana is still offering virtual critique groups ([email me](#) if you want to join one). We have at least one group in each larger city, ready to welcome new members.



Locally Produced Literature to Celebrate!

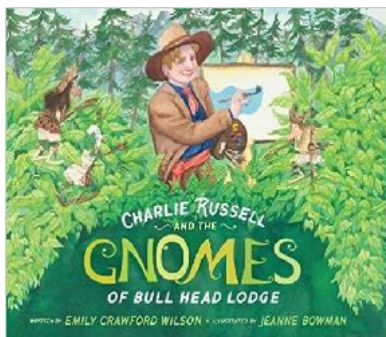
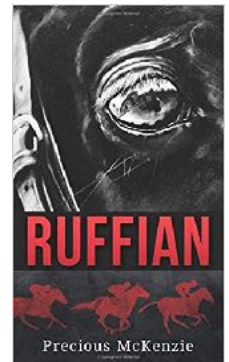


Maddie McDowell and the Rodeo Robbery

Chicken Scratch Books (with Kiri Jorgenson, SCBWI Montana's former Regional Advisor) (Instagram: @chickenscratchbooks, and Website: chickenscratchbooks.com) just published the middle grade novel, *Maddie McDowell and the Rodeo Robbery* written by one of our SCBWI Montana members, debut author LuAnn M. Rod, and illustrated (cover art and chapter headings) by our own Erika Wilson (Instagram @erikawilsonart and @windymillpress, Website: windymillpress.com). A good adventure/action story for 12-year-olds.

Ruffian: The Greatest Thoroughbred Filly

This wonderful race horse-themed novel published October 2020 by BeLu Books was written by our very own Precious McKenzie, Regional Advisor and author of over thirty published books for kids! Precious enjoys researching new topics and presenting materials in engaging ways for readers. She is a winner of the Purple Dragonfly Book Awards: Honorable Mention (Picture Books for Ages 6 and Over) for Cinder Yeti and is a Story Monsters Approved Award Winner for Excellence in Children's Literature in Picture Books (Ages 3-8) Fiction for Cinder Yeti. Website: <https://www.bealubooks.com/about/authors/>



Charlie Russell and the Gnomes of Bull Head Lodge

The historical fiction picture book *Charlie Russell and the Gnomes of Bull Head Lodge* written by Emily Crawford Wilson (Instagram: @ewilsart) and illustrated by our own regional illustrator, Jeanne Bowman jeannebowmanillustrates.com. It was published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press (Instagram: @sdhspress, Website: sdhspress.com) on April 6, 2021.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW: Heather Bode

BY JOANN HOWETH, ASSISTANT REGIONAL ADVISOR

For this newsletter's featured author interview, I am beyond thrilled to introduce my friend Heather Bode. Heather has cleverly used her writerly strengths (she likes a deadline, and she can whip out a nonfiction article in 500 words) and has found her success in the children's lit world writing for the magazine market.

Heather, tell us about yourself and how this happened for you:

I started thinking about writing for children when I was a young mother. I enrolled in my first writing course through The Institute of Children's Literature, and I remember (because back in those days, the courses were still

correspondence courses using good old-fashioned snail mail) bringing my course manual to the hospital when my daughter was born! She was my second child and I thought, because I am a GENIUS, that with a newborn and a 2-year-old...I'd have nothing to do with all my spare time. (That is all complete sarcasm!!!) I stayed at home, for the most part, while gradually adding more children to our family. (We have 5 total.) But I always had my hands in two areas: writing and education.

Where were you born and raised?

I am the middle child of 5. This probably explains much about my personality. I have three sisters and 1 brother. I was born in Wisconsin but was raised in Florida. I grew up in shorts and flip-flops. Our backyard had a grapefruit tree (I remember having so many grapefruits that we would save milk jugs, so we could freeze the fresh grapefruit juice by the gallon!) and an orange tree. Our neighbor had a massive mango tree. He would give us so many mangoes that I still cannot eat them. However, my own kids love them!

We lived just a couple of miles from the Atlantic Ocean, and I have many memories connected with water: beach days, swimming lessons, swimming pools, hurricanes, going to things like Sea Camp. I was an avid reader of *Ranger Rick* because my godmother always bought me a subscription. I was NOT an avid book reader. I think this love of magazines as a child set me on my path.

What is your educational background?

I have a degree in Elementary Education and am just now going back for my master's in curriculum and instruction. I took three writing courses through The Institute of Children's Literature because I could take them for college credit and use the credits to keep my teaching license current in the years when I was home with my kids.

