

Children's Book Insider

The Children's Writing Monthly  November 2022

Understanding Today's Young Adult Market



**Above the Slushpile
Submission Opportunity:**



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At Presstime:

Native and First Nations-focused Imprint of HarperCollins Accepting Submissions

Heartdrum is a Native-focused imprint of HarperCollins Children's Books, author-curated by Cynthia Leitch Smith and edited by Rosemary Brosnan. The focus is on Indigenous stories that reflect Native people whose Nations are located within the borders of what's now called the United States and Canada. In this, the publisher is mindful and inclusive of intersectional identities and various modern settings.

Looking for Native and First Nations writers and writer-illustrators to submit picture book, chapter book, middle grade novel, and young adult novel manuscripts as well as middle grade and young adult nonfiction manuscripts, and both poetry and graphic novel formats. Writing that reflects young protagonists and/or youth-related topics are welcome. Emphasis will be on contemporary, near histories and/or futuristic works, including realistic fiction and genre fiction.

The writing should be for young readers as an audience, not writing for adults that is inclusive of a young characters and/or childhood reflections. Check out the [Heartdrum Submission Guidelines](#) from HarperCollins for information about the imprint and see current titles [here](#). Submit through the contact form at <https://cynthialeitchsmith.com/contact/> (scroll down to see the form). Type "Heartdrum" at the beginning of the subject line, followed by your title and byline. In the body of the message, include your query for the manuscript (plot summary) along with a professional bio, including tribal affiliation(s), any website or social media links, and, if you're an illustrator or author-illustrator, a link to your portfolio. Dues to the volume of submissions received, any submissions that fall outside of the focus of the Heartdrum imprint will be deleted without a response.

Award-Winning Publisher Accepting Submissions for All Ages

Holiday House publishes award-winning hardcover fiction and nonfiction for children and young adults, ages 4-18. The publisher does not publish mass-market books, including pop-ups, activity books, sticker books, coloring books, or licensed books. Recent titles include *Of Walden Pond: Henry David Thoreau, Frederic Tudor, and the Pond Between* by Lesa Cline-Ransome, illustrated by Ashley Benham Yazdani (nonfiction picture book); *I'm Ogre It* by Jeffrey Ebbeler (easy reader); *Middle School Bites: Night of the Vam-Wolf-Zom* by Steven Banks (middle grade); *The People We Choose* by Katelyn Detweiler (young adult)

Accepting submissions for all ages. Send the entire manuscript, whether submitting a picture book or novel. Prefers submissions by email sent to submissions@holidayhouse.com (paste query letter into email, and attach full manuscript as Word document or PDF). Can also mail hard copies of query/manuscripts to Editorial Department, Holiday House, 50 Broad Street #301, New York, NY 10004. Send your manuscript via regular U.S. Mail. There is no need to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Responds within 4 months if interested.

Also accepting submissions from illustrators. Specifically looking for work that is highly original and geared to the trade market; humor, multicultural work, historical work, fantasy and folklore, and jacket art. Seeking illustrators who are professional and competent and have a strong understanding of the process involved in illustrating a children's book. Submit samples (copies only) to: Director of Art and Design, Holiday House, 50 Broad Street #301, NY, NY 10004. For a full list of recent titles, go to <https://holidayhouse.com/>

Jewish Publisher Accepting Children's Books for All Ages

Judaica Press, an independent publisher established over 50 years ago, publishes books that convey Torah-observant Jewish values for adults and children. See all current children's titles here: judaicapress.com/collections/jp-kids

For children's books, currently seeking board books for ages 0-3; picture books for ages 4-8; and short story collections and novels for middle grade (ages 8-12) and young adults (12 and up). Both fiction and nonfiction are considered, but all content must conform to Torah-observant Jewish values. Include a cover letter that briefly summarizes the content of the manuscript, and states its purpose and intended audience. It should also include the author's name, address, telephone number and email address, as well as a brief author bio, and table of contents if longer nonfiction. If your material has been published before, please indicate where and when, and confirm that you own the rights to your work. Attach complete manuscript as a Word document or PDF. Submit to submissions@judaicapress.com

Publisher Seeks Picture Books with Science/Math Components

Arbordale Publishing is an independent press publishing award-winning, fun-to-read picture book fiction and narrative nonfiction with science or math woven into the story. Each book includes a 2-6 page, nonfiction “For Creative Minds” section to reinforce the educational component of the book, with activities, crafts, or fun facts to be shared by the adult reading with the child. Authors will be asked to provide separate facts for this section. For current titles, go to arbordalepublishing.com/bookhome.php

Currently looking for manuscripts for ages 3-6, up to 1000 words, about physical science, engineering, earth science, and science or math manuscripts with a cultural/social studies connection. Standard format is 13 illustrated spreads of story, followed by 4 pages (2 spreads) of For Creative Minds. Prefers fiction with these concepts woven into the story over straight nonfiction. All manuscripts must align with Common Core, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and/or state-level Social Studies standards. All manuscripts must be national or regional in scope (no niche markets) and also marketable through non-bookstore outlets such as zoos, aquariums or museum gift shops. Because Arbordale needs authors and illustrators to actively participate in marketing their books, they are accepting submissions from authors in the US and Canada only. They are accepting bilingual manuscripts in English and Spanish. Please submit manuscript in both languages, and any additional material for the For Creative Minds section in English. Simultaneous submissions accepted on all manuscripts.

Arbordale is not interested in rhyming stories, anything related to COVID/pandemic, books about pets, new babies, biographies, counting, ABCs, holiday-related books, or magic/fantasy. Does not accept manuscripts that have been previously published.

All manuscripts should be submitted via email to submissions@arbordalepublishing.com. The manuscript text can be either pasted into the message or attached as a Microsoft Word document. Include a cover letter with an author biography of 300 to 400 words, including any previous publications, awards, etc., if applicable; a paragraph explaining why you wrote the manuscript; a list of any competitive books on the market (with author/illustrator, publisher, year published) and how yours is different; and a brief explanation of how you envision marketing the book. Also include a bibliography to indicate research on the underlying science concept, regardless whether the story is fiction or nonfiction. Author/illustrators may also attach two JPEG illustration sketches.

Responds within about three months. If you haven't heard back after three months, you can re-submit and mention the date of the original submission in your cover letter.

Small Publisher Seeks Meaningful Books for All Ages

City of Light Publishing is an independent publisher that strives to create beautiful, meaningful books for adults and children. Accepting submissions for each of their three children's imprints (*these are currently establishing lists):

CrissCross AppleSauce (picture book fiction, ages 3-8): books with meaningful, fun and/or educational stories. Seeking themes that can be understood by children but deeply appreciated by adults at the same time.

***Cross Your Fingers** (chapter books for ages 7-9, and middle grade for ages 8-12): interested in books with engaging stories that will hook young people and encourage them on their journey to becoming lifelong readers. These books can be nonfiction or fiction, but the manuscript must tell a great story or capture readers with fascinating information.

***Cross Your Heart** (young adult, ages 12 and up): interested in books that tell stories young adults relate to. Wants relatable characters, engaging plots, self-actualization, wild adventures, blooming teenage romance. While this imprint is geared toward fiction, will consider nonfiction submissions if it is right for the audience.

Because City of Light is a small press, it's important that you first study the publisher's current titles to be sure your work fits with what they do (cityoflightpublishing.com/books/childrens-books/). Submit full manuscript for fiction and all picture books, or a proposal with a detailed chapter-by-chapter outline for longer nonfiction. Include an author bio and/or resume noting the author's credentials and previous publication credits (if any); estimated or actual length of manuscript in words and, for nonfiction, a complete table of contents; author's marketing outline, definition of the book's target audience, a paragraph describing your books unique advantages, and a paragraph discussing the author's ability and willingness to participate in marketing their book. Also include a list of comparable titles (including title, author, ISBN, release date/year and price point) and how your book is similar and different.

All submissions are done online through the City of Light submission form at cityoflightpublishing.com/submission-guidelines/ (click on Submission Guidelines for the imprint you're submitting to, then scroll down to see button for Submission Form). Due to COVID backlog, the publisher is taking about three months to respond to submissions.

