

# Children's Book Insider

The Newsletter for Children's Writers

## At Presstime: *Agents Taking Submissions*

**Brooks Sherman** is an associate agent with Fine Print Literary Management ([www.fineprintlit.com](http://www.fineprintlit.com)), representing books for adults and children. For children's submissions, he is looking to build a list of boy-focused middle grade novels (all subgenres, but particularly fantasy adventure and contemporary), and is open to young adult fiction of all types except paranormal romance. He likes projects that balance strong voice with gripping plot lines and especially likes stories that make him laugh. Send a query letter with a plot synopsis to [Brooks@fineprintlit.com](mailto:Brooks@fineprintlit.com). You can find him on Twitter at @byobrooks.

**Dawn Dowdle** started Blue Ridge Literary Agency ([www.blueridgeagency.com](http://www.blueridgeagency.com)) in 2009. She handles most types of fiction for adults and children. In the children's market she's currently seeking young adult and middle grade fiction, and books for young readers. She does not represent nonfiction, picture books, poetry, short stories, memoirs, screenplays or scripts. Query with a synopsis and attach the first three chapters as a Word or rtf document. Also mention in query letter any marketing plans you have for once the book is published, how you heard about Blue Ridge Literary Agency, and how many points of view tell your story (do not send manuscripts written in the omniscient viewpoint). Send query to [query@blueridgeagency.com](mailto:query@blueridgeagency.com). Visit the agency's blog at [www.blueridgelitagency.blogspot.com](http://www.blueridgelitagency.blogspot.com)

### *Magazine Seeks Nonfiction Material for Boys*

*Boys' Life* is a general-interest monthly magazine published by the Boy Scouts of America. Buys first-time rights for original, unpublished material. Looking for nonfiction (500-1500 words, pays \$400-\$1500) on a broad range of subjects. A look at a current list of the BSA's more than 100 merit badge pamphlets gives an idea of possible subjects. Also looking for material for departments (up to 600 words, pays \$100-\$400). Department headings are science, nature, earth, health, sports, space and aviation, cars, computers, entertainment, pets, history, and music. Each issue uses seven departments, on average. Also need how-to features for hobbies.

Short stories are by assignment only. Do not query or send manuscripts for fiction.

All articles for *Boys' Life* must interest and entertain boys ages 6 to 18, with 12 being the target age. Use crisp, punchy writing in relatively short, straightforward sentences. The editors demand well-reported articles that demonstrate high standards of journalism.

Send a query letter with SASE outlining your article idea and author credentials to Paula Murphey, Senior Editor, *Boys' Life*, 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane, PO Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015. To see what's in the current issue, and read sample articles, go to [www.boyslife.org](http://www.boyslife.org).

### *Upcoming Conference*

The 13th Annual SCBWI International Winter Conference will be held at the Grand Hyatt in New York City on January 28-29, 2012. The faculty is made up of award-winning authors, illustrators, editors, agents and publishing professionals. Three pre-conference intensives will be offered on Friday, January 27: Marketing Intensive for Professional Authors, Marketing Intensive for Illustrators and Roundtable Intensive Critique Session for Authors or Author/Illustrators. Cost is \$360 for members, \$450 for nonmembers before December 31; \$385/\$485 thereafter. Lunch isn't provided, but the registration does include Saturday banquet. Intensives are an additional \$225. Rooms can be reserved at the Hyatt for a special conference rate of \$299. For more information, go to [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org)

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## At Presstime:

### *Publisher Seeks Unique Books for All Ages*

Chronicle Books publishes an eclectic mixture of traditional and innovative children's books, fiction and nonfiction, from board books through young adult. Looking for projects that have a unique bent—be it in subject matter, writing style, or illustrative technique—and that will lend their list a distinctive flair. Open to a wide range of topics. Especially interested in growing the fiction program for older readers, including chapter books, middle grade and young adult novels. Recent titles include *Little Owl Finger Puppet Book* (board/novelty book); *A Dog is a Dog* by Stephen Shaskan (picture book, ages 2-5); *Over and Under the Snow* by Kate Messner, illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal (picture book, ages 5-8); the Ivy and Bean series of chapter books for ages 7-10 by Annie Barrows and Sophie Blackall; *Dan Eldon: Safari as a Way of Life* by Jennifer New (photo-biography, ages 12 ad up). Picture books may be submitted in their entirety; query with synopsis and three sample chapters for novels and longer nonfiction. Do not include SASE; Chronicle will only respond to submissions it's interested in publishing. Will consider simultaneous submissions. Send to Julie Romeis, Editor, or Melissa Manlove, Editor, Chronicle Books, 680 Second Street, San Francisco, CA 94107. Responds within six months. To confirm manuscript receipt, include a self-addressed, stamped postcard with submission. For more titles, go to [www.chroniclebooks.com](http://www.chroniclebooks.com).

### *The 2012 Ezra Jack Keats Award for New Author and Illustrator Open to Nominations*

The Ezra Jack Keats Book Award is given annually to an outstanding new writer and new illustrator of picture books for children (age 9 and under) by the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation. As of 2012, the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection is co-presenting the award during its Children's Book Festival.

The winners' books must highlight the universal qualities of childhood and the strength of the family; reflect the multicultural nature of our world; unify illustrations and text; avoid stereotypes; be respectful of the child's intelligence, sensitivity, curiosity and love of learning; and display freshness and originality content and expression. Illustrators must demonstrate an excellent command of the chosen medium. Books that have not already received awards will be given preference. To be eligible, authors and illustrators must have no more than three children's books published. The book submitted for the 2012 award must have a 2011 copyright date.

A cash award of \$1,000 coupled with the Ezra Jack Keats medallion inscribed with the recipient's name will be presented (one to the winning author, one to the winning illustrator) at the Keats Awards Celebration held at The University of Southern Mississippi, in Hattiesburg, MS. Also, a gold seal with the image of Peter in a red snow suit from *The Snowy Day* is available to the publisher to affix to copies of the book. Publishers must submit copies of books that meet the above criteria to each member of the award committee. See [www.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/html/keats\\_writer.shtml](http://www.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/html/keats_writer.shtml) for details (on the de Grummond Children's Literature website at [www.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/](http://www.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/)).

### *Publisher Seeks Fiction and Nonfiction with Educational Themes*

Barron's Educational Series publishes fiction and nonfiction for toddlers through young adult. Nonfiction tends to have an educational element (concept board books, art books, activity kits, foreign language books, self-help, reference, social issues, biographies). Especially interested in expanding fiction for ages 7-11 and 12-16 with contemporary plots, and picture books that are relevant to kids' lives and day-to-day activities. Recent titles include *A Bed of Your Own!* by Mij Kelly, illustrated by Mary McQuillan (picture book, ages 3-6); *Do I Have to Go to the Hospital?* by Pat Thomas, illustrated by Lesley Harker (picture book, ages 4-8); the Reader's Clubhouse series of easy readers for preschool through grade 2 (three levels); *Diary of a Pirate Voyage* by Nicholas Harris (picture book with interactive elements for ages 7 and up); *How to Raise and Keep a Dragon* by Joe Nigg (middle grade fiction); *Money Sense for Kids* by Hollis Page Harman (128 pages, ages 8 and up). Submit the entire manuscript for fiction; query with an overview (including targeted market and author credentials), table of contents and two sample chapters for nonfiction. Send with a SASE to Wayne R. Barr, Acquisitions Manager, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 250 Wireless Boulevard, Hauppauge, NY 11788. Simultaneous submissions accepted. For more titles, go to [www.barroneduc.com](http://www.barroneduc.com).

**Children's Book Insider** makes every effort to verify the legitimacy of small and new presses and literary agents before printing information in "At Presstime." However, authors and illustrators should always proceed with caution when approaching publishers or agents with whom they are unfamiliar, and read contracts carefully. Go to <http://is.gd/9ta64> for a free copy of our Special Report, [How to Determine If a New or Small Press is Legitimate](#).

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## Writing Workshop

# Advanced Plot Structure

by Jane McBride Choate

We all know how to structure a plot. Start with a character who wants something. Put him on the road to reaching his goal. Make him struggle. Snatch the goal away. Repeat. Bring in the black moment where all appears lost. Have character overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacle and achieve his goal.