You currently live in Helena. What brought you here?

We moved here in February of 2005. My husband, Gary, accepted a position as pastor of a Lutheran church in Helena. He had grown up in Washington and loved the west. Also, as it turns out, both of our fathers were born in Montana: mine in Butte and his in Terry.

Tell us about your family:

Husband: Gary
Ben: finishing first year of college and off to boot camp in June to train in firefighting
Aubrey: junior in high school
Brandon: 8th grade
Owen: 5th grade
Emily: 2nd grade

I know you have a day job:

Yes, I teach 3rd grade at Hawthorne Elementary. Apparently, when Central was torn down, we suddenly became the oldest school building in Helena! It's in the mansion district and is tucked back in the trees and beautiful architecture of the area. It is, in every sense of the word, a neighborhood school and I love watching the families gather each day. We say the pledge outside together and we also have a school pledge. I find it very uniting and unique to other places.

You've successfully broken into the children's magazine market. I think the SCBWI Blueboard launched you in that direction. What can you tell us about that?

I'm trying to remember...I think I first joined SCBWI after completing my first ICL course. My instructor encouraged me to join. The SCBWI (not sure if it was called the Blueboard back then), but there was a spot where editors would post their needs. This is where I found my first regular "gig" writing online teachers' guides for what is now Carus Publishing. It's the Cricket Magazine group.

I also started submitting magazine articles, and I think it must have been when my first article at *Highlights* was accepted that I found out about the Highlights Foundation Workshops. THOSE proved to be life-changing experiences for me! I have attended twice on scholarship. Unlike the SCBWI Conferences, these workshops are much smaller and focused. But I was able to meet with editors, publishers, and writers at all stages of their writing paths. We took a tour of the Highlights facility, which changed my whole perception of how publishing works.

Now, when I submit a manuscript, I have a mental picture of exactly where my manuscript is in the submission process

What are the challenges of writing for the magazine market?

I've often heard people complain about the length of time it takes to publish a picture book - even after acceptance. Magazines can work the same way! Themed magazines have lists that can be 2 years out. So you can submit, but publication is still quite some time off. At *Highlights*, they will accept and pay you, but then it goes into their massive file. Stress massive!

While most of my experience with them has seen my article out within a year, here's one crazy example. I wrote a story about the Yellowstone Trail and had it accepted in 2012. (This was before Emily was born.) The article just came out in the magazine last fall!! But, hey, it was ultimately published. Not all accepted articles are.

Another issue is you have a great idea, but it doesn't fit a theme. The magazine market also seems to be a bit volatile (in my opinion) and ever-changing as far as magazines closing, merging, and starting again.

Would you call yourself a storyteller or a fact disseminator?

I am a fact disseminator. I champion the “fast fact” that will stick in a child’s mind!

I know you like to write about nonfiction topics and that you are also gifted in being able to write “short.” What is it about your personality that lends itself to these two aspects?

Hmmm. I think teaching 8 and 9-year-olds gives me an excellent glimpse into the attention span and interest level of my readers. It’s always best to keep things short and entertaining for them! I think my own personal love of magazine reading helps.

I love to sit and read a magazine like *Real Simple* and get a quick tip for cleaning or organizing. (I am just an older and more wrinkly kid now.) I also don’t have a lot of down-time where I feel like I can dive into a novel. I do that in the summertime, but never during the school year.

I know you also write for the adult magazine market – which came first?

The children’s market came first, but at the original Highlights Foundation Workshop I attended, which focused on writing for the magazine market, we were taught to extend the life of our research by turning it into multiple children’s articles or by making the same article in two versions: one for adults and one for children.

They also suggested looking into regional publishers. This is what I did. For example, I was asked by my editor in Great Falls to interview Belinda Bullshoe. She was the first Indigenous woman to open New York’s Fashion Week. While I interviewed her for a story about her fashion show for Western Art Week in Great Falls, I also asked questions geared more toward her childhood. *Highlights*

accepted and published the children’s version of this interview while the adult version was published in *Portfolio*. (This is the magazine published strictly for Western Art Week.)

What is the most rewarding aspect of writing children’s lit for you?

I love writing high-interest material. I passionately believe all students will love to read - if they have something they’re interested in reading. Right now, I have a student who is deeply interested in dirigibles. We haven’t been able to find much written about them on his level. So that’s always a light-bulb moment for me! I should write about dirigibles!!

Also, when you are contacted asking for reprint rights because someone else wants to use your work, or turn it into testing material, or make it an e-book or something like that! It is validating to know other editors see your work as high interest for kids. AND seeing your name on a by-line never gets old.