The Growing, Evolving YA Market

by PJ McIlvaine

Fun facts or misconceptions about young adult books: it's a genre (no, it's an age range). YA is strictly about tragic young love (wrong, the YA universe encompasses many genres). Adults wouldn't be caught dead reading YA. Again, manifestly incorrect. It's been estimated that nearly 70% of YA titles are bought by adults between the ages of 18-64. The young adult market is strong, commercially viable, and eminently profitable. The books showcased in the recent US Book Show Young Adult Editor's Pick Panel, hosted by Amanda Ramirez, a Children's Reviews Editor with *Publishers Weekly* who primarily focuses on YA books, underscored that in terms of crossover appeal as well as YA being a path for debut authors.

The sole nonfiction book touted in the panel was presented by Kaylan Adair, an executive editor at Candlewick Press. Adair said *Conversations to Help Save the World*, by the husband and wife team of Frederick Joseph and Porsche Joseph, was "the most important book I've ever worked on in my career because it's so much more than just a book, it's an ethos. It's a collection and celebration of progressive values" that "brings together sixteen of the most pressing topics" of the day relating the author's personal anecdotes and offering solutions from noted experts on how to bring about "positive change and really leave the world better than we found it." For example, Senator Elizabeth Warren spoke on education while author and global health advocate Chelsea Clinton discussed misinformation and disinformation. Calling the book a "gift to the next generation" from the authors who "poured so much of themselves into the book," Adair felt sure that today's readers would "come away informed but also really inspired."

Sarah Alpert, an editor at Algonquin Books, waxed enthusiastically for *Dead Flip* by award-winning author/pop culture sponge Sara Farizan, a witty and humorous YA horror in the vein of *Stranger Things*.

"It's the perfect blend of funny and scary. It gives you characters you love and a plot you can't predict." Plus, "her voice is so real. Even the coolest characters are awkward around their crushes, their noses run when they cry. It's my absolute favorite blend of complete adventure and wish fulfillment with a really grounded, relatable cast" in this spooky story centered around a missing teen and a supernatural pinball machine. "It's a fantastic book, and Sarah is such an important writer. This book is so special because it's the first book she writes that isn't about identity but having an identity and dealing with something else that is more universal. These characters get to be queer, they get to be Muslim, they get to deal with that stuff. It's just offering representation and it's bringing representation to horror. Readers will feel like they've been seen by this book."

In a completely different vein, *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* by debut author Zoulfa Katoun is, according to Ruqayyah Daud, an associate editor at Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, a "love letter to Syria" set during the turbulent period of the Syrian Revolution about a young student "caught between her loyalty to her country" and her "desire to survive and leave." The book affected Daud, who is of North African and Arab descent, on a deeply personal level. "When I first received the submission back in 2020, I stayed up until three o'clock in the morning reading it, and it brought me to tears several times." Determined to shine a light on these stories and voices, "when I received this book that was stunningly written, I was excited and knew we had to have it on our list. This book is for everyone. It's a great crossover for teens and adults. And it's even for people within the community who think they might know a lot about the Syrian revolution. I know when I read it, there was so much I didn't know about the atrocities that happened there. So I think there's something for everyone to learn from this." Daud hoped it would "remind readers that

The YA Market...continued

these are regular people like you and I that had lives that were stolen away from them. There are a lot of twists and turns in this book that you wouldn't expect."

ACES WILD by debut author (see a trend here) Amanda DeWitt, a suspenseful YA Las Vegas casino heist with a cast of asexual characters is the story Ashley Hearn, an editor at Peachtree Publishing, was the "ultimate book" wished she had as a teen. "It's a book about teens who are on the ACE (shortened term for asexual) spectrum who are just living their lives, having a great time going on this romp of a heist adventure but this story isn't focused on them coming out or discovering their sexuality. They have these deep conversations about what it means to be asexual, but the story itself is really about the fun. It's about snark. It's about hijinks. It's about online friends coming together in real life for the first time and that awkwardness and newness of that in real life experience and how that just devolves into your inside jokes and your pizza parties."

In the bold and black queer, socially conscious contemporary *Lark & Kasim Start A Revolution*, National Book Award Winner Kacen Callender writes about the hilarious travails of two teens who find themselves in a social media mess of their own making. Maggie Lehrman, the editorial director of fiction at Abrams Children's Books, called it a "bit of a love story but it's also about self-love and what it means to accept yourself for who you are." Citing the pressure that teens face nowadays online, she felt the book would certainly relate to readers and help them navigate online relationships. A big takeaway from the book is that "people have ways of presenting themselves (online) that scratch an itch or fill a need, and what really matters is the relationships you're forming in real life." Best of all, "this is a really fun read."

Polo Orosco, an editor with Putnam Penguin Readers, hailed the alternate reality *How to Succeed in Witchcraft* by debut author and actress Aislinn Brophy as "your next fantasy obsession" about an over-achieving teen witch who battles for a prestigious scholarship at an elite magical high school in the vein of *Sabrina the Teen Witch*. "If you like books about teen witches, love stories, dark academia, musicals, and entertaining plots jam-packed with social critique, look no further." The story explores

in a joyful and humorous way "the complexities of being a person of color in predominantly white spaces in many ways, echoing America's current reckoning with racism." And "there's a sweeping enemies-to-lovers romance and a bunch of really cool witches using their magic for good, but also to blow up stuff."

Mara Delgado Sanchez, an assistant editor at Wednesday Books (St. Martin's Publishing Group), was excited about *Night of the Raven, Dawn of the Dove* by Indian-born Rati Mehrotra. This YA medieval fantasy is a "love letter to India" about a young guardswoman caught in a deadly game between two warring kingdoms. "The first time I read this book, I loved all the characters, the protagonist who is fierce and vulnerable at the same time." Highlighting its crossover appeal in the YA-adult space, Sanchez said she hoped that readers would relate to the romance subplot, the fantastical high-society world replete with monsters, and the concept of "finding home and finding where you belong is something that's ever-evolving. Consider home the house where you grew up in, yes, that's home, but when you're an adult you go and have your own apartment or your own house or you move to a different city and you create a home and sometimes home is a person. I loved every second that I worked on this book, every single pass that I worked on it, I laughed and I cried every single pass."

It was "love at first sight" for Claire Stetzer, an editor at Inkyard Press (Harper Collins) with the K-Pop childhood friends-to-lovers story *Seoulmates* by debut author Susan Lee. "It's everything you could want in a YA rom-com. It's genuinely hilarious and super, super swoony" about "teens who are really thinking about their identities and what it means to be Korean-American in the world, but also even they're grappling with these really big ideas of identity, they're also falling in love." Calling it a book "for anybody who needs a happily ever after right now, which I know I do." Stezer also hoped the book would cause "readers to think about the people behind the pop culture trends, because the world right now is so obsessed with K-Pop and K-Dramas, and just really opening their eyes to the realities behind those industries."

In the Q&A portion of the panel, the editors discussed a variety of subjects about their titles and

The YA Market...continued

particular processes. For example, Adair observed that one challenge she faced in *Conversations to Help Save the World* was staying on top of the changing environment regarding topical issues such as gun violence. Ultimately, the authors felt that would be best addressed by creating an ongoing, online tool kit to “adapt and adjust.”

For Alpert, it was dealing with a time period in *Dead Flip* (the 1990’s) that is now considered historical by YA standards. She acknowledged the nostalgia factor and that “finding your truth in that time was so different” but enjoyed revisiting all that “pop culture with 2020 goggles on.”

Asked if working with a book that she felt such a deep personal connection to was perhaps hitting too close to the bone in *Lemon Trees*, Daud expressed that it was a “cathartic experience” because of the similarities to what her own mother encountered in her home country’s regime which is still in “power without any accountability.” She termed it a “determined excitement” to have “those voices heard and for people to understand the revolutions that have been catching fire across that region.”