This structure has been around for so long because it works. Why argue with success? The answers are as varied as the writers who tackle more advanced plot structures.

You want to break out of the midlist. You are looking for more name-recognition, a bigger advance. You want to do something outside the confines of genre fiction. You want to write a bigger book than what you have up until now. You want to reach a larger readership. Your editor has suggested that you try something different. (This can be interpreted in several different ways: Your editor sees greater potential in you and wants you to stretch your writing muscles. Or she is dissatisfied in your latest efforts and is trying to give you a chance to keep your spot in her stable of writers. Either way you will want to pay attention to any suggestions she makes.)

Advanced plot structure involves more: more subplots, more characters, more points-of-view, more drama.

What are some of these subplots? Could they work for you and your latest book?

*The group novel where the group itself is the protagonist.* For examples of a group protagonist, look at past and current television series as well as books: *Friends*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *The Baby-Sitters Club*. The group functions as a single unit with each character contributing to the whole.

*The book of linked short stories.* A collection of short stories will be just that: a collection of individual stories, episodic in nature, if there is not a unifying element. The difference between a haphazard collection and a book of linked stories is the presence of a recurring conflict or theme. A helpful structural technique is a framing device. This may be a group, event, or theme that surrounds the individual stories. The stories may also feature larger-than-life characters who face life-altering events. These stories are highly dramatic and must have dazzling impact.

*The crossover novel.* I write romance.

In the last two decades, many romance authors have successfully blended two genres resulting in a new breed of romance, requiring different marketing and shelving in bookstores. Romantic suspense, romantic sci-fi, romantic comedy, and historical romance are but a few of the crossovers. Romance authors are not the only writers to see the benefits of combining genres. J.K. Rowling looked to both science fiction and fantasy to create the Harry Potter series. Thrillers have also been successfully combined with fantasy. (Anyone heard of *Twilight*?) What makes these hybrids work? Authors who have made crossovers work for them look for the best within both genres and combine them to produce something that is totally new and fresh. How many times have you heard an editor lament the lack of fresh ideas in the manuscripts that cross her desk?

*Multiple point-of-view novels.* Increasingly, novels where each chapter features a different point-of-view character are finding their way into publishing lists. The chapters are frequently shorter than normal and may consist of only a few pages. I have read a number of books where a chapter may be only one page. (This is especially popular in thrillers and suspense novels.) In each chapter, the point-of-view character relates what is happening, so that the same actions are seen through several different lenses. What is the appeal of this type of structure? It allows the reader to delve more deeply into the characters and to identify with them more fully. A caveat here: don't simply rehash the same events without giving additional insights and in some way moving the plot forward.

You may want to combine elements of these different structures. The structure of a group novel lends itself easily to one employing multiple points of view.

How do you determine what is the right plot structure for your book? If you decide the straight forward plot is the right framework for your story, don't be afraid—or ashamed—to use it. If, however, you decide your novel needs something different to best tell the story, one of these plot structures may work for you.

**Jane McBride Choate** is the author of over 30 books and CBI Contributing Editor. Check out her blog, The Gratitude Project, at [www.janemcbride.blogspot.com](http://www.janemcbride.blogspot.com)

# The Poetry Lover's Writing

Do you love reading poetry? Does carefully crafted poetry make you swoon? Do you admire great children's poets like J. Patrick Lewis, Rebecca Kai Dotlich and Jane Yolen? What about writing poetry? Does your love for poetry begin to fade? Does writing verse make you curse? Over the next several months, I will be presenting a poetry class for CBI readers. We'll cover all the basics of what poetry is, types of rhyme, poem lengths, poetry tools and lots of different poetry forms. Stick with me. My goal is to take the frustration out of writing poetry and help you find the joy!

## What is Poetry?

My dictionary defines poetry as "a verbal or written composition designed to convey experiences, ideas or emotions in a vivid and imaginative way, characterized by the use of language chosen for its sound and suggestive power and by the use of literary techniques such as meter, metaphor and rhyme." What!?! Leave it to a dictionary to take the beauty right out of poetry. I much prefer Jane Kenyon's definition, "Poetry consists not so much in saying memorable things, as in saying them memorably."

