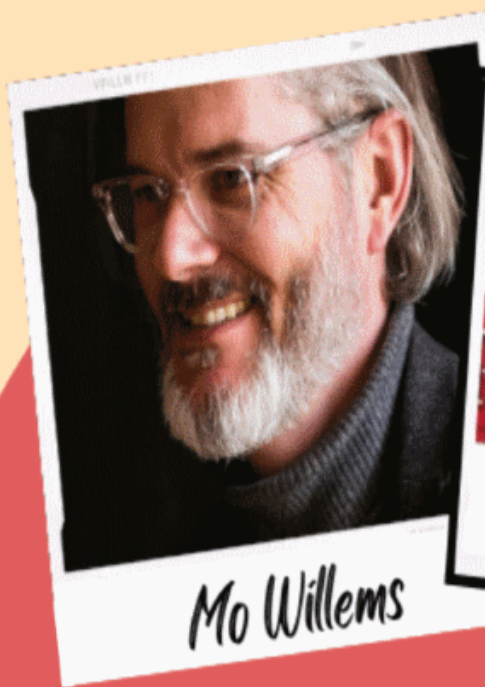


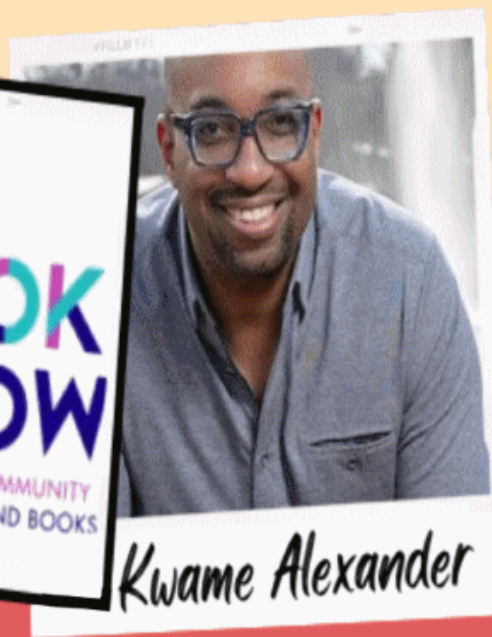
Children's Book Insider

The Children's Writing Monthly  July 2022

TWO SUPERSTAR AUTHORS ON WHAT MAKES A CHILDREN'S BOOK GREAT



Mo Willems



Kwame Alexander

A SPECIAL REPORT FROM THE U.S. BOOK SHOW

**ABOVE THE SLUSHPILE
SUBMISSION OPPORTUNITY:**



**Doubleday
Books**

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This issue's contributors

April Cox is an award-winning author and founder of Little Labradoodle Publishing. She is a self-publishing coach and creator of *Self-Publishing Made Simple*, a program that helps authors to improve their knowledge and self-publish their books. Among them were kid-authors and their parents, which inspired the youtube series and inspired this initiative and article.

Lynne Marie is the author of *Hedgehog Goes to Kindergarten* and *Hedgehog's 100th Day of School* (Scholastic), *The Star in the Christmas Play* and *Let's Eat Around the World* (Beaming Books), *Moldilocks and the 3 Scares* (Sterling) and more forthcoming, as well as numerous stories and articles in magazines, including *Highlights for Children*, *High Five*, *Baby Bug*, *Family Fun*, *Hopscotch*, *Turtle*, *Spider* and *Writer's Digest*. Her website is <http://www.LiterallyLynneMarie.com>

Jane McBride is the author of 38 novels (writing as Jane McBride Choate), numerous short stories and articles including pieces in 16 *Chicken Soup for the Soul* anthologies, and the CBI Managing Editor. See her Amazon Author Page at <http://bit.ly/JaneMcBrideChoate>

PJ McIlvaine is a Jill of all trades when it comes to writing: kid lit, screenwriter, journalist, blogger. She is the author of *Little Lena* and the *Big Table* (Big Belly Book Co., May 2019) and *Dragon Roar* (MacLaren-Cochrane, TBD). PJ is also a co-host of #PBPitch, the premiere Twitter pitch party for picture book writers and illustrators. Follow PJ's magical adventures at her website <https://pjmacwriter.com>

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Genre Spotlight: Jean Diagneau
Featured Interviews: PJ McIlvaine
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At Presstime:

Publisher Seeking Submissions with Jewish Themes

Apples & Honey Press, an imprint of Behrman House Publishing, is seeking submissions. Apple & Honey Press publishes picture books, chapter books, and middle grade novels that help children explore their world through the lenses of Jewish culture and practice, universal ethical themes, and diverse perspectives. They have reached out to CBI with updated guidelines.

Here are some of the things they're looking for:

- Stories that give a window into diverse backgrounds and life experiences
- Stories from underrepresented voices, including Jews of color
- Narrative nonfiction stories that highlight a moment in history
- Stories about a biographical figure who displays core character strengths
- Dynamic, memorable characters and situations with series potential
- Stories that highlight values, personal growth, or emotional development
- Humorous stories

Above all, editors are looking for compelling stories of Jewish culture and identity that will keep children coming back again and again. Write what moves you, and that enthusiasm will come through in your story. Please email a query letter with a brief synopsis and short author bio, and attach your full manuscript as a Word document to submissions@behrmanhouse.com. Responds to all queries, and the average response time is two months. For current Apples & Honey Press titles, go to store.behrmanhouse.com/index.php/apples-and-honey-press.html

Walter Grant for Diverse Authors and Illustrators Now Accepting Applications

The Walter Dean Myers Grant program provides five grants of \$2,000 each to promising diverse writers and illustrators who are currently unpublished. All applicants must identify as diverse, [as per WNDB's definition of diversity](#). Applicants must be unpublished as illustrators and/or authors. This includes both trade publishing and self-publishing. If the applicant has a book deal for an as yet unpublished book, the applicant is considered published for purposes of this grant. Essays, short stories, and articles do not render an applicant ineligible. Applicants must be working toward a career as a children's author and/or illustrator. This includes but is not limited to: Picture Books, Early Reader Books, Chapter Books, Middle Grade Books, Young Adult, Graphic Novels, Nonfiction, Poet. Applicants must be a U.S. resident or a refugee living in the US.

In 2022, WNDB is offering community-specific grants in addition to their general five Walter Grants. They are also offering two Walter Grants to trans writers or illustrators, two Walter Grants to Muslim creators, and two Walter Grants to Native/Indigenous/First Nations writers or illustrators. To apply for these grants, you must select that you wish to be considered in your application.

Submit a cover letter (up to 200 words) including your full name and contact info; how you identify as diverse; the genre of the manuscript for which you're seeking grant support; one sentence stating your name and that you have never been published as an author or illustrator; a brief statement explaining how you intend to use the grant money to further your writing career. Also include up to 200 words summarizing the work for which you're seeing grant assistance. Finally, write an essay up to 500 words discussing how diversity impacts your writing and illustrating career, and attach up to 2500 words from your work in progress, or 4-6 illustrations.

All applications must be made online through the form on the WNDB website. You can find the form and more application details at diversebooks.org/programs/walter-grant/ **Applications for the 2022 Walter Grant must be submitted by 11:59 PM EST on July 31, 2022.**

Small Press Seeking STEM-Related Fiction for Ages 8-12

Tumblehome Books is an independent press publishing STEM-related (science, technology, engineering and math) books for children in grades K-12. The majority of their books are geared toward upper elementary and middle school grades (approximately ages 8-12). Looking for STEM concepts presented in a fictional format. Most of their books have adventure/mystery plots containing scientific facts, engineering design processes and/or genuine historical STEM figures. Especially looking for authors with a background in a STEM field. All Tumblehome publications are aligned with the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards curriculum. Authors will be asked to assist with developing freely-available teacher guidelines and online resources to supplement their work.