Regarding any sort of pushback regarding the asexual cast of *ACES WILD*, Hearn said she tended to “brush it off because I don’t really give that much credence to it. It’s not really something that I even want to play into. So I’m like, it’s nice that you have an opinion, okay, I’m moving on now.” Instead, she’s received more comments “about how cathartic it is” and how “you can find a lot of camaraderie and hope and just a sense of community in people that are experiencing that thing along with you” because the characters “all have very different experiences with their own sexualities based on their race and gender.” And reflecting that diversity, “no ACE experience is the same just like no one experience of any identity is the same.”

In the pandemic and post-pandemic world where much of publishing migrated online, Lehrman conceded that like in *Lark & Kasim*, while one could be presenting a particular image online, we all have a social responsibility in terms of “rightfully shaming and piling on.” Furthermore, “it requires a really strong sense of self and knowing when you’ve made a mistake. And that’s so hard. I certainly as a teen would’ve had no idea. I didn’t have social media

when I was a teen because I’m ancient, I’m one of the historical nineties. I would’ve just lost my entire sense of self if strangers were yelling at me.”

To the question of how to present a magical alternate United States as in *How to Succeed in Witchcraft* but keep it grounded in real-world issues, Orozco believed this was accomplished by having a “magical setting, a very fun backdrop but looking at harassment and racism through this magical lens of sorts” and that the author adroitly created a “healthy distance of sorts” for readers by not “diluting the importance of these topics” and “making it more digestible.”

As for Sanchez, working with an author on her first novel for younger readers was an easy task. “Her voice fits into that gray area between young adult and crossover...so I didn’t really have to steer her in a specific direction. I just basically asked questions about her motivations and asked her to weave a little more description into the world, and her dual in the adult space also helped her craft a world that actually feels concrete. She’s a very vivid writer and I just fell into this book.”

Stetzer was asked about coming on board to work on a book that she herself hadn’t acquired. She admitted that it was a “unique situation” but not altogether uncommon. “I came into this being a huge fan of (Susan Lee). I joined the anchor team a little over a year ago, and it was one of those titles that the entire team was really excited about. So I was hearing about it a lot and I know, and my fellow editors here will know that you don’t have time to read every single book on your list but I did read this one right away because it sounded so fantastic and so right up my alley.” Her process is to be “pretty flexible to working with (authors) in a way that is most helpful to their work because I know every author kind of approaches things differently and might like to talk edits on the phone or if they’ve stuck through e-mails back and forth. Or they might be the kind of author that just likes to hide in their little revision case while they’re working and then come back with a product to show.”

The final panel question that elicited a good amount of back and forth was how to best guide and nurture debut authors since several of the picks were by authors who were new or unfamiliar with the publish-

The YA Market...continued

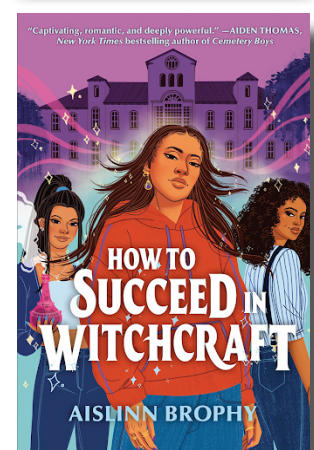
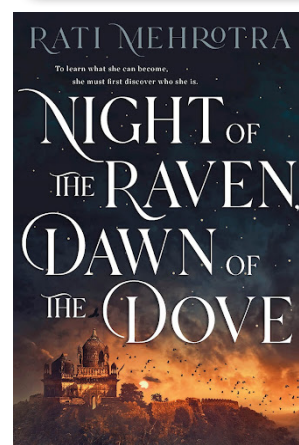
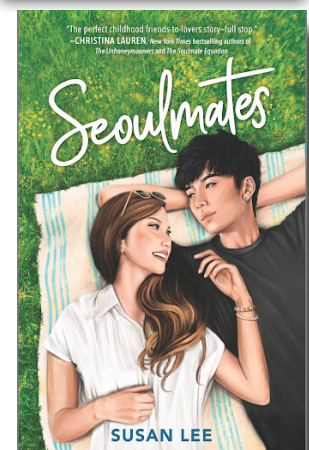
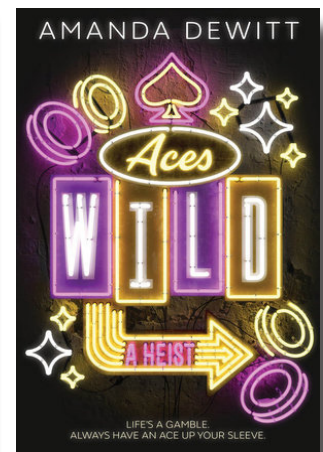
ing process.

Adair said it was a bit different for her since she already had an established relationship with Frederick Joseph but that his then-fiancee Porsche got a good sense of the editorial process from that. Still, having established trust with Fred, she consciously explained “a bit more” but always “underlined the fact that this is optional, this is just one’s person’s very specific suggestion based on who I am. So that always comes into my edits but with a first-time author, in particular, I really, really, as much as I can give them the confidence to stand up when they feel strongly about something.”

Alpert said that working with debut authors brings an “energy that is so special and a lack of cynicism which is a very joyful experience” and that she also tried to be more thorough. “I just find it very exciting because you get to sort of see how high you can jump in that first jump, and then after that, you continue up. But it’s a really fun opportunity to set a new baseline with someone completely new and who has no track. It’s a great experience.”

Daud said it was important to remember that first-time authors are “new to the process and might not necessarily know what copy edits are or how much input you can have on your cover personally. So just making sure that they feel involved in the process and empowered to ask questions on anything that’s confusing.”

As an editor with a mid-sized publisher, Hearn observed that “we get a lot of debut talent that we then grow.” So for her, “it’s a lot of establishing that relationship is kind of something that I really look to build in that debut experience because I want to keep working with them on multiple books into the future. So making sure that we establish that baseline of what our camaraderie is going to be, and how me learning them as much as they’re learning me, how they take to a certain editorial style, what they need...as I have authors across the different spectrum with different needs.” Also, Hearn stressed that communication was crucial and that an author must “speak up” as editors have so much going on it’s sometimes impossible to keep on top of it all. “I think debuts kind of come into it thinking that oh, the publisher’s going to take control of the process from me. And I’m like, no, no, no, no, no. We want to give you control. We want you to be part of this.”



Monique Jones Brown

Young Adult Acquisitions Editor



interview by Lynne Marie

Monique Jones Brown is the acquisitions editor for PISH, the YA imprint of the Little Press. She comes to publishing from education, with over 20 years experience. She's currently a school librarian for a private school in Bronxville, New York. She's also a published children's book author. (*Note: If you're writing material younger than YA, you still have an Above the Slushpile opportunity with The Little Press this month. Details at end of this interview.*)

Lynne Marie: Congratulations on this position, Monique! You have certainly experienced children's books and reading from many angles. What drew you to your passion for reading?

Monique Jones Brown: Growing up, I read a lot. My mother was an avid reader, so I became an avid reader. Once I became a teenager, I would be alone a lot so I would go to my room and immerse myself in stories. I would read anything and everything I could get my hands on, even romance novels if I ran out of my favorite books.

LM: What were some of your favorite books that stand out from your childhood?

MB: I read a lot of Agatha Christie books and any mysteries I came across. I loved her character Hercule Poirot. I was intrigued by the way he used his

"little gray cells". He was also a little quirky and quiet, and I connected with him. I enjoyed his skills of observation, which was something I also shared. And, now, in my adult life, I actually watch movie renditions of Agatha Christie books every day! I also enjoyed reading the Anne of Green Gables series by Montgomery.

LM: During my teenage years, I was also an absolute Agatha Christie fan. So, as such a fan, I must ask – Which books were your favorites? And, if possible without giving anything away, why?

MB: My favorite books were *Murder on the Orient Express* and *And Then There Were None*. They both had a large cast of characters, red herrings, and plenty of twists. The stage was always set for her characters to go on these dynamic journeys surrounded by lies and betrayals. Each of them added to the puzzles which made reading the books even more appealing. Christie's books are prime examples of stories I would like to see published by PISH.