To begin our journey into the world of poetry, let's first take a look at different kinds of rhyme and examples of each.

## What is rhyme?

A rhyme is a poem or verse with like recurring sounds, mostly, but not always, at the end of lines.

**Perfect Rhyme-** In perfect rhyme, the words rhyme exactly. Let's look at few perfectly rhymed lines from Hilaire Belloc's *The Vulture*:

The vulture eats between his meals  
And that's the reason **why**  
He very, very rarely feels  
As well as you and **I**.

**Internal Rhyme-** This is when we have words that rhyme inside the lines. We can see internal rhyme in Heidi Bee Roemer's *Beach Buddies*:

By the splishy splashy ocean,  
Where we **wiggly giggly** play,  
We build **dandy sandy** castles...  
till they're wishy washed away.

**Near Rhyme:** Sometimes words do not rhyme perfectly. Let's take a look at two lines from *Hurk* by Shel Silverstein:

I'd rather play **tennis** than go to the **dentist**.  
I'd rather play **soccer** than go to the **doctor**.

**Identical Rhyme:** This is when the exact word rhymes with itself. Here is an example from a work by Edgar Allen Poe:

For the moon never beams without bringing  
me dreams

Of the beautiful **Annabel Lee**.

And the stars never rise but I feel the bright  
eyes

Of the beautiful **Annabel Lee**.

Next, let's take a look at rhyme scheme and poem lengths. If you've ever analyzed a collection of poetry, I'm sure you noticed that the first line doesn't always rhyme with the third line and the second line doesn't always rhyme with the fourth line, etc. When we pair up the different lines that rhyme in a poem, we are discovering its rhyme scheme. Let's take a look at the following poem:

*The Ladybug* by Kimberly Hutmacher

An eensy red bug- **A**  
with teensy black dots- **B**  
walks weensy black legs- **C**  
on red flower pots.- **B**

The first line of the above poem is known as line A. Since the second line does not rhyme with the first line, it becomes line B. The third line does not rhyme with either line A or line B, so it becomes line C. But, the fourth line does rhyme with the second line, so it's also known as line B. Therefore the rhyme scheme for this poem is **ABCB**.

*The Wind* by Douglas Florian

Blow-drier.- **A**  
Kite-flier.- **A**  
Leaf-dancer.- **B**  
Seed-prancer.- **B**  
Hat-tosser.- **C**  
Earth-crosser.- **C**

As you can see above, lines one and two rhyme with each other, but with nothing else, so they become A. Lines three and four rhyme with each other but with nothing else, so they become B. Lines five and six rhyme with each other, but with nothing else, so they become C. Therefore the rhyme scheme for this poem is **AABBCC**.

Along with a varying rhyme scheme, I bet you've also noticed that in most collections, with the exception of a collection of a specific form like haiku, the length of the poems vary, too. The following are examples of several different poem lengths. As you'll see, they can take several different rhyme schemes.

Special Report:

# Workshop: Part One

by Kimberly M. Hutmacher

**Couplet-** A couplet is a two-line poem that rhymes. Some poems are composed of a series of couplets. Here are a few examples of couplets:

By J. Patrick Lewis  
Houses meant for **Porcupines-** A  
Always carry "Warning!" **signs-** A

*The Persian* by Douglas Florian  
I am a cat of longhaired **version-** A  
A pet-i-gree that's known as **purrrian-** A

**Tercet-** Tercets are three-line poems. Tercets can have different rhyme schemes.

*Symmetry* by Douglas Florian  
Autumn is the only **season-** A  
The leaves all leave.- **B**  
Call it **tree-son-** A

*DRATS* by Shel Silverstein  
Can anyone lend me- **A**  
Two eighty-pound **rats?**- **B**  
I want to rid my house of **cats-** B

**Quatrain-** A quatrain is a four-line poem with several different possibilities for rhyming patterns.

*Butterflies, You Puzzle Me* by Jack Prelutsky  
Butterflies, you puzzle **me-** A  
For as you flit and **flutter,-** B  
I study you, but never **see-** A  
The slightest bit of **butter.-** B

**Quintet-** A quintet is a five-line poem. It can be made up of a tercet and a couplet. A limerick is also a quintet.

*HAT* by Shel Silverstein  
Teddy said it was a **hat,-** A  
So I put it **on.-** B  
Now Dad is **saying,-** C  
"Where the **heck's-** D  
The toilet plunger **gone??"-** B

**Sestet-** A sestet is a six-line poem. It can be made up of three couplets, or a couplet and a quatrain, two tercets or other variations.

