

Children's Book Insider

The Children's Writing Monthly  October 2021



**FIND FRESH STORY IDEAS
BY REVISITING THE PAST**



**ABOVE THE SLUSHPILE
SUBMISSIONS CODE:**



CARDINAL RULE PRESS

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Children’s Book Insider makes every effort to verify the legitimacy of small and new presses and literary agents before printing information in “At Presstime.” However, authors and illustrators should always proceed with caution when approaching publishers or agents with whom they are unfamiliar, and read contracts carefully. All “At Presstime” listings are current at the time of initial publication. Members are urged to verify listings past the month of publication.

At Presstime:

Free App to Record Parents/Grandparents Reading Pic Books Accepting Submissions for Library

Pixipages (www.pixipages.com) is a free iPhone app that allows adults to choose any picture book from the Pixipages online library and record themselves reading the book out loud. The recording can then be emailed to the children in their lives. The recordings are synced with page-turn “chimes” so the child can listen to the recording while reading the physical book. Pixipages does not sell the books in its app library, but does provide Amazon buy links on the same page to make it easy for users to send the book along with the recording.

Pixipages is accepting picture book submissions to be included in the app’s library. Authors are not paid to have their books included, and Pixipages is not licensing any rights (authors are still free to sell audio rights elsewhere). Participation in the Pixipages library is a promotional opportunity for the author/illustrator since people who record themselves reading the book out loud will want to buy the book to send with the recording.

To be considered for inclusion in the app, authors should send a digital copy of their book to Bill and Lib Seabrook at hello@pixipages.com. Should the book be chosen for the Pixipages library, they’ll send an address to the author to mail a physical copy of the book so recordings can be properly synced with page turns. Self-published books can be submitted for consideration if they are available in print form on Amazon. Responds only to book submissions that fit the Pixipages library needs.

To see a demo of how Pixipages recordings work, view the videos on the home page of www.pixipages.com. If you have any questions, you can contact Bill and Lib Seabrook at hello@pixipages.com

Penguin Random House Imprint Accepting Submissions

Kokila Books is an imprint of Penguin Random House that publishes books for children and young adults across all formats and genres that celebrate the richness of our world. Looking for books that inspire and entertain readers and add nuance and depth to the way children and teens see the world and their place in it. Kokila is looking for (but not limited to) stories from communities of color, stories from people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ stories, and stories about immigration. For a full list of Kokila’s titles, go to penguin.com/publishers/kokila/.

Kokila is open to submissions until December 1, 2021. Submissions can be fiction or nonfiction, board books through young adult, as well as graphic novels. Send a query letter in the body of an email with a synopsis, brief author bio, and why this manuscript fits Kokila’s mission. Attach the full manuscript as a doc file up to 20 MB. If you are an author/illustrator, send a full sketch dummy as a PDF with text placed on the pages, and two pieces of finished art. Illustrators may send three pieces of finished art and a link to an online portfolio in the body of your email. Only one submission per author or illustrator. Subject line format for authors: PB/MG/YA/GN: TITLE by AUTHOR. (Choose PB for picture book, MG for middle grade, YA for young adult, or GN for graphic novel.) Subject line format for illustrators: ILLUSTRATOR PORTFOLIO: NAME + LOCATION. All submissions should be addressed to kokila@penguinrandomhouse.com. Responds to submissions within a year.

Agent Accepting Picture Book, MG and YA Queries

Leslie Zampetti, an agent with Dunham Literary Inc. (<https://www.dunhamlit.com/>) is accepting submissions for picture books through YA. For picture books, she prefers nonfiction that tells a story almost too good to be true, stories that show everyday diversity to mirror under-represented readers and open windows to others, witty word-play, and dry, sly humor. For middle grade and young adult, Leslie is seeking contemporary fiction, mysteries, novels about mixed-faith families, magical realism, historical fiction with a specific hook to the time and place, novels in verse, and off-the-beaten-path romances. Email a query letter addressed to Leslie that has a brief manuscript synopsis and the first five manuscript pages pasted into the body of the email. Send to query@dunhamlit.com. Responds in approximately four weeks.

Magazine Accepting STEAM Articles for Ages 9-14

Muse is a discovery magazine for children and teens ages 9-14. The editors seek fresh and entertaining articles from the fields of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM). Ideal *Muse* articles build on and extend the existing knowledge most young people in grades 4–8 have. Especially looking for articles that feature innovators, scientists, and engineers who can explain what they’ve done in a clear and understandable way, articles that explore new developments related to the organizing questions, or that describe how things and processes work.

Seeking Feature Articles (800–2,000 words, including sidebars), Profiles and Interviews, particularly of underrepresented STEAM professionals (500–800 words), Activities and Experiments (500–800 words), Photo Essays (100–300 words), Science Fiction or Science-Focused Fiction (800–1,200 words), Infographics

Authors should read several back issues of *Muse* to see the magazine’s style (most libraries have back issues, and you can see one here <https://bit.ly/musesample>). Authors are expected to ensure accuracy in both conception and detail. *MUSE* purchases all rights to materials.