Agatha Christie, herself had moments where her life was shrouded in mystery which also drew my appeal to her stories.

LM: You mentioned that you also enjoyed Lucy

a young adult
imprint
Pish

Monique Jones Brown...continued

Maud Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables series. What drew you to those books?

MB: Strong female protagonist. And even though it was "turn of the century" Anne still had modern sensibilities. It was a coming of age story I could identify with while growing up. The struggles of "growing up" and finding oneself in this world resonated with me because I was an awkward teen who constantly wrestled with my individuality.

LM: Tell me a little about your role as acquiring editor for PISH at The Little Press.

MB: I work on acquisitions for their YA imprint, PISH. I search for talent by participating in Twitter pitches and reviewing submissions from agents. Once the author is signed, I work with them for several months to make sure the book is ready for the copy editor. I am a part of setting up deadlines to make sure that the book can be released in the optimum season for maximum sales potential and I work closely with the publisher, Michele McAvoy, on book design and cover and ensuring the books are marketable.



LM: I know that you have recently acquired your first book! Please tell us a little bit about that acquisition and when we should expect to see it.

MB: Sure. We at PISH signed debut author, Sierra Isley and her book, *In the Ring*. It is a compelling story of a queer teenage girl who starts boxing to deal with the aftermath of a sexual assault and while trying to navigate love, ends up as part of an underground fight club. It is an enthralling read that will keep readers mesmerized throughout the text.

In the Ring will be published in fall of 2023.

LM: Does The Little Press pay an advance to their authors?

MB: Yes! We are a small publisher so our advances are smaller compared to larger publishers, but we do pay an advance against royalties.

LM: Where will PISH Books be found in the marketplace? What marketing is in place? Will authors be required to submit a marketing proposal?

MB: PISH books will be available everywhere books are sold. We are currently distributed through Ingram. We market our titles and promote our authors in many areas, including bookstore tours, school visits, conference appearances, Amazon advertising, Goodreads giveaways, email and direct mail outreach. Authors are not required to submit a marketing proposal but we do expect our authors to take an active role in marketing and promoting their titles, which includes participating in bookstore and library events, social media, blogs and podcasts, etc.

LM: I understand that right now, you are just acquiring Young Adult Fiction. What exact criteria makes a good YA novel for PISH?

MB: A compelling read with a strong main character. We want fresh angles, new situations in an original voice.

LM: Is there anything in particular currently on your wish list?

MB: We are interested in stories that have diverse characters that are coming of age. We want these characters to show growth and change over the course of the novel. We want to see characters that exhibit issues that teens are dealing with today like: depression, anxiety, breakdown in family structure. We're also interested in fantasy with a focus on the supernatural.

LM: Please address any limitations or lines to draw

Monique Jones Brown...continued

regarding sex or horror or anything else you don't want to see in a submission.

MB: We have to keep in mind that this is for young adults and therefore we would like to see scenes that are appropriate for the vast age range; realistic teen-age experiences that young adults can relate to.

LM: To avoid getting submissions that are geared to the wrong age group and sensibilities, please share the difference between middle grade and young adult novels.

MB: Young adult usually has characters aged 13-19. It focuses more on social interactions, such as relationships, bullying and is set in high school or maybe even the beginning of college. It might focus a bit more on intimacy or lean into adult topics. Middle grade, on the other hand, spans from 8 - 12 years of age and has more focus on friendship and family.

LM: Please share five words that portray the style of your imprint.

MB: Edgy, Door-opening, Fresh, Heart, and Relatable.

LM: What are some examples of some books that you would have liked to pick up for PISH ?

MB: *Ace of Spades* by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé because it reminds me of the show, *Pretty Little Liars* (an anonymous texter divulges secrets that can destroy people's lives!) Plus it has BIPOC lead characters which we need to see more of in young adult books. The other one would be *The Inheritance Games* series by Jennifer Lynn Barnes. It reminds me a little bit of the book, *The Westing Game* by Ellen Rankin. What would you do if a mysterious stranger left you a fortune and you had to solve the puzzle to survive? Both stories are page-turners and compelling to say the least.

Here are The Little Press' submission guidelines for further reference for targeting submissions:

littlepresspublishing.com/submissions

Monique Jones Brown's social media:

Twitter: [@mjbrownceditor](https://twitter.com/mjbrownceditor)

Instagram: [@mjbrownceditor/](https://www.instagram.com/mjbrownceditor/)

TikTok: [@mjbrownceditor](https://www.tiktok.com/@mjbrownceditor)

NOTE: For those of our readers who do not write for young adults, I have exciting news! The Little Press is willing to review picture books, chapter books and middle grade novels, with a particular current interest in chapter books. Please review their guidelines and catalog to make sure your submission is targeted to their list. You can submit all pitches at the Above the Slushpile submission form link below, and specify which age group your submission targets. Good luck!

Monique Jones Brown and The Little Press are offering a special **Above the Slushpile** submission opportunity for CBI subscribers. Monique is acquiring young adult fiction for the PISH imprint, and The Little Press is acquiring picture books, chapter books and middle grade novels. All pitches can be submitted using this one form at bit.ly/Nov22ATSLittlePress. The submission period ends **November 30, 2022**. Please study The Little Press submission guidelines to make sure your work is appropriate for this publisher (littlepresspublishing.com/submissions). All pitches will be read by Monique (for YA) or another Little Press editor (younger work) and those pitches of interest will be responded to by January 31, 2023. If you haven't heard back by the end of January, consider it a pass.

---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.
- 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.

Take It **Out!**

Why Less is More When Counting Words

by Jane McBride

Before you leave the house, look in the mirror and take one thing off."

You are probably familiar with this quote by Coco Chanel. If you're wearing a necklace, earrings, bracelet, and a ring, take off the bracelet and maybe the earrings as well. If you're wearing an embroidered sweater with a plaid skirt and argyle socks, get rid of the sweater. You get the picture.

Did you know that the same thing applies to your writing?

Let's take a look at three drafts of the same narrative.

Example A (359 words)

Twelve-year-old Ryan didn't want to spend the week at his grandparents' house. Their house smelled like old people, like dead skin and medicine. Old people had a lot of dead skin, and it was always shedding. He'd read that in a magazine somewhere. Or maybe he'd heard it.

"I'm not going." He kicked the bag his mother had put out for him to pack his clothes. He kicked it again for good measure. "I don't care what you say. I'm not going. There's nothing you can say to make me." He pushed his blond hair away from his forehead.

"You have to go," Mom said. "Your dad and I are going out of town and we can't leave you here on your own."

"I'm twelve. I don't need to be babysat." He had just finished seventh grade. Wasn't that old enough to show that he didn't

need to be tended?

"You're not being babysat." Mom's voice was full of understanding and frustration. Right now the frustration was winning. "You're going to spend the week at your grandparents' house."

"Their house smells like old people. And there's nothing to do there. All they want to do is read and watch TV." The last time Ryan had been there, Grandpa had wanted to Ryan to read a book that Grandpa said he had liked when he was a boy. The book was like a hundred years old. Maybe a thousand.

Ryan liked to read anime and manga.

"I can take care of myself just fine."

"I'm sorry. We've already made plans, and they can't be canceled."

Ryan gave the duffle bag another kick. If he kicked it hard enough, maybe it would come apart and he wouldn't be able to go because he didn't have a bag. But he knew he was acting like a baby.

"Your grandparents love you."

"Yeah. I know." And he did know. His grandparents were good people. They just weren't fun. "I could spend the week with Jacob. His parents think I'm cool."

"His parents are great people, but we can't impose on them that way." The frustration in Mom's voice was edging toward anger.

Example B (264 words)

"I'm not going." Ryan kicked the bag his mother had told him to pack his clothes in. "I don't care what you say. I'm not going. There's nothing you can say to make me."

Take It Out...continued

"Your dad and I are going out of town and we can't leave you on your own," Mom said.

"I'm twelve. I don't need to be babysat."

"You're not being babysat." Mom's voice was full of frustrated understanding. Right now the frustration was winning. "You're going to spend the week at your grandparents' house."