*Thunder and Lightning* by Anonymous  
The thunder **crashed-** A  
The lightning **flashed-** A  
And all the world was **shaken;-** B  
The little **pig-** C  
Curled up his **tail-** D  
And ran to save his **bacon.-** B

**Septet-** A septet is a seven-line stanza. It can take many variations.

*Invention* by Shel Silverstein  
I've done it! I've done it!- A  
Guess what I've **done!-** B  
Invented a light that plugs into the **sun.-** B  
The sun is bright **enough-** C  
The bulb is strong **enough-** C  
But, oh, there's only one thing **wrong...D**  
The cord ain't long **enough.-** C

## Meter and Scansion

You probably remember words like iambic, trochee, anapest and dactyl from your grade school poetry unit. These words represent different forms of meter in poetry. Meter is the stresses (beats or accents) of words and how they are placed next to one another to create these different patterns. I am not going to try to teach meter in this series. One article would not be enough. I also don't feel that knowing how to define and identify all those different patterns is especially important. What's more important, in my opinion, is developing an ear for rhythm. The biggest piece of advice I give to clients is to listen to poetry collections on tape. Listen to how the poems are read. Listen to where the reader places stresses as he or she reads. You may wonder why I don't recommend that you just read the collections out loud yourself. Because, different people say words differently. Different dialects place stresses in different places. Also, if you are reading your own poetry, you'll have a tendency to read it the way you want it to sound rather than the way it really sounds. Let a friend read your poetry aloud to you. You'll have a much better idea of how your rhythm is. I also recommend counting syllables in each stanza. If you have the same amount of syllables in each stanza of a poem, you're closer to a perfect meter. My last piece of advice is that until you do develop a natural ear, use the dictionary to find out where stresses are placed on each word to ensure a perfect metric pattern.

## Your Assignment

Over the next month, I encourage you to practice making different kinds of rhymes. Practice with varying the length of each rhyme and identifying the rhyme scheme of each of your poems. If you still don't feel ready to write your own, borrow some collections from the library. Identify the kinds of rhymes, the poem lengths and the rhyme schemes the poet used. Play with the words and the rhyme. Remember the joy!

Next month, we'll delve into the different tools that poets use to make their words sparkle!

If you are looking for some wonderful collections, I plan to share some of my favorites with each new part of the workshop.

Dotlich, Rebecca Kai.  
*Lemonade Sun and Other Summer Poems.* Wordsong.

Florian, Douglas. *Hand-springs.* Greenwillow Books.

Prelutsky, Jack. *A Pizza the Size of the SUN.* Greenwillow Books.

Roemer, Heidi Bee.  
*Come To My Party And Other Shape Poems.* Henry Holt.

Silverstein, Shel. *A Light in the Attic.* Harper & Row (now HarperCollins).

Shel Silverstein  
[www.shelsilverstein.com](http://www.shelsilverstein.com)  
Heidi Bee Roemer  
[www.heidibroemer.com](http://www.heidibroemer.com)  
Edgar Allan Poe  
[www.poestories.com](http://www.poestories.com)  
Jane Kenyon  
[www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/361](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/361)  
J. Patrick Lewis  
[www.jpatricklewis.com](http://www.jpatricklewis.com)  
Rebecca Kai Dotlich  
[www.rebeccakaidotlich.com](http://www.rebeccakaidotlich.com)  
Jane Yolen  
<http://janeyolen.com>