Do you have a favorite part of each new project?

I love the research! I love interviewing also because of all the wonderful and colorful people I’ve gotten to meet!

Tell us a couple of your favorites:

- Nursery rhyme – “There was an old woman who lived in a shoe...”
(Ha! I know where that’s going!)
- Time of the day – Morning before everyone else is awake!
- Activity with kids – Hiking/exploring
- And without those darling children - Going out for a drink or out to eat
- Snack food - nuts

How do you feel about the revision process?

I am a firm believer of the “let it sit” approach - especially if it is a project I am submitting on my own versus being an editor’s request. Finish it. Put it away for a month. Pull it out and look again. Something I **should** do is revise, revise, revise, submit, layer with rejection letters, revise, revise, submit, layer and repeat!!

I think you’ve found a “sweet spot” of writing to assignment as well as freelancing. What are some of the topics you’ve written about - either assigned or proposed by you?

Oh my gosh - everything from restaurant reviews and architecture to ghost signs, video gaming, and hiking. My freelance ideas are usually tied to something I’ve done with my own kids or ideas I’ve gotten from them.

So your children and their age-related interests influence your selection of topics?

Absolutely!

How many articles do you write a year?

This is hard to say with the pandemic. Teaching through this has definitely been the most challenging thing I have ever done. I was not an effective writer during the pandemic!

How many are published?

Maybe 6. Others I write and they aren’t accepted. Now that I’ve started doing book manuscripts, that’s also cut into my article writing. So not sure you want to use the word “prolific!!”

Some of the magazines that have featured your work include: *Highlights, Fun for Kidz, Hopscotch, Boys’ Quest, Skipping Stones.*

I worked for Carus Publishing writing online teachers’ guides for classroom magazines for maybe 6 years.

I’m a regular contributor to *SignatureMT Magazine*. I also have written for religious publications and parenting newsletters.

You mentioned during the BLOOM! Conference that you were inspired by author, Sarah Albee, who has published an impressive list of nonfiction books. Is this an area you’d like to break into? Can we hope to see a book from you in the future?

Yes, I would LOVE to do what Sarah Albee does! She pitches her own ideas - which is amazing. Where I am right now, I need to stick with editors pitching me the idea! I am extremely deadline oriented. Setting my own deadlines doesn’t hold the same weight for me. I’m much more scared of actual editors!!

Because it makes me chuckle every time I hear it, please share with us your daughter’s reaction to the award you received from Highlights for Children.

I came home from work one day to find that I’d received a pewter platter with this inscription:

Highlights for Children
Author of the Month
Heather Bode
“Life Behind the Lens”
August 2017

My teenaged daughter, Aubrey, looked it over and laughed. “Really? ‘Author of the MONTH?’ ‘Author of the YEAR’ would be a lot more impressive.”

Any other anecdotes?

Just recently, I was sharing with my class the editor's proofs the publisher sent of a WFH piece I wrote with the help of my third-grade class.

One of my students asked, "Mrs. Bode, when are you going to write a real book?"

I asked, "What do you mean by a real book?"

Her answer: "One with unicorns in it."

Gotta love how kids keep us humble! I guess I would say that those comments, (Aubrey's and my student's) serve to fuel me. I am not afraid of rejection (as any writer is accustomed to it), and their comments just drive me to keep going. Keep submitting. Will I ever be Author of the Year? Maybe not. But it won't be because I didn't try.

What advice can you give to someone who is interested in writing for the children's magazine market?

Read back issues or subscribe to the magazines you're interested in writing for. Or check them out at the library! Read the guidelines and stick to them. They are serious! I still hear writers say, "I know they aren't accepting right now, but I'm submitting anyway." Don't.

Another memory from my trip to the Highlights Foundation was when they showed us the "slush pile" and it was overwhelming. And it was just ONE editor's desk.

You're awfully busy – (being the mother of five, a pastor's wife, and teaching full-time). Do you have time left over for hobbies?

I hate to say it, but right now writing is the hobby. Teaching is my day job. I am focusing on my master's program now. But I'm hoping by having to stick to a strict study schedule will make me more able to focus on writing once my classes are done!

If I need a little "me" time, it's paging through a magazine and sipping coffee!

What a pleasure it has been visiting with you. Your story is inspiring. Thanks, Heather, for sharing your journey with us and for all of the good advice!

You can read more of Heather's pieces at [Signature MT Magazine](#)



**Go Hiking! (Wild Outdoors)
available August 2021**

SCBWI Montana is proud to announce we are now

100 members strong!