"Their house smells like old people, like dead skin and medicine. And there's nothing to do. All they want to do is read and watch TV." The last time Ryan had been there, Grandpa had wanted to Ryan to read a book that Grandpa had liked when he was a boy. The book was at least a hundred years old. Way older than the anime and manga Ryan read.

Mom's voice was full of frustrated understanding. Right now the frustration was winning. "I'm sorry. Your father and I have already made plans, and they can't be changed."

Ryan gave a the duffle bag another kick, this one so hard it made his toes sting. He knew he was acting like a baby.

"Your grandparents love you."

"I know." And he did know. He loved his grandparents too. They just weren't fun. "I could spend the week with Jacob. His parents think I'm cool."

"His parents are great people, but we can't impose on them that way." The frustration in Mom's voice was edging toward anger.

In example B, we removed the entire first paragraph: *Twelve-year-old Ryan didn't want to spend the week at his grandparents' house. Their house smelled like old people, like dead skin and medicine. Old people had a lot of dead skin, and it was always shedding. He'd read that in a magazine somewhere. Or maybe he'd heard it.* This information is given in later paragraphs, where we learn that Ryan is twelve, that the house smells like old people, dead skin and medicine. By removing the first paragraph, we jump right into the action. In the second paragraph, we removed the sentence *He kicked it again for good measure.* That information is repeated in a later paragraph: *Ryan gave the duffle bag another kick. We added a sensory detail to that later paragraph (it made his toes sting) which led directly*

into Ryan's self-analysis (*He knew he was acting like a baby.*) We removed a few other unnecessary words that muddied up the scene, reducing the number of words by We reduced the number of words by 95.

Example C (225 words)

"I'm not going." Ryan kicked the bag his mother had put out for him. "I don't care what you say. I'm not going. There's nothing you can say to make me."

"Your dad and I are going out of town and we can't leave you on your own," Mom said.

"I'm twelve. I don't need to be babysat."

"You're not being babysat. You're going to spend the week at your grandparents' house."

"Their house smells like old people. And there's nothing to do. All they want to do is read and watch TV." The last time Ryan had been there, Grandpa had wanted to Ryan to read a book that Grandpa had liked when he was a boy. The book was like a hundred years old. Way older than the anime and manga Ryan read.

"I can take care of myself just fine," he said.

"I'm sorry. Your father and I have already made plans, and they can't be changed."

Ryan gave a the duffle bag another kick, this one so hard it made his toes sting. He knew he was acting like a baby.

"Your grandparents love you."

"I know." And he did know. His grandparents were good people. They just weren't fun. "I could spend the week with Jacob. His parents think I'm cool."

"You're going to your grandparents' house. That's final."

In example C, we've deleted the sentences, *Mom's voice was full of frustrated understanding. Right now the frustration was winning.* These sentences aren't necessary. The mother's frustration is implied in her words. We also removed the description of what old

Take It Out...continued

people smell like, *dead skin and medicine*. Finally, we removed the two sentences in the final paragraph—*His parents are great people, but we can't impose on them that way. The frustration in Mom's voice was edging toward anger.*—and replaced them with “*You're going to your grandparents' house. That's final.*”

We've reduced the words by an additional 41, for a total of 225.

Can you see the differences between the three drafts? Each one gets tighter with less and less exposition and description. You can probably find more words to tighten or to replace with more precise ones.

Now, some of you may be thinking that this scene could be improved with a few *more* words at this point, particularly some body language to accompany the dialogue that shows how Ryan and his mother are feeling about this conversation. For example, when Ryan says, “I'm twelve. I don't need to be babysat,” he could roll his eyes to signal how ridiculous he thinks it is to make him stay with his grandparents. But be careful about adding words that will just repeat what's already on the page. Body language can actually take the place of some dialogue. For example:

“I'm not going.” Ryan kicked the bag his mother had put out for him. “I don't need to be babysat.”

“Your dad and I are going out of town and we can't leave you on your own.” Mom pulled a stack of folded shirts from the laundry basket and handed them to Ryan.

Ryan rolled his eyes. “I'm twelve.”

“You're not being babysat.” Mom stared at the shirts in her hand, then dropped them into the duffle bag. “You're going to spend the week at your grandparents' house.”

Ryan gave the duffle bag another kick, this one so hard it made his toes sting. “Their house smells like old people. And there's nothing to do. All they want to do is read and watch TV.” Ryan glanced at his mom. Had he gone too far? He knew he was acting like a baby.

Mom took a slow breath. “I'm sorry. Your

father and I have already made plans, and they can't be changed.” She squeezed Ryan's arm. “Your grandparents love you.”

“I know.” And he did know. His grandparents were good people. They just weren't fun. “I could spend the week with Jacob. His parents think I'm cool.”

Mom emptied the basket of clean laundry onto Ryan's bed. “You're going to your grandparents' house. That's final.” (216 words)

Body language and getting deeper into Ryan's point of view (*Ryan glanced at his mom. Had he gone too far? He knew he was acting like a baby.*) add a more complex emotional layer to this scene. But we couldn't see that layer until we removed all the unnecessary words and were left with the essential elements of the dialogue. By replacing some of those essential elements with body language, we enriched the scene and still cut nine more words.

IN CLOSING

“Write like you're in love. Edit like you're in charge.”
— James Scott Bell

The Art of Give ↔ and ↔ Take: Writing with a Co-Author

by Mary Bowman-Kruhm and Jackson Liaram

I fumbled in the dark. "Hey, Siri, turn on flashlight." Siri, my phone's virtual assistant, responded. It was 6:15 a.m. in Maryland, early afternoon in Kenya. I smiled as I opened my laptop, ready to spend a day working with words. I also thought how friend and co-author of *Hatari! Danger!*, Jackson Liaram, was probably spending his day.

Jackson is a safari guide in Kenya. As visitors watch the Mara River flow calmly along, he might point out crocodiles selecting a wildebeest for dinner. "Some guests," Jackson told me, "love seeing blood in the water. Others pity the innocent dying wildebeests."

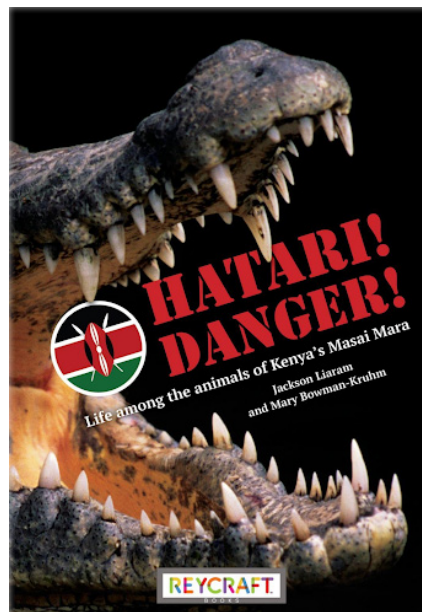
Jackson and I have very different lifestyles and live half a world away from each other. Yet, when we wrote *Hatari! Danger!: Life Among the Animals of Kenya's Masai Mara* (Reycraft Books), I discovered the joys and issues were similar to writing with co-authors who lived closer. As our manuscript developed, we shared great conversations, laughs, and memories and our friendship grew too. Jackson trusted me to frame his stories to appeal to an upper-elementary and older audience. I trusted his descriptions of Kenya, and images of life there. One small example: I said, "Wow!" when he wrote that a black night on the plains of Kenya was "...so black you cannot see someone pinching your eyeball." His description

was very different from what I would have written but it resonated with me.

Appreciation for a co-author's words are crucial and the basis of a writing relationship. Each project differs, but hopefully our process and suggestions will help you and your partner with both writing and publication.

The first step is to set basic goals. Yes, goal-setting sounds deadly dull and it can be, but coordination helps if you decide on the basics before moving to the writing itself. What is your specific topic? Will you write an article or a book? If an article, is it for a blog or a hard-copy magazine? Length? Possible publishers to whom to submit? How and how often will you meet, or at least touch base, as the project moves from initial idea to submission? If research is needed, who will handle each of the various sources, whether human or within the virtual world? These are difficult decisions, not easily made but crucial.