Tumblehome Books is also accepting series submissions. Their keynote series is called the Galactic Academy of Science, which follows a very specific format; if you submit a work for this series, please be sure to obtain an example copy first from the publisher's website (<https://tumblehomebooks.org>) or the library and make sure that your idea fits within this style.

Tumblehome also publishes quality STEM classroom kits containing both child-focused and teacher-focused resources. If you have a specific idea for a new, unique STEM-related activity or kit, which can be accompanied by some form of written publication, feel free to submit, and be prepared to assist in sourcing materials for your idea. You should also be a primary contributor with regard to writing and/or illustrating all materials.

For detailed submission guidelines, go to <https://tumblehomebooks.org/submissions/>. Note that Tumblehome is a smaller press and generally does not pay advances. However, authors will be paid royalties on sales. For a list of current Tumblehome titles, go to <https://tumblehomebooks.org/books/>

Agent Accepting Picture Books, and MG/YA Fiction, Nonfiction and Graphic Novels

Stacey Kendall Glick is Vice President of the literary agency Dystal, Goderich and Bourret LLC (<https://www.dystel.com>). She has a wide-ranging and eclectic client list, and is interested in many subjects, including (but not limited to) on the adult side: practical and narrative nonfiction including cooking and food, memoir, psychology, mental health and wellness, lifestyle, women's issues, parenting, current events, pop culture and science, and select adult contemporary fiction. And on the children's side: middle grade and young adult fiction and graphic novels, MG/YA nonfiction, and select picture books.

Submit a query letter with the following:

- A professional, personalized greeting, and a mention of why you're querying her.
- Key stats for your project: title, genre, word count, and comp titles or authors.
- Your pitch: a paragraph or two summarizing your project that will hook her on your work. For fiction, please include genre, word count, and comp titles.
- Your bio or credentials: your expertise in the topic, previous publication credits, your social media platform.

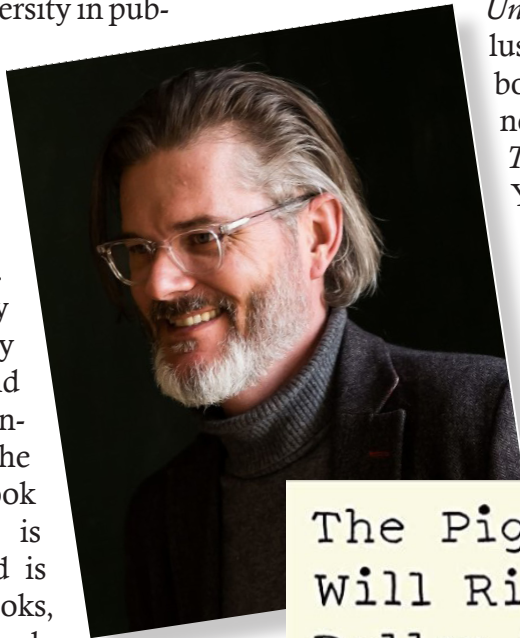
Note: Stacey welcomes picture book and graphic novel submissions from authors and author/illustrators, but is not open to illustrator-only submissions.

The full query should be in the body of the email. After the query, paste the first 25 pages of your fiction manuscript (or the full manuscript for a picture book), or your nonfiction proposal with one sample chapter. Author/illustrators may also attach a PDF dummy or sample art (graphic novel author/illustrators can attach 10 illustrated pages, but still include the first 25 pages of text within the email). Attachments should not exceed 20MB. Send to sglick@dystel.com. Stacey does her best to respond within 8 weeks. Go to the agency's website to see a list of current clients.

The US Book Show: CHILDREN'S BOOK PUBLISHING IS ALIVE AND WELL

by PJ McIlvaine

By every metric, it's been a rough couple of years in the children's book publishing arena with many challenges due to the lasting effects of the COVID pandemic, logistical/supply-side/distribution issues, lack of diversity in publishing, efforts to ban books/censorship, and a shrinking workforce. Even so, one of the main takeaways from the second annual U.S. Book Show in May 2022 (sponsored by Publishers Weekly and billed as the largest online conference for the bookselling and book publishing industry) is that the kid-lit world is thriving and that books, and in particular books geared to young readers hungry for diverse books that mirror their own cultures and experiences, are needed, perhaps now more than ever in these troubled times.



The children's portion of the book show put the spotlight on picture books, middle grade, graphic novels, and young adult books with panels featuring authors, editors, and publishing professionals. The main attraction of the children's day events were two of the biggest best-selling authors in the kidlit world: three-time Caldecott Honor winner and Theodor Seuss Geisel Award winner Mo Willems, the author/illustrator of the popular "pigeon"

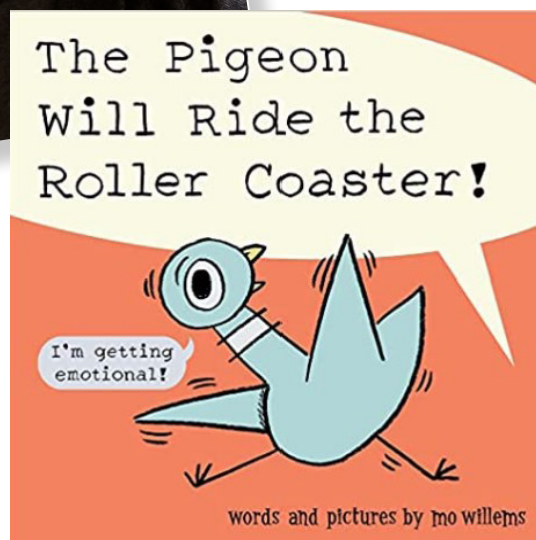
series including the upcoming *The Pigeon Will Ride the Roller Coaster* (Union Square Kids, September 2022), and the Newbery Honor winner Kwame Alexander (whose poem-turned-picture-book, *The Undefeated*, also won a Caldecott Metal for the illustrator Kadir Nelson), author of over thirty-five books including the forthcoming middle-grade novel about a young boy in colonial Ghana, *The Door of No Return* (Little Brown Books for Young Readers, September 2022).

Mo Willems was in great spirits in his keynote conversation with Tracey Keegan, editorial director of Union Square Kids. A born entertainer who knows who his audience is, Willems' passion and enthusiasm for children's

books were delightfully infectious. Bon mots and thoughtful insights came fast and furious. One gem: "A book is sometimes a letter to yourself than you want somebody else to buy. And it is always a question you don't have an answer to."

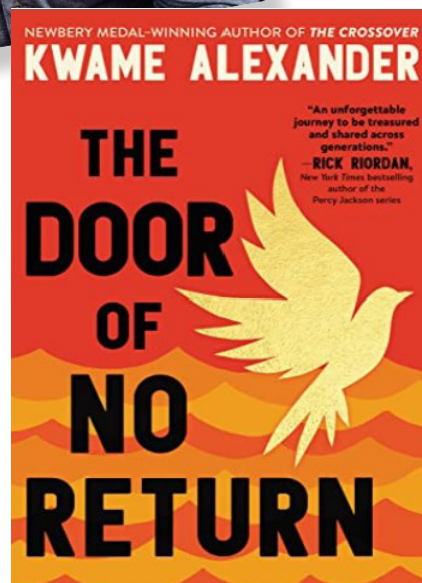
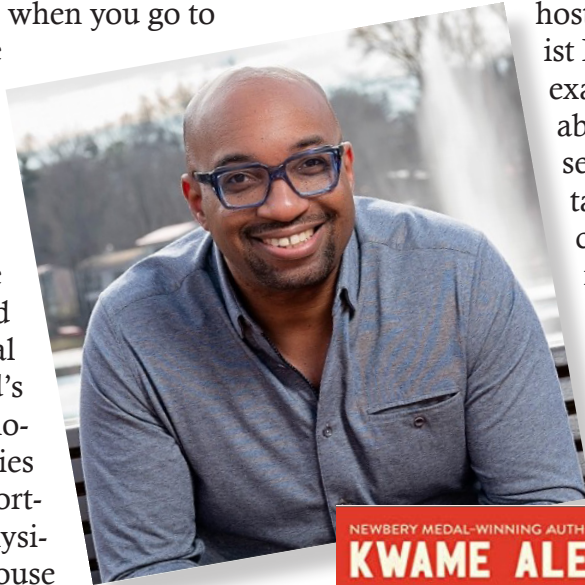
According to Willems, in a children's book, "It's a dialogue, and I only

make 49% of the book. It's a piece of sculpture and it isn't alive until it's being reacted to. So from a kid, any reaction is fine. If a kid yells no to a book, that's great. If a kid says, oh, I love this book, it's great. If a kid is bored, then that's a promised reaction."