**Make sure you join us on your favorite social media channels:
on Instagram**

[@SCBWiMontana](#)

and/or in our

[Facebook Group](#)



🎈 We're pleased to introduce one of our newest SCBWI Montana illustrators to you—Thuy Nguyen!! 🧑🎨

Thuy is a self-taught illustrator who says, "The love I have for the small details in life inspires the story-driven pieces I create."

🧑🎨 Her Instagram page 🎨 is [@b.sprout_illustrations](#) and her website is [beansproutillustrations.com](#). Shown here is a sampling of her illustrations and sticker art.

Special shout and thank you to Sue Lawrence for all her amazing help proofing the newsletter and photos she adds to make it look great!

BY KIDLIT CREATOR SUE LAWRENCE



It pays—in more ways than the obvious—to follow the social media accounts of SCBWI regions outside of our own. That's how I found the inch-thick 2021 Edition of Magazine Markets for Children's Writers—my copy already bears the dog-eared corners

and yellow highlighter markings so characteristic of my style of research.

This resource lists North American magazine markets that buy freelance editorial material for children and teens, their parents, and teachers. Included are publishers, submission guidelines, and rights and payment information, as well as writers' contests, conferences, and current industry news.

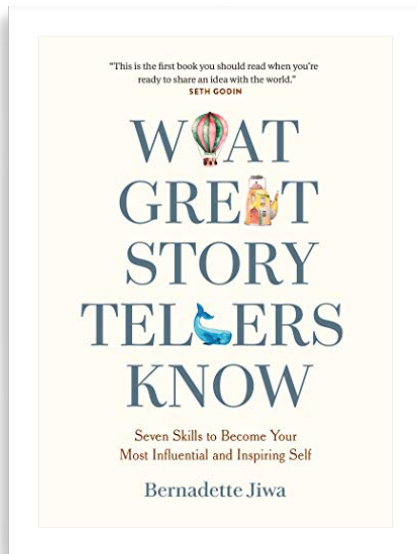
And, to think, I'd never have known about this valuable resource for kidlit writers if I didn't follow [California's San Francisco North and East Bay SCBWI region's website](#) and Instagram page ([@SCBINorthEastBay](#)).

On March 13th of this year, I attended a virtual webinar led by Colette Weil Parrinello and Natasha Yim, titled, "Writing for the Children's Magazine Market." It was during that \$10 SCBWI webinar that the Magazine Markets for Children's Writers was recommended to attendees.

Both authors make at least part of their living writing articles for the children's magazine market—primarily nonfiction ones.

The 2021 Edition of Magazine Markets for Children's Writers sells for \$21.95 direct from the publisher, Institute for Writers.

Their website is [instituteformriters.com](#).



Book Review & Synopsis

BY TIFFINY SPIRE

MONTANA SCBWI NEWSLETTER COORDINATOR

What Great Storytellers Know: Seven Skills to Become Your Most Influential and Inspiring Self. By Bernadette Jiwa • Copyright 2020

The Background

This book isn't written specifically for writers of children's literature. It's not even written for writers, actually. It's written for anyone wanting to make a bigger impact with their audience through the stories they tell.

Having said that, this book does apply directly to writers including those who write for kids. In fact, Jiwa quotes children's book authors such as David Sedaris, Philip Pullman, and Oliver Jeffers. (Probably because kid-lit writers have to be good at storytelling.)

I enjoyed this book because it was a quick read full of good reminders and short exercises to help writers tell their story in a meaningful way.

The Meat

The author reminds us that before you can tell a story well, you have to have a story to tell. Jiwa instructs us to develop habits of being present and aware. We should be actively watching the world around us and really listening to those we're with. If we're looking for it, we will find a story.

The story doesn't have to be an earth-shattering moment in order to engage the emotions of the audience. Often, it's the small moments in life that others can relate to that have the biggest impact.

Another tip from Jiwa is to get in the habit of storing your stories. At the end of the day, record a moment you noticed on your walk, or a conversation you overheard. You can't use a story later if you don't remember the details. Details matter! Keep a journal or use the Notes app in your phone.

Jiwa also reminds us to really learn who our audience is. She encourages us to "be curious, listen..., avoid judgement, examine your biases, read and research."

Then the author spends some time explaining the age-old adage, "show don't tell." This is how she describes it. "Telling is about the chronology of events, what happens—the plot. Showing is the way we evoke emotions in the audience, using sensory details and also by creating empathy for the characters."