Then it's time to move on to the words to help you reach your goal, including your response to the words your co-author wrote. I was mesmerized when I first read Jackson's description of his father's slipping and sliding as he escapes from an irate hippo. "Hatari sana," indeed. Very dangerous! I told Jackson I loved that description. Honest feedback with your co-author is needed to move a project forward. It includes positive



Co-author...continued

feedback and also includes a response less positive because you believe changes are needed or at least require frank discussion.

One important aspect of honest feedback is openness. Openness includes the freedom to edit each other's work, to discuss content, organization, wording and all the variables that combine to produce a manuscript. Openness includes realizing problems will arise. Stop and talk to resolve them. Even if the problem is minor, challenging each other—whether over a word, a title, or inclusion of sensitive material—will build a better book, article, or story. If you're both reasonable writers who trust each other, pick your battles and stand firm if need be. State the reason, argue and resolve the problem; neither of you should feel you have backed down.

Backgrounds, however, come into play. Jackson is definitely an authority on wildlife so I deferred to him in that area. As a published writer and long-ago English teacher, I logically prepared final versions of all correspondence. To be truthful, when my co-author has a similar background I have sometimes cringed at suggestions we cut words that I labored long to produce. If a co-author senses a problem, however, acknowledging and resolving the issue before it reaches an editor's eyes is best.

Then, when you both feel comfortable about the ideas and their placement in your manuscript, move toward the final draft. In this phase, two absolute rules matter:

- Until it is returned, hands off after giving your co-author a revision. Do not, NOT, touch the material, even to insert a comma.
- If you still want to make a change in what the co-author wrote, articulate the reason why. Unless you can succinctly explain your reason, keep silent.

I strongly suggest, even when the manuscript is happily delivered to the editor or prospective publisher, that you stay in touch with each other. Good friend

Anna Maslowicz, fluent in several languages, and I, who can barely read the "mujeres" sign at a local restaurant, submitted an article to a Spanish-language magazine. It was accepted and she happily left for a trip to London. The next day I received an email requesting a re-write of several sentences. Luckily, we were able to arrange text messages and I forwarded Anna's Spanish version changes on to the editor. *Thanks be! ¡En agradecimiento!*

Because of distance, the pandemic and other impediments, I have missed the personal face-to-face joys of co-authoring. Since phone calls required consideration of the time difference, Jackson and I used [WhatsApp](#) to text about what each would do and discuss changes. Is the back and forth dialogue via an app easy? No. Does it work? YES! For proof, see [Reycraft Books](#) or [Amazon.com](#) to find *Hatari! Danger!*

For Jackson and me, writing with another person is well worth sharing the reward of publication. If monetary reward is involved, so much the better and we happily share it also. Wonderful memories, although not easily measured, are even more valuable.

Note: Proceeds from the book and donations to [digthiswell.com](#) go to Jackson's village of Oltorotua.

Useful Tips for Working with a Co-author

- scribemediacom.com/how-to-co-author-book/
- publishdrive.com/how-to-co-author-a-book-top-5-methods-to-share-the-workload.html
- authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/editorial-policies/defining-authorship-research-paper/

MANY VOICES: WRITING IN MULTIPLE POINTS-OF-VIEW

by Jane McBride

Have you ever thought about writing a book with multiple points-of-view? I'm not talking about a book where several POVs show up because you weren't paying attention to whose head you were in. Nor am I talking about random head-hopping.

I'm talking about intentional POVs that actually make the book better.

First, let's take a quick look at the various types of POV.

First person. Here the main character is the "I" character. Everything is filtered through her thoughts, her feelings, her perception. This character can describe other characters, but she can't get into their thoughts and feelings and observations.

Second person. In this POV (not very commonly used today), thoughts and feelings are seen through the "you" character. You need to understand ... You will remember ... You have no idea of what I've been through ...

Third person. Characters identify as "he", "she", or "they" (when using it as a singular, third-person gender-neutral pronoun). Action, thoughts, and feelings are filtered through his, her, or their POV.

Omniscient. An unseen narrator describes the action. This narrator is all-seeing and all-knowing. This is often used in fantasy or fairy tale type stories.

Now we can move on to talking about using multiple POVs and how to do it effectively. Following are a few questions that may arise.

How do you signal your readers that you're going to be (intentionally) in another character's head?

J.B. Cheaney does this masterfully in her book *Somebody on the Bus is Going to Be Famous*. In this mystery for 10–13-year-olds, the author handles the POV switches by giving every chapter to one character. As there are nine months in the school year, Cheaney divides the book into nine chapters. This means nine POVs.

Cheaney's method is a great one. But what if you don't have nine main characters? What if you have only three or four? Does that mean you can write only three or four chapters? No. You can still label each chapter with a character's name. Or you can use a different kind of titling method to let the reader know that you're now in a different character's POV.

How can you make certain each character is distinguished in every chapter, even though only one POV will be used?

Say you are writing a story about four 11-year-old girls who are entering that maze of self-consciousness, awkwardness, and social groups of middle school. Darcy, Maria, Anna, and Rachel, The Fabulous Four, are best friends and have been since kindergarten. They do everything together and have made a pact that they will be there for each other in this new adventure of navigating the mysteries and pitfalls of middle school. For instance, in Darcy's chapter, how can the readers remain aware of Maria, Anna, and Rachel? One way is to give each girl an identifiable quality. Does Maria talk too much? Does Anna twist her hair around her finger when

Using Multiple Points-of-View...continued

she gets nervous? Does Rachel cough before she wants to say something important? Darcy's chapter is written in the first person POV, but she'll be noticing, and reacting to, the unique qualities of her friends when they're in each scene, and the reader won't forget that those characters are still involved in the story.

What if you must change POV within a chapter?

Spend a sentence telling what the new POV character was doing previously. For example, if the POV is changing from Darcy to Maria, mention that Maria had been sketching a picture of the girls in during lunch while the narrative is still in Darcy's POV. Then, add new information to what Maria is doing after the POV switch, so it continues to move the story forward.

Darcy glanced at Maria's drawing and then looked up as Rachel quickly walked by with her tray. She landed at the popular kids' lunch table, fitting into an empty seat as if it belonged to her. Darcy didn't like this new development. What if Rachel left The Fabulous Four?

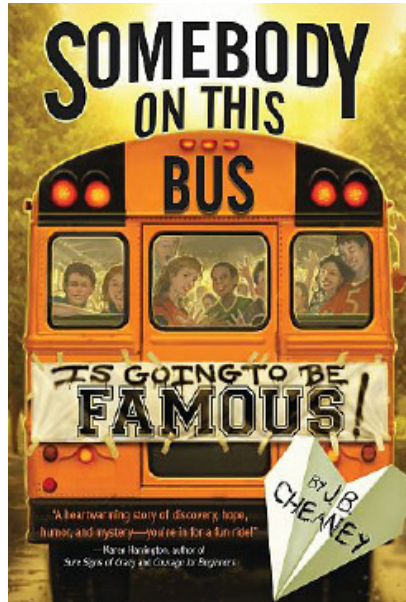
Maria continued sketching her picture. She'd gotten Rachel's likeness and that of Anna, but she couldn't get Darcy's features right. Though Darcy was a follower, she could also be manipulative. Though Maria would never outright accuse her friend of this behavior, she wanted to find a way of showing both qualities in the sketch.

Techniques for writing in multiple POVs

Understand each character's goals. Each POV character should have a specific goal in the story, and obstacles that prevent them from reaching that goal.

Make certain all your POVs are necessary. Are you writing in one character's POV just because you want to have multiple POVs? Not good. In *Somebody on This Bus is Going to Be Famous*, the author thought through what she wanted to do and then assigned each character a chapter.

Make your choice purposeful. Don't fall into one character's POV for two lines because you needed her feelings at that moment. This goes back to being intentional.