The US Book Show...continued

Willems also went into detail on his thought processes behind how a book should physically look and feel to a child: “How is it gonna fit on a kid’s lap or when a teacher holds it up? How well can it be seen? Is it a book that needs to be read on a lap? Is it a book that can be read from a big distance? What is the size and shape of the book telling us? Usually a long horizontal book is about a place because that’s how you take pictures when you go to a place.” And on the importance, even in this digital age, of a child physically holding a book: “I really do believe that a book can be a child’s friend and sometimes the physical book can be the child’s only friend in that moment. Certainly, studies have shown how important it is to have a physical book in one’s house for their development as a human being, to see themselves, to see others, to participate all in this object that is also shareable. And revisable, you know, when you come back to a book, you’ve read that same physical thing you’ve been in that same space. So many times it gets a veneer of humanity, maybe in a way that a screen never could.”



Willems’ credo is to “always think of your audience and never think for your audience. I’m very aware of what my work is going to do and how it will not be received, but how it will be projected in one way or another.”

One point that Willems stressed is having respect for children in his writing. “The only difference between us and them is that they’re new here. They just got to the party, right? They don’t know where the bathroom is. They don’t know where the keg is. They don’t know whether they should try the crudite. But besides that, they’re us, they’re settling in. And I think I learned so much more from the ques-

tions that come from kids because they’re born philosophers. If somebody says, well, you can’t put that big word in because a kid doesn’t know it, the answer is well, they don’t know it yet, but after you’ve done it, then they know it. And now they got this big word. That’s pretty exciting.”

Kwame Alexander’s keynote address was hosted by the acclaimed novelist and journalist Lev Grossman (*The Magicians* trilogy). Alexander spoke thoughtfully and eloquently about his new book, which at first glance, seems a departure from his other books. In talking about how Kofi, the novel’s main character who lives in a village in Ghana in the mid-19th century, is a protagonist that today’s readers can identify with: “I wanted to write about it in a way that any kid could connect or relate to it. Any reader would be able to say, oh, wow, this makes sense. And then once I took you out of that normal, accessible, comfortable place, and took you to this very uncomfortable place, you would at least have this sort of frame of reference to appreciate the humanity of this kid.”

Alexander, who co-founded LEAP for Ghana, an international literacy program, had a specific purpose in mind re *The Door of No Return*: “I wrote this book to be able to remind people that the story of black people in America did not begin in 1619. It did not begin in slavery. Black history goes way further back. And I really wanted to look at what has been called the black continent and bring some light to it.” A frequent visitor to Ghana, it was during one of his trips that he realized, “I’ve gotta tell a story here one day. And so, inadvertently, it all became research,” including consulting his father, an African historian.

The US Book Show...continued

In many of Alexander's books, a recurring plot point or theme is some type of athletic activity, and his new book expands on that. "How do I use sports as a metaphor for our lives? And so, as I was thinking up this book, I thought, well, what sport would I want to write about? And it occurred to me that there's this sort of superstition in the black community that black people do not like to swim, like we don't like water. It's a myth, but there's some truth to it because it goes back to Africans being stolen from their land and being put on ships and having to travel months in the hole of ships across these blue waters. And so this notion that black people don't like water comes from that. At the same time, black people, Africans in particular, had a plethora of fishing villages, especially on the coast. Which meant we fished so we probably had to know how to swim." The more Alexander researched the issue, he discovered that some early origins of swimmers were in West Africa, cementing the idea that "water would play a huge role in this book. And it's ultimately gonna be the thing that can save him, save his life."

Alexander admits that "this was the hardest book I've ever written. Which is why it took so long. There were days where I just decided, I'm not gonna write today. I can't do it, I can't be in that space, because you're writing about wonder, and you're also writing about triumph, but you're also writing about tragedy. And how do you do that for an eleven-year-old kid or a fourteen-year-old kid?"

The key? "You want to be authentic. I'm a hope person. I believe in the power of hope and dreaming a world and staying. I wanna write books that instill that, that inspire that in kids, and empower them in that way. Trying to figure out how to do that with this book was like trying to push water up a hill with a rake and it became super challenging and painful and very, very exciting to try to figure out how to do it. And to this day, I hope I accomplished it."

Frances Gilbert

VP and Editor-in-Chief



interview by Lynne Marie

It's finally summer and time for fun, so what could be more fun than featuring an acquiring editor AND the author of a book about slime! So I'm very excited to welcome back Frances Gilbert this month.

In addition to being the editor-in-chief of Doubleday Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, Frances has authored picture books for Simon & Schuster and Random House, several Step Into Reading leveled readers, and a Little Golden Book.

LYNNE MARIE: Which came first for you, being an editor or a writer? How did that inform your success in the other career?

FRANCES GILBERT: I had been a children's book editor for almost twenty-five years before it occurred to me to write a children's book of my own. I wrote my first picture book, *Go, Girls, Go!*, as more of a writing exercise, with no intention of having it published. But I kept coming back to it and decided in the end to share it with some editors. I sort of stumbled into being a writer, but with a quarter century of experience behind me saying "Try it!" I'm glad I did.

Being a published author has given me a lot of insight into how hard an author must work to promote their books. Being active on social media, booking author events, talking to booksellers, writing to influencers – it all takes a lot of time but is very necessary. I'm in awe of the writers I work with such as Tammi Sauer who make it look so effortless.

LM: Please share your process for selecting which

ideas to pursue in your writing. When do you think like an author and when do you think like an editor?

FG: I always think like an editor. An editor always considers who the reader is and who the customer is. Alas, it's not enough for it just to be a nice story; as an editor who's managing a business I have to think about who will buy it. So, when I wrote *Go, Girls, Go!*, I knew books about vehicles have always been popular, but I wanted to write a story that gives that theme a different spin. By putting girls in the driver's seat, I knew there'd be many parents who would appreciate this differently gendered viewpoint for their children.

LM: How might our readers develop a similar process to inform their choices? What are some important things to consider when selecting which bright and shiny idea to pursue?

FG: It's blunt, but the question I always ask about my own writing and other people's writing is simply, "Who cares?" Is what you're writing interesting enough, fresh enough, new enough, compelling enough to inspire a publisher to spend many thousands of dollars on acquiring, developing, promoting, and selling your book? Is it enticing enough for a hardworking customer to part with their money and bring it home? Is it important enough for a cash-strapped library system to devote some of their resources to add it to their collection? Is a bookseller going to give some of their very limited shelf space to your idea? It has to meet all these criteria if it's going to be published.

LM: I absolutely chuckled through your newest pic-



Frances Gilbert...continued

ture book, *Too Much Slime!* Please share the story behind this idea.