**Kimberly Hutmacher** is the author of 21 books and three ebooks including *Poetry Play for Preschoolers* and *Children's Poetry Party*. She spent two years as poetry editor for *Wee Ones Magazine*. She loves to write poetry and to help others fine tune their own. To learn more about Kimberly, her books and her workshop and critique offerings, visit her home on the web [www.kimberlyhutmacher.com](http://www.kimberlyhutmacher.com)

## Guest Editorial

### *One Author's Experience with Self-Publishing Distribution Options* by Natalie Hale

After self-publishing my illustrated children's book, *Thank you, Mommy!*, with Lulu.com (see CBI June 2011 for details), I had to think about distribution. As you know, Amazon is the biggest online bookseller, so that was a priority for me. One of the requirements of getting listed on Amazon is that your book must have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN). I had the option of receiving a free ISBN from Lulu.com. I was directed to a secure page on Lulu.com's website where I could access my ISBN's barcode image.

I was certain that I would have to get creative with the barcode image and digitally add it to my book's back cover myself. However, I later learned that Lulu.com adds the barcode for you when you upload your cover design, free of charge. So be assured that if you decide to publish with Lulu, your number will automatically be listed with the barcode on the back of your book if your manuscript meets certain standards outlined at their website, including the grade of the book and the size.

To get my ISBN, I was also required to sign a license agreement. As always, it's advisable to read through an agreement before signing. For your convenience, I've included a link to the agreement in the sidebar.

If you are self-published through Lulu.com's ISBN Plus package then your book will be listed in Ingram's distribution channel which will make it available to Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com as well as any other online retailer that uses Ingram. Lulu.com has three levels of distribution packages that range from \$25-\$75. Each package comes with its own set of services. See the link at the end of this article for details.

**marketREACH** – is the first package offered. The cost is \$25 and will get your book listed at Lulu's marketplace at Amazon.com. There are some basic eligibility requirements that must be complied with including content, ISBN, and other pertinent details.

**extendedREACH** – This package allows distribution on both Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk.

**globalREACH** – At \$75, this distributive package is the most costly but gets your book listed at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, as well as with the Ingram Book Company. This option is valuable if you are looking to sell your book in traditional brick and mortar stores.

You could also consider publishing directly with Amazon.com with one of its self-publishing packages. These packages also include three options to choose from: CreateSpace, Kindle, and Advantage, with distribution online and to brick and mortar retailers, depending on the package. See below for further information.

Keep in mind that self-publishing with Amazon might not be a profitable path to pursue. According to one a self-published author, "The cost of using Amazon is high. They take 55% of the 'official' price (not the sale price but the price you originally determine). That means that even if they discount the book (good for sales), the discount is coming out of their half. But it means you are only getting 45% of your listed price. In addition you pay for shipping books there, and of course for printing them, so the math does not encourage fortune making."

Another option for consideration is Google Books. It's included in Lulu.com's free ISBN service. I took advantage of this option to try it out. Google will make 20% of my book available for free and there is about an eight-week wait for the book to be included in their searches. Although it is not a very profitable option, it is a way of getting my name and title out there and circulating. See the link below.

Self-publishing is certainly not the easiest path to follow. There are so many wonderful options to choose from that are affordable and easy-to-use, but that means there is a lot of preparatory research and even a little trial and error. Make sure to understand all the pros and cons to whichever service you choose to ensure so you get the most for your dollar.

Lulu.com license agreement: [www.lulu.com/about/isbn\\_license.php](http://www.lulu.com/about/isbn_license.php)

Lulu.com distribution packages: [www.lulu.com/services/distribution](http://www.lulu.com/services/distribution)

Kevin Kelly article, "How to Sell Your Book, CD, or DVD on Amazon": [www.kk.org/cooltools/archives/000668.php](http://www.kk.org/cooltools/archives/000668.php)

Amazon's packages

[www.amazon.com/gp/seller-account/mm-summary-page.html?ie=UTF8&ld=AZFooterSelfPublish&topic=200260520](http://www.amazon.com/gp/seller-account/mm-summary-page.html?ie=UTF8&ld=AZFooterSelfPublish&topic=200260520)

Google Books: <http://books.google.com/support/partner/bin/answer.py?answer=167975>

Natalie Hale's books *Thank You, Mommy!* (picture book) and *Finding Evie* (adult novel) are available at  
[www.lulu.com/spotlight/nataliehale](http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/nataliehale)

## Nonfiction Focus

# The Scoop on Nonfiction

by Jane McBride Choate

When I wanted to research writing nonfiction for young adults, I went to the experts: Mary Bowman-Kruhm and Catherine Reef, who, between them, have authored over 72 books.