Give each character qualities that help them stand out, and a clear role in the story. Let's go back to *The Fabulous Four* and give every girl a defining characteristic. Rachel is clearly the leader. Darcy is a follower—to a point. She won't go against what she believes is right, no matter who is pushing a course of action. Anna is the peacemaker, ready to sacrifice herself if it means everybody gets along. However, don't push her too far because she can turn confrontational when something is really im-

portant to her. Finally, Maria is the funny girl. She likes to make the others laugh. Everything is fine except when circumstances force the girls out of their roles.

Keep the POV characters in balance (as much as you can). You don't have to count up how many times Darcy's POV is used, but, if it is your goal to make this a book about all four girls, be even-handed with how much space you give each.

Don't be afraid to use different kinds of POVs. For example, what if in the story *The Fabulous Four*, Rachel emerged as a clear main character because she is the leader? How do you make that obvious while still including other characters' POVs? One way is to give Rachel a first person POV and to give the other characters third person POVs. Rachel is quickly identified as the main character while the other characters' POVs are still represented.

Using Multiple Points-of-View...continued

Have a thread that ties the chapters together. This can be a mystery that needs to be solved or a relationship that needs to be repaired or severed.

Give each POV character a distinct voice. This applies to not just when they are speaking but when they are thinking as well. Does a character think in complex sentences or in short bullet points? Ask yourself which sense does the character most rely on and then highlight that sense when you are in their POV.

Pros of Multiple POVs:

- Multiple POVs can move the story along at a faster clip as readers get to experience the action from several different characters.
- Readers grow to understand each character rather than just the main one. This can pull readers more deeply into the story. Goals as seen through the eyes of each character can complement each other.
- In writing multiple POVs, you can show why characters react to each other as they do.

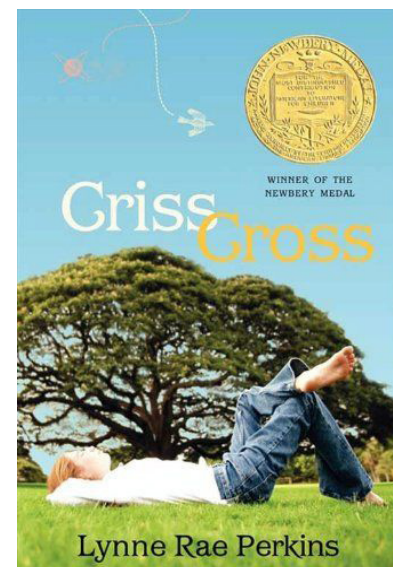
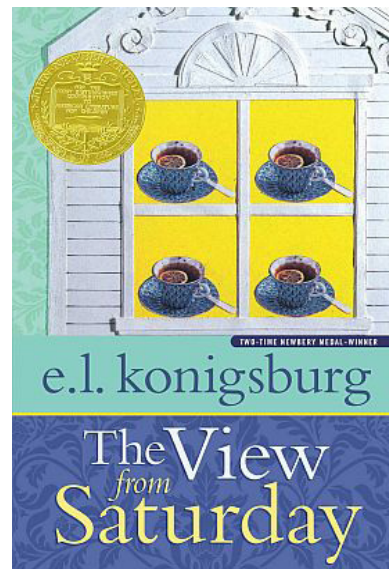
Cons of Multiple POVs:

- Even if each character has an identifiable voice, it may still be difficult for readers to recognize whose head they are in.
- Readers may identify with one character more than the others. This works if there is a clear main character, but when your intention (there's that word again) is to write the book through several equal POVs, you've lost your goal.
- Despite your best efforts, you may run into the problem of head-hopping, where characters chime in randomly with only one or two lines at a time. If you're going in a character's POV, plan to stay there for a length of time. A line here, a line there, is lazy writing and can be annoying to the reader.

WRAPPING UP

Writing multiple POVs is hard. You may find it is not for you. If so, that's all right. Your goal is to tell your story in the best way you can. Experiment, then do what works for you.

For examples of other books for children with multiple POVs, read E.L. Koningsburg's *The View from Saturday* and Lynne Rae Perkins' *Criss Cross*.



Author Finds Career in Work-for-Hire Projects

interview by Sharon O. Blumberg

Writer J.P. Miller (authorjpmiller2020.com), grew up in Asheville, North Carolina. As a child her weekdays were filled with school and sports. And with being a preacher's child, her weekends were filled with church activities. In between, she loved to read. Though she enjoyed classics such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, she had an unrelenting thirst for books about African Americans. She found there were few on this topic, and those she found were stereotypical.

After she graduated from Tennessee State University in 1982, she served as an Airman in the United States Air Force. She is most proud of being a Desert Storm veteran and her time as Director of Youth Programs.

JP's journey to authorship began in 2000 when she self-published her first book. Then in 2016 she entered a short story contest sponsored by Brown Girls Publishing. Out of 300 submissions, her manuscript was 1 of 19 chosen for their *The Ex Chronicles* anthology. The anthology received the #1 National Bestselling Short Stories Award from the African American Literature Book Club (AALBC).

Since October 2020 J.P. has penned over 20 titles in several work-for-hire illustrated picture book and middle grade series: *Black Stories Matter* (Hachette UK), *Leaders Like Us*, and *Careers in the US Military* (Carson Dellosa/Rourke Educational). Each series has garnered positive reviews from *Booklist* and the *School Library Journal*. In 2021 J.P. received the Black Authors Matter Award sponsored by the National Black Book Festival.



Sharon Blumberg: You've made a name for yourself as an author writing series of illustrated nonfiction biographies of leaders and heroes from African American history, as well as nonfiction about military careers. These are work-for-hire projects for educational publishers. What drew you to taking on so many work-for-hire projects?

J.P. Miller: Can I just say that work-for-hire (WFH) was not the path I envisioned for my writing career.

I was on this proverbial hamster wheel ...writing stories, submitting to agents, and receiving "champagne" rejection letters. Determined to publish traditionally. But this kept happening over and over again!

It was NAACP Award winning author Gwendolyn Hooks who posed this question to me: "JP, have you ever considered WFH?"

Of course, I hadn't. In fact, I'd never heard of it. She went on to explain that in WFH, publishers in the educational market present

concepts for writing projects but hire freelance authors to do the writing for an agreed upon amount of money. Gwendolyn added that it might be a great way to get my foot in the door for traditional publishing. It was Gwendolyn that recommended me for my first project; the *Black Stories Matter* series with Hachette UK as well as the second series, *Leaders Like Us*, with Carson Dellosa. I credit her for my introduction and success to WFH.

SB: What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of work-for-hire writing assignments?

J.P. Miller...continued

JPM: I feel that the advantages and disadvantages of work-for-hire (WFH) are in the eye of the freelance author. When I entered the world of WFH I had no idea what the going rates were for writing. I was just excited to have my name on books that would soon be in the hands of school-age children. I later learned that what I was paid was extremely low for a project of that magnitude. I also learned that the education market does not have budgets like traditional publishing. What I received was said to be the norm for the education market. Some may see that as a disadvantage, but I didn't. I saw it as an opportunity to establish a name for myself.

Similarly, in WFH the publisher retains all rights to a work completed by a freelance author. Some may view this as a disadvantage. For me, although the rights aren't mine, I still treat each of my projects as if they are. I market and seek opportunities for school visits and other book events. After all, my name IS on the cover.

I guess I don't look at any of it as a disadvantage. Work-for-hire is simply another means for me to reach my audience of young readers eager to learn more about African American History/Culture.

SB: Are you responsible for having a knowledge of educational components such as appropriate readability of the text or Core Standards that may be incorporated into the book's content?