FG: I'm glad it made you laugh! The idea came from being at a cottage with my cousin and her young daughter, who'd spent much of the summer making lots of slime. They were about to head home and were arguing about how many tubs she could bring with her. At some point my cousin declared that there was "too much slime!" and instantly knew I wanted to write about that. So I turned slime into the main character, and decided it would be fun to explore what would happen if slime took over a home, and then a street, a school, and a town. And I gave it kind of a *Cat In the Hat* treatment by getting rid of the parents and letting kids explore the fantasy of having this kind of adventure without parental input.

LM: Speaking to hooks, please share what you have determined to be the reading/marketing hooks for *Too Much Slime!*

FG: The marketing hook is that lots of kids make slime, and lots of parents complain about it, so my story is a bit of a nod to both the reader and the grown-ups. When I was four, I remember reading *Bread and Jam for Frances* with my mom. It's about a character who's a very picky eater, and my mom and I both found it funny because I was a famously picky eater and of course my mom knew it, so we bonded with a knowing laugh about that. I remember her saying, "You know this is you, right?" and me saying "Yes!" That lesson has stuck with me—to connect with both kids and adults and to give them that common ground to share. With *Too Much Slime!*, kids and grown-ups can both enjoy laughing about what would happen if the slime in their house suddenly grew and overwhelmed everything. It's like a very silly and low-stakes horror story. I also peppered the story with tons of made-up sound words from the slime, such as "flerk", which adds sheer goofiness to a read-aloud.



LM: Please share a tip to help our readers be best in touch with the age group they are writing about.

FG: It's important to read current books in the market to understand what kinds of stories today's kids are enjoying and grown-ups are buying. What books are indie publishers putting in their windows? What books does B&N have on display? Which books are featured at Target? And if you have your own kids, of course, study what they choose themselves, or what they ask to have read over and over again.

LM: Apart from an engaging premise, *Too Much Slime!* has age-appropriate and accessible humor. How important is humor in writing for the picture book set?

FG: Humor is important if your book is supposed to be funny! I tried to pack a lot of wry and also silly humor into that book, but not every book has to be funny. *Go, Girls, Go!* went for more of a motivational angle; *Too Much Slime!* is definitely funny; and I've just had a new picture book announced with Beach Lane/Simon & Schuster coming next year called *Can You Hug a Forest?*, which is gentle and mindful.

LM: What advice do you have for those who wish to write humorous picture books?

FG: I'm always surprised at how many submissions I get where the query letter tells me it's a humorous picture book but the text doesn't make me laugh. I wouldn't recommend writing funny picture books if you're not naturally funny. But for writers who are funny, I'd advise really pushing the humor to get the biggest belly laughs possible. Don't phone anything in or get lazy. Work on your humorous writing the way a comic hones her or his standup material over months on the road. When I work with funny writers such as Dev Petty, Mike Boldt, Tammi Sauer, and Alex Willan, they're always pushing themselves to make each story, each line, each word funnier and funnier. The trick of course is to make it look effortless.



Frances Gilbert...continued

LM: Can you recommend some good humor mentor texts?

FG: I'm a bit nervous about the idea of mentor texts because I want writers to be original, and I worry that someone might think that if they write in the pattern or style of a popular writer they'll get published. I wouldn't want to encourage people to think there's any kind of magic formula they can follow. But in terms of books that make me laugh really, really hard, and which have strong authorial voices, memorable characters, perfect comic timing, and bonkers-yet-believable story lines, some of my favorites that I've published are: *Chicken Dance* by Tammi Sauer and Dan Santat; *No Bunnies Here!* by Tammi Sauer and Ross Burach; *I Don't Want to Be a Frog* (and the three sequels) by Dev Petty and Mike Boldt; *Don't Eat Bees!* by Dev Petty and Mike Boldt; *Bad Dog* by Mike Boldt; and the two *Jasper & Ollie* books by Alex Willan.

LM: Please share your thoughts on how to achieve successful comedic timing.

FG: Think of a picture book as a physical object. A joke can sometimes land better if you time it so that it comes after a page-turn, as it can give your story a beat or pause to really set up the joke and can allow the illustrator to create something surprising and/or hilarious for the page after the page-turn. I wouldn't recommend overdoing that trick; you can't have a whole book full of wry page-turns, but if you use it selectively it can amplify the humor.

A lot of the humor is also in the tension between words and art. This is why we always stress that you should "let the illustrator speak". It's like in the TV show *Arrested Development* where something happening in the scene is directly contradicted by what the voice-over is saying. That ironic contrast can be brilliantly funny. But, again, add it to your toolbox but don't overdo it. An entire picture book of ironic distance between the text and

illustrations can feel pat and overdone.

LM: What do you look for in a good fiction pitch? Nonfiction pitch? Illustrator postcard?

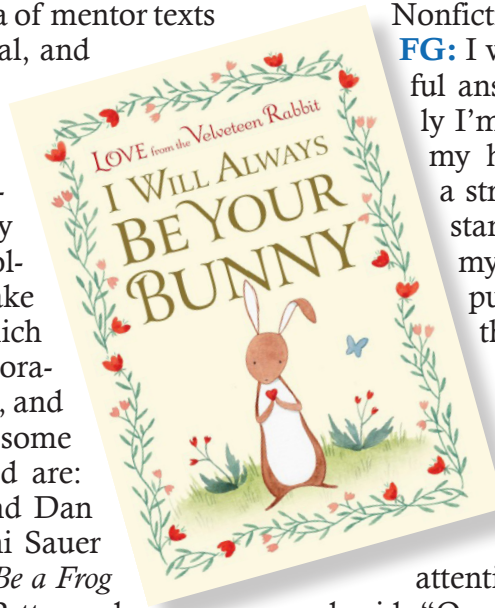
FG: I wish I had a more specific and helpful answer for this but I never do. Mostly I'm looking for a fresh idea that turns my head. And ideally something with a strong hook that will allow me to instantly know how I can present this to my colleagues in sales, marketing, and publicity and how they can sell this to their booksellers and libraries.

One thing I don't need to hear about in your pitch is how many words it is. That's not at all interesting information to include when you're trying to grab an editor's attention. No editor has ever read a pitch and said, "Oooo, 256 words! Sign it up!" So that's one thing writers can cross off their list of things to stress about!

LM: Name some books that are good examples of what you are looking for in a project to take on?

FG: In terms of recent books I've published, there's *A Grandma's Magic* by Charlotte Offsay and Asa Gilland, which is a tribute to grandmas and their everyday magic. I loved the fresh spin Charlotte took with her story, pointing out that daily family activities such as gardening, playing, baking, sewing, and exploring are all magic in their own way.

I also recently published one of the most unique, beautiful, and brilliant books of my career: *I'd Like to Be the Window for a Wise Old Dog* by the wonderful Philip Stead. I'd urge everyone to read it. It's a gentle but unusual and open-ended story about imagination and possibility. It feels like an instant classic—something that could have been published fifty years ago or today and would be equally relevant and need-ed. And there's no "hook"; just extraordinary language and heartbreakingly gorgeous illustrations. It will certainly provide thoughtful inspiration to push your words to new heights.



Frances Gilbert...continued

LM: Share your excitement about one of your latest acquisitions and what the story is about.

FG: I recently acquired something incredibly special, which comes out next summer: *Under the Blanket Sky*, written and illustrated by Tim Fischer. It's his debut and yet it shows the accomplishment of someone who's been writing and illustrating for children for decades. It's the story of a young boy who meets an unlikely friend—a huge, fuzzy owl—and how they grow closer over one long yet fleeting summer. When the owl must fly away as the weather gets colder, the boy grieves this loss, and yet comes to understand that sometimes there are beings who pass through our lives and change us forever, and their love and memory sustain us. I've honestly never read or seen anything like it and I think it's going to make huge waves next year. I can't remotely describe how perfect it is.

LM: Please share anything you may have on your wish list or do not want to see from our readers, as far as genre, topic, theme, etc.