*Why do you write nonfiction rather than fiction?*

MBK: I write nonfiction because I enjoy the research and I like to read nonfiction. I'll take an issue of National Geographic or a book like the *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* over a book of fiction any day. I know much fiction has well researched background material in it, but I really prefer to read only the background material—told in an engaging way, of course.

CR: I was working as a writer in the health field and feeling unfulfilled when my husband and I took our ten-year-old son and his friend to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. I sensed that the boys didn't have a good understanding of what we were seeing, and I had the idea of writing a book for children on the memorial. That project never got completed, but my query to a publisher led to my first book, *Washington, D.C.* (Dillon Press, 1990). Writing about our heritage for young readers turned out to be a good fit for me, and I am doing work that is satisfying and important.

*What are the possibilities in writing nonfiction? Can writers grow a career from it?*

CR: Publishers will always need good writers, so those who can produce high-quality nonfiction manuscripts that meet market demands should look forward to steady publication.

MBK: I framed a career around mostly nonfiction, but you have to be willing to research and write varied materials. You also have to seek out varied markets. I have written articles for *Children's Book Insider* since the Internet was just taking off. I have also done a great deal of work-for-hire. Having been in education most of my life, I also write materials for the Johns Hopkins' Center for Technology in Education, a great group of people working to help teachers benefit from cutting edge technology combined with current research. A friend writes those booklets

found in hospitals and doctors' offices. Wherever you find the printed word, you find the need for a writer.

*We all know that fiction is taking off in ebooks. What about nonfiction?*

CR: EBooks have come to stay, but their eventual share of the nonfiction market remains to be seen. My most recent book, *Jane Austen: A Life Revealed* (Clarion, 2011), is my first title to be made available in both print and eBook editions.

MBK: I feel eBooks are taking off in both fiction and nonfiction. You would have to check numbers but I think the market for nonfiction eBooks is potentially huge and only beginning. For instance, I'm a knitter and I can envision an eBook with video links to demonstrate techniques like yarn over and grafting toes of socks. For history, a book about the seeds of World War II in Germany could link to brief videos of Hitler making a speech, economic conditions, and so on. A cookbook can link to demonstration of techniques. Along with video and audio links, an app or game or blog can support the printed word. The field for nonfiction, including textbooks, is wide open and changing to a multi-modality experience.

*Do you ever write for the educational market? What, if any, limitations are there for that?*

MBK: Yes, in fact most of my books are for the educational market or both education and trade. A background in education helps, but many writers study the field to get into that market.

*Do you find librarians helpful and appreciative of your work?*

MBK: I absolutely appreciate them and hope it's a mutual feeling.

Both writers stress that they have found librarians and booksellers to be helpful and supportive. Mary Bowman-Kruhm's *Margaret Mead: A Biography* is dedicated to "two librarians at Johns Hopkins University who kept my backpack filled with resources I could never have found on my own." With writers like Mary and Catherine, we are assured that nonfiction for children and young adults is in capable and caring hands.

Read more about these authors, their books, and their thoughts on writing at:

Mary Bowman-Kruhm — [www.markbk.com](http://www.markbk.com), and [digthiswell.com](http://digthiswell.com): (Dig This Well! The Maasai, the Mara, Musings, and a fresh water well for Olitorotua, Kenya)

Catherine Reef — <http://catherinereef.com>

### Select titles to study

By Mary Bowman-Kruhm:

*The Leakeys: A Biography* (Greenwood Publishing, young adult)

*Busy Fingers and Busy Toes* (Charlesbridge, picture books. Co-authored under the pen name C.W. Bowie)

*Margaret Mead: A Biography* (Greenwood Publishing, young adult)

*Are You My Type? Or Why Aren't You More Like Me?* (Consulting Psychologists Press, young adult)

By Catherine Reef:

*Jane Austen: A Life Revealed* (Clarion, young adult)

*Poverty in America* (Facts on File, young adult)

*Poetry Came in Search of Me: The Story of Pablo Neruda* (Morgan Reynolds, young adult)

*This Our Dark Country: American Settlers of Liberia* (Clarion, young adult)

Jane McBride Choate is a CBI Contributing Editor.