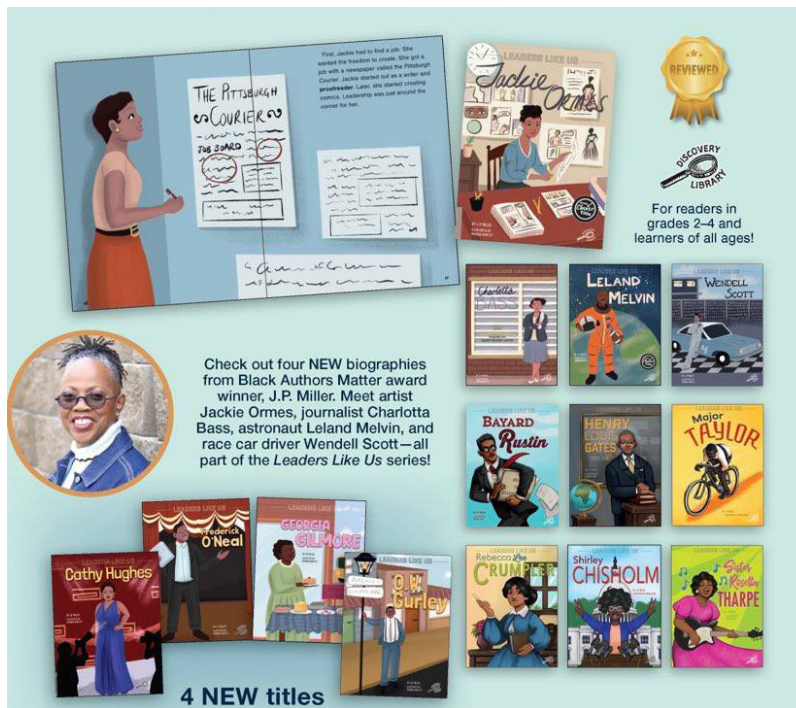
JPM: As a first time freelance writer, I was not held responsible for knowing the appropriate readability of text or core standards. The editor provided this information and I wrote within the parameters. I must admit that my first couple of drafts were pretty inked up! But it wasn't long before I caught on. I've particularly become very reliant on ATOS (the standard used by

most publishers to determine readability, renaissance.com/edword/atos/).

Have no fear . . . the editors are very patient and helpful in working with freelance writers. They want us to succeed!

SB: Since work-for-hire projects have tight deadlines, you must be an efficient researcher. What are some of your favorite research strategies?

JPM: Research is my favorite part of writing. ☺ I turn into a full-fledged detective. Starting with the Internet, I look for everything and anything that helps bring that person to life for me. I love YouTube videos!! Especially when they are of the actual person talking, performing, or being interviewed. Not only do I learn about what made them famous, but I get to learn the little things about the person that help give my story heart.



Next, I go to newspapers.com. I love this resource because I can find articles and interviews when the person was in the throw of whatever it was they became famous for. I'm able to find original quotes and unique bits of information not available anywhere else. Generally, it takes a week of non-stop research before I can move on to my outline.

SB: You currently have an agent. Did your agent help you get in the door with educational publishers, or did you get these assignments yourself? Do you have any tips for authors wanting to approach educational publishers for assignments?

JPM: Yes, I am represented by Sera Rivers, Senior Literary Manager at Martin Literary Management. All my work-for-hire (WFH) projects to this point were acquired prior to signing with Sera. I am so excited

J.P. Miller...continued

to work with Sera because she supports my desire to do WFH and will seek out both traditional and WFH publishing opportunities on my behalf.

For anyone interested in writing for the education market my advice would first be to develop a resume geared toward your writing experience. You would want to make sure you highlight all of your social media sites, any professional organizations you are affiliated with, development courses/workshops you may have taken, and of course, list any books, articles, etc you have written and/or published. (I also suggest building a page on LinkedIn.) While building your resume I take the time to tighten up one of their manuscripts that can be sent along with the resume as a sample of your writing.



my personal manuscripts shopped to publishers and editors. This is such an exciting time in my life and writing career.

While that's going on I've decided to direct my attention to writing a middle grade story. I've toyed with the idea long enough. It's time to put it on paper. I also plan to revisit a middle grade series that I started in the early 2000s. I self-published then but plan to spruce it up a bit (using what I've learned about writing and the kidlit community over the years) in hopes of selling it traditionally some day.

SB: Is there anything else you would like to add regarding work-for-hire or writing for children in general?

JPM: Continue to write and go after your dreams! Be open to what the universe allows!

After these two steps began to seek out publishers and editors on LinkedIn and/or by visiting publisher websites. Learn their acquisition process and the types of books the publisher/editor have published in the past. Some may even accept your package and include you in their database for future projects.

SB: Could you please tell us what you are currently working on as an author? Have the skills you acquired doing work-for-hire books helped you create other types of writing?

JPM: I've had the opportunity to write work-for-hire and I absolutely love it. I hope that more projects will come my way. Now that I have an agent, I am getting

To learn more about writing for work-for-hire and the educational market, check out two on-demand webinars from Writing Blueprints (writingblueprints.com): *Writing Nonfiction for the School and Library Market*, and *How to Get Published with Book Packagers* (click on each title to go directly to the info page).

Let's Celebrate!

CBI MEMBER PUBLICATIONS



Lexy Rosario (writing as Lex Ros) announces the publication of her first picture book, *The Skunk and the Squirrel*, a story about true friendship, self-love and acceptance. It's available as a Kindle eBook at amzn.to/3SUgCHM



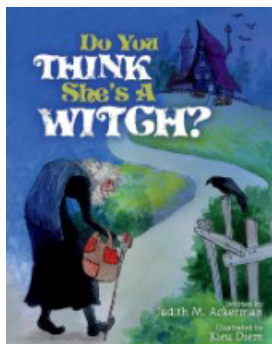
Dayna Ault's picture book, *Who Made This Mess?* was published in hardcover, paperback, and as a Kindle eBook in October. The rhyming story showcases gentle, positive parenting principles. Check it out at amzn.to/3WgxSdj



Michelle Nott announces that her picture book, *Teddy Let's Go!*, will be published by Enchanted Lion Books on December 6, 2022. A beloved teddy bear, stuffed with love, tells a deeply felt and tenderly observed story of growing up and the new sibling experience. "The poetic language, gorgeous pencil and pastel art, and the sweet love between the child and the stuffed animal makes this a precious story," noted a starred review from Youth Services Book Review. Available for pre-order anywhere books are sold. Author website: authormichellenott.com/

OTHER GOOD NEWS

Lexsy Rosario has launched her website, Elementary Reading & Writing, at elementaryreadingandwriting.com/ Drawing from her experience as an educator, the site contains lessons parents can use to teach their children how to read at home.



Judith Ackerman's local library featured her picture book, *Do You Think She's a Witch?* in a special Halloween display. Check out all her books at judithmackerman.com/

(NOTE: This listing includes book review and guest post opportunities for CBI members)

Sherry Dunn is a children's author and animal rescue advocate. She writes and reviews children's books that feature shelter animals. She is pleased to announce that her picture book *Jasmine and Mattie* will be released in early 2023. Her blog at www.sherrydunn.com spotlights no-kill shelters around the United States and features adoption stories from rescue pet owners and her reviews of picture books. She welcomes submissions of picture books (for possible review) that include shelter animals, as well as guest posts of animal adoption stories and spotlights of no-kill shelters. Submission guidelines are available at sherrydunn.com/submissions-guidelines. Payment per accepted guest post is a \$100 donation (in the guest poster's name) to the no-kill shelter of their choice.

Sherry with a donkey at Star Gazing Farm in Maryland, an animal sanctuary for abused farm animals.



Send us your good news!

If you'd like to announce a recent publication (book or magazine, traditionally or self-published), please send a short description of the project (title, publisher, age range, pub date, and 1-2 sentence description) along with a JPEG of the book cover or, if available, the magazine cover/spread of article. Also include up to two links (your website, Amazon listing, etc.) Please note that we don't have the staff to hunt down any details that you forget to include. We'll print what you send us, so you may want to wait until you have a book cover and firm pub date to take best advantage of this announcement.

If you'd like to share other good news (you found an agent, started a blog, finished revising your manuscript, were invited to speak at a local festival, etc.) please send a brief description of your news, up to two links you'd like to share, and, if desired, one related image as a JPEG. (NOTE: If you sign a contract for a book, you can announce the signing under Other Good News, and then send more details and the book cover near the publication date for CBI Member Publications).

Email all material to mail@writeforkids.org, and put "Celebrate" in the subject line. All material must be received by the 20th of the month to appear in the following month's issue.