FG: I don't have a wish list but I will say I'm not at all interested in stories that rely on formulas or prescribed rules, which tend to make a lot of stories sound similar to each other. I'd encourage writers to stop thinking about limitations that they've heard about and focus on the fun part instead: the creativity. I reject many manuscripts each week because they sound the same, so I'd love to stress that following the rules not only won't get you closer to being published, it likely will become a hindrance. Free yourselves!

If you're looking for some tips and techniques to add humor to your picture book manuscript, check out *How to Write Funny Picture Books* with editor Natascha Biebow, an on-demand webinar from WritingBlueprints.com, at writingblueprints.com/p/how-to-write-funny-picture-books

Frances Gilbert is offering a special **Above the Slushpile** submission opportunity for CBI subscribers. **Until July 31, 2022**, you can submit a 350-character pitch/synopsis of your fiction or nonfiction board book or picture book manuscript, along with other information, via the online form at bit.ly/ATSJuly2022FrancesGilbert. Frances will read all pitches and respond to those she's interested in by October 31, 2022. If you haven't heard back by the end of October, consider it a pass. Please see penguinrandomhouse.ca/imprints/8C/doubleday-books-young-readers to get a feel for what Doubleday Books for Young Readers publishes.

---Please Read Before You Proceed---

For a detailed explanation of the Above the Slushpile submission form, as well as tips for writing your pitch, see cbiclubhouse.com/clubhouse/slushpile-new/

To watch Laura's Kidlit Social interview about how to know when your manuscript is ready to submit, go to writeforkids.org/blog/kidlitdistancingsocial70/

Before you submit your manuscript please run the following checklist. This will ensure that editors will continue to offer us Above the Slushpile codes:

- You've chosen one manuscript to pitch for each Above the Slushpile opportunity. If the editor or agent shows interest in that submission, you'll have the opportunity to mention your other work.
- You've studied the submission guidelines and verified that your manuscript falls within those guidelines.
- You've confirmed your work matches the interests of the editor by reading their CBI interview, and studying recent books on their list.
- Your work has been critiqued by a beta reader, critique partner/group, or a freelance editor.
- You have thoroughly revised and polished your manuscript so it is ready to submit should the editor ask to see the entire work.

HANDLING A REVISION LETTER

WITHOUT LOSING YOUR MIND (OR GAINING 17 POUNDS)

by Jane McBride

How do you handle revision notes from an editor?

First, let me tell you where I'm coming from: a background of so many rejections that you might tell me I should have given up long ago. Rejections became a way of life in our family. My husband and children dreaded them because they knew the letters (they came in an envelope back in the day) would send me into depression or a fit of anger or headed to the grocery store to stock up on candy, ice cream, and cake.

These days, instead of rejections I usually receive revision letters, normally via email. These are slightly more fun than rejection letters, but they still sting. Revision letters say one thing: my seemingly perfect manuscript was not so perfect after all. But just as I eventually learned to handle rejection letters, I also learned to handle revision ones.

I had to mentally and emotionally absorb the notes. This means reading through them. I usually did that quickly, then read through them again, this time more slowly.

Absorbing the notes took yet another read. By this time, I had settled down enough to admit that, okay, maybe my words, sweated and bled over as they were, needed some help, and, yes, the plot did go astray halfway through the book, and, yes, again, the characters were acting inconsistently upon occasion. This admission took a lot of humility and swallowing of pride.

But I still needed to get my attitude in the right place. What does this mean? For me, it means accepting that the revisions will make the book better.

And 99% of the time, they do. (We'll discuss later what to do when you honestly feel a certain change recommended by the editor doesn't work.)

Armed with chocolate, I approached the revisions with the sage advice of how to eat an elephant: one bite at a time.

Let's break down eating this particular elephant into the Mini Blueprint system.

STEP 1: Cry or throw things if you need to. Some revisions are so overwhelming that crying seems to be the only option. My first revision letter for a major publisher sent me into such a tailspin that I thought I would never find my way out of it. My husband came home from work and found me sobbing because I didn't know what to do.

ACTION: Spend the time you need on this step. It's a kind of cleansing or purging that allows you to get to work. If you need to and have the time, put aside the revision letter and your manuscript and work on something else for a couple of days. Allow yourself to deal with the enormity of it.

STEP 2: Decide upon your approach to tackling the revisions. Your approach will be different from mine which will be different from your best writer friend.

ACTION: Decide if you want to dive right in with the major revisions or if you want to start small. Over the years, I've developed a system for tackling revisions. I begin with the smallest ones, the ones that won't be affected by major plot or character-

Revision Letter...continued

ization revisions, then I move on to the mid-sized ones, and finally to the largest. By getting some of the small revisions out of the way, I gained confidence, which I sorely needed before attacking the bigger ones. A caveat here about starting with the smallest revisions and working your way up to the biggest ones: if the larger ones involve taking out big chunks of the manuscript, it probably doesn't make sense to work on the smallest ones when they may be deleted in the sweeping changes you are making.

STEP 3: Look at your time schedule. How long do you have to complete the revisions? My editor typically wants a ten day to two week turnaround. This is not a long period, meaning I need to budget my time accordingly.

ACTION: Consider dividing up the revisions you need to make in daily chunks. This is not a word-count thing. It is determining where you need to spend the bulk of your time. If the editor wants you to beef up conflict, start there. This is a biggie and will likely affect everything else.

STEP 4: If you have questions, contact your editor and ask for clarification.

ACTION: Do not start off without knowing where you're going. Don't be afraid to ask your editor what he means by "flesh out this character" or "too much telling, not enough showing." Though we hear those phrases frequently, they can mean different things to different people.

STEP 5: Talk to your editor directly and honestly if you feel that a certain change will detract from your story. Make certain that you approach her with an attitude of "Let's talk about this and work it out."

ACTION: Think about why you don't want to make the suggested change. Is it an ego thing? If so, put your ego under the bed and keep it there. Or is it that you truly feel that the revision will detract from your story. In writing the first book for

the series that I am now working on, I had used the word "Daddy" whenever the heroine referred to her father. The story was set in Georgia. Having a number of relatives who live in the south and my own mother being a Tennessee girl, I knew that people, especially women, often referred to their fathers as "Daddy," no matter what their age. For my heroine to say "Dad" or "Father" or another word didn't sound right. What's more, any reader from the south would know that it was false. I explained my reasoning to my editor who graciously agreed. I accepted all the other revisions, seeing that she was spot-on in her comments.

STEP 6: Go through the manuscript as your own editor. See if anything stands out to you that maybe the editor or her copy or line editor missed.

ACTION: This is the time to be picky. In revising one manuscript, I discovered that I had used the word "focus" eleven times. Eleven times in one manuscript! What had I been thinking? Obviously, this was one of my pet words. Do you have any pet words or phrases? I word-searched "focus" and found that I could use another word or phrase for many of those times. I think I ended up leaving in only three of the eleven words. Have you noticed that you use the same sentence construction over and over? Perhaps it is prepositional phrase/subject/verb construction. Or maybe you stick to the basics and write subject/verb construct repeatedly. This is the time to mix it up. Whenever you find that you are overusing one of your "darlings," this is the time to take it out.

WRAPPING UP

Editors want your book to succeed. They also want you to succeed as a writer. Think about it: if an editor has taken the time to write a revision letter to you, it means that she is investing her time and energy in helping your book and you succeed. Editors' time is valuable, and they don't spend it carelessly. Take the revision letter for what it is—a mark of faith in you.