The next part of the book points out how the structure of a story has an impact. "Great stories also have a particular structure, which causes a visceral emotional response in the listener or reader—making the story more meaningful and memorable, and thus effective. The information we give the audience must be released in a particular sequence to elicit this response."

Showing is the way we evoke emotions in the audience, using sensory details and also by creating empathy for the characters.

Jiwa uses some neat alliteration to explain her version of this story structure. She calls it the 5 C's: Context & Catalyst, Complication & Change, and Consequence.

Here's my brief summary of these stages.

The Context and Catalyst are the beginning of a story where we're introduced to the protagonist in her ordinary world, but then something changes for her in a big way.

The Complication and Change is the big problem or obstacle of the story (internal and/or external) that the protagonist must overcome and the change(s) this journey has brought about in her.

The Consequence is the resolution. What is life like for our hero after she has changed in response to her journey? How does she function in the world now after having gone through this change? What can we (the reader) learn from her experience?

The author encourages us to make a simple outline for the story we're working on using the 5 C's.

The Through Line:

Jiwa also cautions us to know the "through line" of our story. What is the story really about? What is the theme? (redemption, love and loss, good vs. evil, etc...)

"The through line is the invisible thread that pulls the reader or the listener through the story, from event to event."

We, as writers, need to know the through line of our story from the beginning, and we need to stick to it all the way to the end.

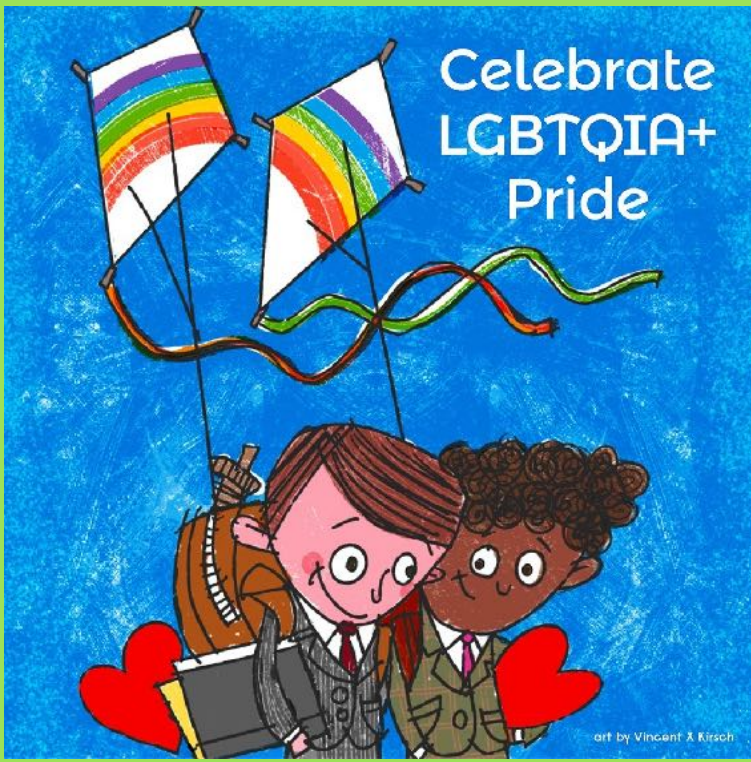
Jiwa ends this section with a list of questions to help storytellers outline their stories. Then she gives us a reminder about the importance of story structure. "It's only by being intentional that we can tell stories that are emotionally resonant. Structure is the storyteller's friend."

The Takeaway:

Veteran writers will recognize that Jiwa's 5C's are the same story stages we've learned before, just with different names. I think Jiwa's clear and concise message and exercises would be a great starting point for a beginning writer. For seasoned writers, the book would serve as a good reminder for keeping your story relevant and impactful to the reader with simple exercises to make sure you're on track.

I'll end with this quote from Philip Pullman that the author used. "After nourishment, shelter, and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world."





Happy Pride Month!

This month SCBWI is celebrating with books that honor the affirmation, dignity, equality, and achievements of LGBTQIA+ people. On the main recommended reading list, you'll find **#OwnVoices** books, bios, historical events, memoirs, fiction, and more.

Start browsing today!

<https://bit.ly/3vKWWM3!>



SCBWI's featured illustrator for June 2021:

M.E. Shakur (@bystudiomai). Illustrator, designer, and founder of Studio Mai. M.E. incorporates nature, sustainability, and inclusivity in their designs. Visit M.E.'s website for more incredible art <https://bit.ly/2S0PT3e>.



Enjoy the Summer Everyone! Happy writing and illustrating!