## The Basics

### Analyzing Magazine Markets

by Suzanna Henshon, PhD

To find magazines' submission guidelines, you can check each publication's website (look under "Submissions", "Submission Guidelines" or "Contact us"). You can also read the magazine listings in the 2012 *Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market* published by Writers Digest Books.

To see detailed guidelines for *Ladybug*, go to [www.cricketmag.com/29-Submission-Guidelines-for-LADYBUG-magazine-for-children-ages-3-6](http://www.cricketmag.com/29-Submission-Guidelines-for-LADYBUG-magazine-for-children-ages-3-6)

**Dr. Suzanna E. Henshon** teaches full-time at Florida Gulf Coast University. She is the author of several books for young adults, including *Mildew on the Wall* and *Spiders on the Ceiling*.

Many writers get their first bylines in children's magazines, which offer ample opportunities for publishing poetry, short stories and articles. But not all magazines are good markets for your work. Just as you need to research book publishers and find the right fit for your submission, targeting the proper magazine will greatly increase your chance of making a sale. But how do you analyze a magazine from a writer's perspective? First, pinpoint magazines that cater to the same age group as the audience for your writing. Ideally, you'll skim back issues from the last two years to get a sense of content, style, and tone. You also want to make sure the magazine hasn't recently run another piece similar to yours. Then, break down the magazine feature by feature. Let's look at one example.

*Ladybug* is a high quality publication for children ages 3 to 6. The magazine publishes poems, short stories, and illustrated pieces for children who are just developing literacy. When I was considering submitting a Halloween-themed piece back in 2010, I paid close attention to issues from previous Octobers. When I picked up an October 2009 issue I discovered it was filled with pieces that highlight autumn and Halloween in a way that is appropriate for young readers.

Reading through *Ladybug*, I appreciated how the magazine is lyrically written and visually appealing for children. To attain a publication in this magazine, think about how your poem or short story will appear on the page; it is essential to think about where the piece will appear in the magazine, and how children will experience it beyond the words upon the page. In this issue, there was a story that contained just a few lines, "Max and Kate," while another piece was a traditional short story length ("The Halloween Countdown"). Writers need to be aware of how the magazine is generally laid out; it is essential to not only write a piece that is ap-

propriate for the magazine but to think like an editor and anticipate where your piece might appear if it is selected for publication.

*Ladybug* publishes several short stories in each issue. These stories differ in length and content, indicating that some stories are meant to appeal to children ages 3 and 4 who are not yet reading while other pieces are intended for children ages 5 to 6. In this issue, "Max and Kate" was just a few lines long and accompanied by illustrations; it was more of a picture book format and intended for younger children. "Henry, Hurry Up" and "The Halloween Costume Countdown" might be for children ages 5 to 6. Because children ages 3 to 6 have different needs, it is good to think about specific audiences within this age group as you write your short story. Writing a short story for *Ladybug* is more difficult than one might think; the piece must fit with the content and philosophy of this high quality magazine while fitting well with the other materials that have been accepted for publication. The editors of *Ladybug* prefer to have a variety of pieces in a given magazine rather than pieces that are all the same length and format.

Writing poetry is also a possibility. In the October 2009 issue, there were several poems: *Apple-Picking Time*, *What Am I?*, *No Crows*, *Five Little Bandits*, and *Windy Nights*. These poems are all short pieces with the longest being 16 lines. The poems are accompanied by full-page illustrations and must appeal to both children and adults. Reading through the pieces, I noticed two trends; some of the pieces were humorous while other pieces were written with a seasonal appeal. Most published poems are short in length, rhyme, and tell a "story" that children will remember later.

Once your research is done, check the magazine's guidelines (see sidebar). Then polish your piece and submit!