Food and Family: Children and Adult Author Ginger Park

interview by PJ McIlvaine

As a child, Ginger Park dreamed of being a gymnast until life intervened and showed her a different path. Family, history, and chocolate led her to write her critically acclaimed middle grade historical *The Hundred Choices Department Store* (Fitzroy Books/Regal House, April 2022) about a young teen navigating life in North Korea during the Japanese occupation in WWII and then the Korean War. A prolific writer in several genres who also co-writes with her sister Frances, Park has been published by National Geographic, Boyds Mills & Kane, Hyperion, Lee & Low, St. Martin's Press, and Thomas Dunne, and garnered many accolades including the International Reading Association's Children's Book Award, Paterson Prize for Books for Young People, The Joan G. Sugarman Children's Book Award, Outstanding Merit, Best Children's Books of the Year, Bank Street College, Parents' Choice Award, A Junior Library Guild Selection, IRA-CBC Teachers' Choice Award, and NCSS-CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book For Young People Children's Book Award. An empty nester, Park lives in Virginia with her family and fur babies, and loves tennis, reading, cooking, and dining out. With her sister, Park operates a high-end chocolate boutique Chocolate Chocolate in Washington, D.C. (<https://www.chocolatedc.com/>). You can find out more about the eclectic Park Sisters and all their upcoming releases at (<https://www.parksisters.com/>).

PJ McILVAINE: Your much-praised middle grade historical novel is a story inspired by your Korean parents and their struggles during and after wartime

in their native land. What compelled you to write it?

GINGER PARK: Growing up, I wasn't all that curious about my family roots. In fact, there was a black and white photo of my mom's family that sat on her bedroom dresser for decades. As a kid, I passed that photo thousands of times never once pausing to think who they were. How did they live? How did they die? While these strangers were in my bloodlines, they weren't in my heart—they were merely ghost-like images looking back at me. But when my mom shared a story about this same family owning a department store during the Japanese occupation of Korea, a store that catered only to wealthy Japanese shoppers, I became intrigued. Suddenly an illustrious story unfolded before my eyes—of a department store that burned to the ground during the Russia invasion, of a family torn apart by war. It was as if the black & white photo became a rich oil painting that was a part of my history—these people, their lives, their dreams and losses are the reasons I'm here today.



PM: Did you find it difficult and/or emotional to blend fact and fiction into one cohesive story?

GP: Difficult only in that I wanted to stay true to my family's story. That said, the book is based on my mother's memories, which was tricky as my mother didn't recall her past in linear fashion. When my mother shared stories of old-world Korea, she was all over the map, and often when I had a question about a particular incident, she couldn't remember all the details. So...there was plenty of room for the

Ginger Park...continued

creative process. Emotionally, it was heartbreaking to learn of all the tragedy and sacrifice my family suffered so I could live in a free world.

PM: How much research did the book entail?

GP: The book required in-depth research on World War II, the Russian invasion of northern Korea, and the Korean War. But confirming my mother's memories was a bit challenging, i.e, timeline and events. But I learned if you dig deep enough, even the most obscure events can be confirmed.

PM: Do you share any traits with Miyook, your main character?

GP: Not at all. Miyook is truly my mother, and it was an honor to step into her shoes and become that little girl who lived through Korea's most tumultuous era.

PM: Did your parents (now deceased) encourage your writing as a child?

GP: I didn't write when I was a child (I don't count my journal, but maybe I should!). I was a gymnast with Olympic goals (for a nano second!) who spent most of my time turning aerials and doing backflips. But that all changed after my father's untimely death two days before my seventeenth birthday. Panicked, I clung to my mother afraid if I so much as looked away, she would leave me too. It was then that I started asking a lot of questions about my family—I was desperate to know everything before the stories of my family were lost forever. Interestingly, while documenting my family history, I was not only crafting my art, but I was healing my panicked heart, too.

PM: What was your favorite book as a child?

GP: *Charlotte's Web*—read it more than a dozen times.

PM: You have quite an eclectic writing background (cookbooks, a memoir, picture books). How do you know which format is right for a particular story?

GP: I primarily write for children, but I went on a decade hiatus from children's books to write my chocolate shop memoir and cookbook for allergy sufferers in honor of my then young son who couldn't eat dairy, tree nuts, peanuts, eggs, and a slew of other foods. Fortunately, he outgrew most of them! Then I decided to write my first historical middle grade novel.

PM: Do you outline?

GP: No, never! My process is organic—I allow my imagination to take me on my writing journey.

PM: When do you know that it's time to write a particular story?

GP: Honestly, I never know. As mentioned above, it's an organic process. An idea will inspire me, and I'll run with it. I will say, the release of *The Hundred Choices Department Store* within weeks of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is an eerie coincidence and a reminder that history will always repeat itself.

PM: How long does it take you to write the first draft?

GP: It depends on the genre and inspiration. The first draft of *The Hundred Choices Department Store* took

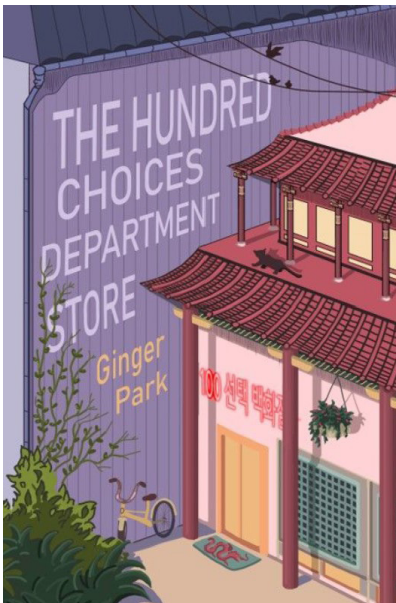
about three months. First draft of one of my picture books took a day. First draft of another picture book took two years!

PM: Do you revise as you write?

GP: Always—I'm a bit of an imperfect perfectionist. I probably waste too much time revising as I go along, but it's part of my unique process.

PM: Who is the first person to read what you've written? Are you your own worst critic?

GP: Given that a lot of my work is inspired by my mom's life, my mom always read my work. But since her passing, I write and submit. My other family members are too close to be objective. In their eyes,



Ginger Park...continued

everything is great!

Yes, I am most definitely my worst critic. In my eyes, the project is never done--even a finished glossy hard-back book with great reviews could use some edits!

PM: You've co-written children's books with your sister Frances. Do you come up with ideas together or separately? What is your writing process like when writing a book together? Who has the last word if you have differences?

GP: Sometimes I come up with the idea and hammer out a first draft then give it to my sister to add her poetry, and vice versa. The back-and-forth revisions can go on a few or even several dozen times depending on the scope of the work. We never work 'together' on any of our projects nor do we talk about the project--every discussion is through margin comments and email. It's quirky, but it works for us. Frances and I are very close, which makes our process easy. We're very much in sync, so there are no surprises.

PM: On your path to publication, was there anything that surprised you or in hindsight, you wished you could've changed? From the first draft to the offer, how long did it take for *The Hundred Choices Department Store* to find a publishing home? And what a great title—how did you come up with it?

GP: I had submitted queries to ten agents and six asked for full manuscripts and the founder of an agency got back to me within a week. I'll never forget her first words: "What's it going to take to bring you on as a client?" I was on cloud nine as this was a big agency with a lot of clout. But that cloud nine feeling had me coming back down to earth when in slow gut-wrenching realization, I learned the agent who was representing my book was new to the agency as well as to the world of children's publishing and didn't have many contacts. In fact, she's no longer in the industry. I appreciated her efforts as she shopped the book everywhere and there were a cou-

ple of close acquisitions, at least it felt that way—talk of board meetings, editorial meetings, etc., but those connections are vital as it's easy to turn away work when there isn't a relationship and there's a slush pile of manuscripts waiting for you. In the end, I parted ways with the agency and let the manuscript sit for a year. Then the pandemic hit, and I had more time on my hands and decided to search independent publishers. Frances, who had previously submitted work to Regal House Publishing, suggested I do the same and the rest is history!



Ginger Parks' mother (in hat).

As for the title—when I asked my mom for the name of the family department store, she said it was a difficult translation from Korean to English. I asked if the name had a meaning and she replied, "Many choices!" Moments later, the title of my book popped into my head.

PM: You have an agent for your kid lit material now, but what was the querying process like? Is your agent hands-on editorially?

GP: A few years ago, I submitted a middle-grade novel that my current agent loved. Though the book received wonderful feedback, ultimately, it wasn't sold.

But I loved my agent's process and felt we were always on the same page—kindred spirits, so we stayed in touch. We hooked up during the pandemic with my forthcoming picture book co-authored with Frances titled *Grandpa's Scroll*, which will be published by Albert Whitman & Co. We're so excited!

My agent can be hands-on with edits, or not--it really depends on the project. With the picture book not as much, but with the middle-grade novel I recently completed, there were some solid edits, which I'm now diving into.

PM: In the modern age of publishing and social media, it's become somewhat the norm that authors have to be more proactive and creative in terms of marketing their books. Do you find that challenging? Or have you pivoted during the pandemic?

Ginger Park...continued

GP: Challenging in that I would rather be writing all day. By nature, I'm a hermit, but the world sees me as a social butterfly. Maybe I'm a little of both. I know that promoting comes with the territory, so I'm very active on social media, putting myself out there, doing my little song and dance promotion. I'm also a member of SCBWI and the Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC, both of which are fantastic organizations that help authors promote their work. And my chocolate shop in Washington, DC gives me tremendous exposure. I've learned that whether on-line or in person, it's all about building community, which fosters support.

PM: What are you working on now?

GP: As I mentioned, I'm working on edits for a middle-grade novel about my family's conversion from Confucianism to Christianity—not a religious book so to speak, but a spiritual one. The heroine of the book is my grandmother. I never had the opportunity to meet her, but I've heard countless times from numerous distant relatives that she was the most revered woman in northern Korea.

PM: How do you juggle family, writing, and running a specialty store?

GP: First off, Frances and I were chocoholics before it was a word! Also, we're in the shop three days a week, so we have plenty of time to write. The truth is writing requires solitude and lots of it! So, when we're not writing, it's nice to head into the shop for a day of chocolate and book chat with customers--gives our lives balance and harmony. Besides, my husband and I are empty nesters--well... if you don't count our three crazy and lovable doodles!

PM: Since you're a foodie at heart, was it always your plan to combine food and writing? Can you elaborate on the commonalities of chocolate making and writing? And you know I have to ask: what is your favorite candy? And chocolate—milk, dark, or white?

GP: I'll answer the last question first: Anything with dark chocolate be it caramel, nuts, ganache. But I suppose I'm a purist at heart as plain dark chocolate does it for me. There's nothing wrong with milk chocolate (sorry, I don't do white chocolate!), but dark chocolate gives me that nice mood boost.

We don't make our chocolate, but rather offer a global variety for every chocolate craving. Sometimes you want something deep dark and earthy like a cocoa dusted truffle. Other times, you crave that comfort chocolate such as our dark almond bark. I'll never forget the day after 9/11. Our shop was full of customers who were there for comfort and a need for connections. Suddenly, a customer on her way out the door paused and raised a slab of dark almond bark

and said, "If you handed this out in a warzone, there would be peace on earth." Everyone cheered. The power of chocolate. Rest assured, whenever I'm writing, I'm nibbling on dark chocolate.

As for candy—I love dark chocolate gummy bears. See? Everything covered in dark chocolate!

If you read our books, you'll soon realize there's always a food theme be it bagels, chocolate, Korean food. It's funny, but I wasn't aware of how much I wrote about food in *The Hundred Choices Department Store* until it was brought to my attention by my readers--it's clearly a subconscious part of my writing process.



Frances and Ginger Park in their D.C. chocolate boutique, Chocolate Chocolate.

Tips For Deeply Connecting Readers With Characters

by Jane McBride

A large part of good writing is connecting with the reader. We do that by establishing intimacy between the reader and our characters as soon as possible. What do we mean by “intimacy”? Forging an emotional connection so the reader feels part of the story and closer to the characters.

Most of us know not to begin a book with long passages of narrative. Readers want to meet the main character right off. They don’t have the time or inclination to wade through pages of exposition or backstory or description. Though such techniques worked decades or even a century ago, they are outdated now and will put readers off. A writer wants to snare his readers early on, and that includes the first readers— an agent and/or editor.

So how do we go about this?

Avoiding filter words. What are filter words? Filter words remove the action one step further from the reader. Compare “I saw the building collapse” with “The building collapsed.” The second is stronger writing because it doesn’t dilute the action with unnecessary words (I saw).

Using qualifiers sparingly. Qualifying words and phrases include such things as *very, nearly, mostly, almost, kind of, probably, possibly, might have been*. A qualifier is added to another word to modify its meaning (Jack was a somewhat motivated student./The puppy is very affectionate.) Writing that contains too many qualifiers can sound unclear or wordy. Whenever possible, it’s best to replace the qualifier and word it qualifies with more precise phrasing that says exactly what you mean. (Jack received his usual B-grade on the test./The puppy greets even strangers with kisses.)

Qualifiers can be powerful if used intentionally. *Jack was probably telling the truth* can show your reader that the narrator wants to believe Jack, and has reason to believe him, but still holds enough doubt to remain

a bit skeptical. That long explanation was captured in the word probably. But if the author overuses this technique, the reader will soon become annoyed with a narrator who never takes a firm stance on anything.

Having a character confide something that only she and the reader will know. Readers love to be in on a secret. If a character does something that only the reader knows, he is sharing that part of himself with the reader. Secrets are powerful stuff. What if you are writing a story about an eight-year-old girl whose step-father is molesting her? Our young protagonist, Sheila, hasn’t told anyone. Her step-father has threatened her and her little sister. Only the readers are in on this devastating secret. Sheila carries this awful burden alone until she finds the courage to confide in a counselor at school.

Having characters lie to each other, or better yet, to themselves. We want to believe that we are above lying, that we would never lie to anyone, much less to someone important to us, someone we love. The fact is that many people lie in some form every day. These lies may not be intended to hurt another person. Often they are “little white lies,” those told to spare someone’s feelings. They may be lies to make us feel better about ourselves. There are also lies of omission. In the above example, Sheila is “lying” to her mother by keeping what is happening to her a secret. What about a story where the protagonist is lying to protect someone else? Ten-year-old Ryan knows that his twelve-year-old brother Georgie is being bullied every day at school in his middle school. Georgie begs Ryan not to tell his parents because they would only go to the school and demand that the principal do something, making everything much worse. When the boys’ mother asks Ryan what’s bothering his brother, Ryan longs to tell her, but he’s given his word to his brother that he won’t say anything about the bullying. Instead, he tells their mother that Georgie likes a girl in his class, a girl who doesn’t like him back. The lie tastes sour in Ryan’s mouth, but he won’t go back on his word to his brother. Ryan is

Tips For Deeply Connecting...continued

torn up inside that his brother is suffering and that he (Ryan) can't do anything about it. Do you see how the lie adds to the story's conflict and opens Ryan's dilemma up to the reader on a deeply emotional level?

Writing in first person. First person point-of-view (POV) is a powerful tool. It brings a sense of immediacy to a story that third person POV may not be able to achieve. Warning: first person writing is difficult to bring off satisfactorily. It can begin to sound stilted, even egotistical, as the narrator continues to refer to himself as I, me, myself, my. *Catcher in the Rye* is an iconic book for many reasons, one of which is the strong first person narrator, Holden Caulfield. J.D. Salinger perfectly captures Holden's sardonic voice. A number of children's mystery novels are written in first person, such as the Red Blazer Girls series by Michael Beil and the Ruby Redfort series by Lauren Child. One benefit of writing mysteries in first person is that the reader knows only as much as the main character (narrator) does and therefore must solve the mystery along with the narrator.

Writing in the present tense. This frequently pairs with writing in first person and, likewise, can bring a sense of immediacy to the writing. It takes a skilled hand to pull this off. *When I Was Joe* by Keren Davis, *Massive* by Julia Bell, and *Beast* by Ally Kennen are prime examples of books penned in the present tense. When combined with writing in first person, writing in the present tense can give an unfiltered look into a character's deepest fears and his most intense joys. Let's try writing the opening of a book about Kerri, a sixteen-year-old high school junior who is accustomed to being the prettiest and most popular girl in her class, if not the whole school. However, things have changed. Kerri was in a horrific car accident over the summer. Though she's had plastic surgery, there is still much more to do to restore her face to what it was. The scene opens as Kerri walks into school on the first day back after summer vacation. She has been dreading this day.

I hear them. Whispering. Snickering. At me. Me. The most beautiful girl this crappy school has ever seen. What do they know? What does anyone know about what it is to look in the mirror and wish you'd never been born?

I hold my head up. They can whisper and snicker all they want, but they won't make me cry. I'll cry plenty. Later. When I'm alone.

I am Kerri Harewood.

Contrast this with the first line written in the past tense.

I heard them. Whispering. Snickering. At me. Me.

Do you hear the difference? Only one word has been altered (heard), but it changes the beat and feel of the sentence.

-Using deep point-of-view. When a writer uses deep POV, he brings not just the character's thoughts and feelings to the forefront, he enhances them by showing visceral responses. Notice the use of the word *showing*. Never is it more important to show than when one is in deep POV. This advanced technique of writing rarely tells. Rather, it shows. Remember, the mind and body are inextricably connected.

Consider this:

Cara felt sad because her best friend Samantha was moving to California where her father had taken a new job.

This is prosaic writing, at best. Try this instead:

Cara's stomach twisted in on itself until she was certain she was going to puke. Or worse. How would she live without Samantha? How would she even exist?

In the second example, we see that Cara is not only sad, she is physically sick at the idea of her friend leaving, so sick that she fears she will throw up. Plus, you've got your readers' attention as they immediately wonder what is worse than puking.

WRAPPING UP

You will probably find more ways, different ways to connect your readers with your character. Experiment with various techniques. Combine them. Leave out what doesn't work for you and embrace what does.

The Benefits of Self-Publishing with Your Creative Kid

by April Cox

Editor's Note: The Roman philosopher Seneca said, "While we teach, we learn." What better way to polish your own writing and publishing skills than to help your creative child self-publish a book this summer? Here April Cox, founder of Little Labradoodle Publishing and Self-Publishing Made Simple, gives free tips and resources for helping your young author or illustrator self-publish, gleaned from her work with six kids bringing their own book projects to fruition.

Over the last couple of years I have had the pleasure of working with six creative kids and their parents to self-publish stories created by each child. At first, I have to admit I was skeptical. Is a seven-year-old truly able to create a marketable story? Could they fully participate in the process of self-publishing that story?

Well, let me tell you... the answer is a resounding YES! As I interviewed these creative kids for my Rise of the Kid Authors series, I saw amazing transformations from the shy, reserved children that I started working with to the confident and inspired kids you see in the interviews.

As they shared their favorite parts of the self-publishing process and talked about their biggest challenges, they came alive with a spark that was truly awesome to see. What struck me most was the bonding experience the adults and kids shared and how much their relationship grew as they worked through the

publishing of the book together.

I helped them go from finalizing their manuscript to a self-published book, working through every step together. It was such a pleasure for me to be part of these journeys and witness their transformations.

Top 10 Benefits

There were so many benefits to the parent and child as a result of this collaboration. The top ten are listed below.

Fosters Creativity - Allows kids to tap into their creative side, and use their imagination to develop something unique that becomes a source of pride. Whether they are writers or budding illustrators, there are so many benefits to the creative process.

Builds Confidence - As the kids work through the process and face challenges, they become more confident and practice grit and resilience. Accolades come from family, friends and maybe even the local press can provide a bit of celebrity as well as a huge dose of accomplishment. Let's not forget the feeling of holding their book in their hands, or even seeing it in a store for the first time. What a confidence boost!

Bonding Opportunities - The interviews clearly show the bonding that has occurred through

Your Creative Kid...continued

these projects. The creative duos are laughing and joking about the struggles and their experience, having grown closer as a result. Let's face it, when we get to spend quality 1:1 time with our kids, it benefits the relationship.

Develops Resilience - Kids learn that projects don't always run perfectly. They learn to adjust and push through when problems arise. Mental toughness and grit develop as they work through the challenges and refuse to give up.

Improved Communication Skills - The child refines their communication skills as they work with editors, illustrators, mentors and others. They also share more with their teacher and peers about the project and may share it with their class and become a bit of a celebrity in the classroom. I have personally witnessed kids, once shy and reserved, coming out of their shell and blossoming through this process.

Increased Assertiveness - Since there are bound to be differences in opinion between the child author and adults offering help, kids learn to advocate for themselves and their ideas. They develop courage to push back on ideas from their editor or assert themselves regarding the illustrations and final finished product. This has been true of each of the kids with whom I have worked.

Patience and Discipline - The publishing pro-

cess can be long and tedious. It requires discipline and patience to keep on track over a period of months before the author is rewarded by holding a copy of his or her new book.

Business and Entrepreneurial Skills - Watching Adam Musselmani talk about his book, where it is available and how he supports his community, is a perfect example of the marketing, communication and entrepreneurial skills that have developed over the past year or two. As he now works on book two, he is involved more on the business side, which expands his business acumen.

Less Time on Devices - As parents, we are always looking for ways to limit screen time. Creative projects are a great way to encourage that. Additionally, field trips—like visits

to the library, book stores and nature, are excellent immersion opportunities for the child author to learn more about a topic or about publishing in general..

Inspiration and Emotions - Kids often write about something they are passionate about or use the opportunity to work through something. For Annabelle Wallick, it gave her the opportunity to work through strong emotions, which resulted in the book, *My Feelings are a Hurricane*. Being able to work through those feelings as well as help others through her book has been cathartic. For child author Leiya Davey, passion for speaking up fueled



Your Creative Kid...continued

the book, *My Voice is My SuperPower*. When brainstorming topics with your child author, ask, “What topics are important to you?”

Help & Resources

Because I want everyone to be able to access development help for their creative projects, I have pulled together some resources for you.

[The Rise of Kid Authors Series](#) - Check out the series of interviews with six creative kids and their parents. The interviews are stored on my YouTube channel: **[Self-Publishing Made Simple with April Cox](#)** where you will also find a wealth of information on self-publishing topics.

[Self-Publishing with Kids Facebook Group](#) - I have created a Facebook group to allow parents to connect, ask questions and share their experiences within a community that is monitored by myself and my team.

Free Meetings - I conduct and sponsor author events and meetings to support those working through the process. Visit my website for a list of upcoming events at **www.selfpubmadesimple.com/upcoming-events**.

Tools & Templates - Free tools and templates are available to utilize throughout your journey including a self-publishing checklist, budget template, list of editors/illustrators as well as **[other author resources](#)**.

Group Coaching - I will be scheduling sessions with those who are working through self-publishing with their kids, to help encourage and support your efforts. Post your questions and interest **[in the Facebook group](#)** to help us coordinate the sessions.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage you to work with your creative child. Whether you

are a parent, grandparent or just have a special kid you want to encourage—take this opportunity to bond with the child and make memories together that will last a lifetime.

You don't need to spend a fortune or formally publish the story to realize the benefits. You can write a story, use clip art and even place it in a photo book with the help of your local pharmacy or favorite photo-printing store. The most important thing is that you work together and support creativity. This could be a game-changer to encourage huge growth in your child as well as in your relationship together. You've got this!