Submit a detailed query with a cover letter, an outline of the proposed article, including scope and treatment, and proposed resources via the *Muse* Submittable page at <https://bit.ly/musesubmissions>. Each edition of *Muse* focuses on a central theme and open-ended organizing questions about the theme. Below are upcoming themes for 2022 issues, with query deadlines:

May/June 2022 issue theme: AMONG THE STARS. Article ideas: The life cycle of a star. New insights about stellar nurseries. Spectroscopy—and how we gather information about stars. Cutting-edge telescopes and their technologies. Recent and upcoming space missions to study our Sun. A movie or movies with the most accurate portrayals of astronomy or astrophysics. Mythology: How did different cultures explain what stars are? How does a star go supernova and what have we learned recently about black holes? Current research into the nature of dark matter. **Queries by: October 15, 2021**

July/August 2022 issue theme: ISLANDS. Article ideas: Why big animals get small and small animals get big on islands. The fabulous birds of paradise—why living on an island gave them incredible plumage. How delicate are island ecosystems?—explore Hawaii’s struggle with invasive species. How does an island form? The disappearing island—why some islands can simply vanish. Life on an island—would be great if we could talk to a kid who lives on a small island. How do island communities get supplies, weather storms, etc. How to make an artificial island. **Queries by: November 15, 2021**

September 2022 issue theme: EXTINCTION. Article ideas: Modern-day extinction wave. How many animals on the planet are threatened? How about plants? Danger zones for animals: why certain habitats are disappearing faster than others. Helping threatened animals that aren’t cute and cuddly (why pandas get the big bucks and blobfish don’t). The ugliest animals that need the most help. How does the current extinction wave compare with extinctions of the past? A success story in conservation. Possibly story of conservation that didn’t work, as well. The technology of conservation: how do you replicate delicate ecosystems? Why is cloning NOT the answer? **Queries by: December 15, 2021**

October 2022 issue theme: SKEPTICISM/SPOTTING FAKES. Article ideas: What is skepticism? Why is it an important part of science? Why do people believe what they believe? Why people believe propaganda and pseudoscience. How to be a skeptic. Houdini and his crew of medium-busting magicians. How stories spread through the internet. What makes a story believable? What makes us doubt that a nonfiction piece is actually true? Why do urban legends or interests in cryptids last throughout time? Possibly the story of an urban legend. **Queries by: January 15, 2022**

November/December 2022 issue theme: SHOW ME HOW. Article ideas: How babies learn by mimicking older people. Zoos that use dogs to help teach young cheetahs. How animals teach tool use to their babies. STEAM professionals tell stories about mentors who made a difference in their lives/careers. History of how-to and self-help manuals (possibly some funny ancient ones). What have people needed instructions on throughout history (farming, cooking, fishing, navigation, medicine, fashion)? People who write instructions for Ikea or some odd thing (IRS? nuclear missile launching?), what they have to include. **Queries by: February 15, 2022**

Guest Editorial: Shut Out by Sallie Lowenstein



Do you remember these titles?

A Light in the Attic by Shel Silverstein; *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle; *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, illustrated by Henry Cole; *Are You There God? It's Me Margaret* by Judy Blume; *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson; *Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep; *Draw Me a Star* by Eric Carle; *For Every Child a Better World* by Jim Henson; *Freaky Friday* by Mary Rodgers; *Halloween ABC* by Eve Mirriam; *Hop on Pop* by Dr. Seuss; *I Saw Esau* by Iona Opie, illustrated by Maurice Sendak; *In Our Mothers' House* by Patricia Polacco; *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris; *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl; *Julie of the Wolves* by Jean Craighead George; *My Brother Sam is Dead* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier; *Olive's Ocean* by Kevin Henkes; *Pinkerton, Behave* by Steven Kellogg; *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor; *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz; *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig; *The Egypt Game* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder; *The Librarian of Basra* by Jeanette Winter; *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis; *There are Two Lives: Poems by Children from Japan*, compiled by Richard Lewis; *Where's Waldo?* by Hanford Martin; *1984* by George Orwell; *Beyond Magenta* by Susan Kuklin; *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley; *Catch 22* by Joseph Heller; *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury; *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes; *His Dark Materials* by Philip Pullman; *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou; *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding; *Native Son* by Richard Wright; *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare; *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain; *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon; *The Freedom Writers Diary* by the Freedom Writers; *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck; *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald; *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky; *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

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Most of you probably do remember or are familiar with many of the titles on the previous page's list. What they have in common is that all of these books have either been banned or censored.

Years ago, I had a long-sleeved tee shirt with a list of many banned books on it, including some of these books. (Nobody could put all the books that have been banned on one tee-shirt. Just since 1982, the Banned Books website says 11,300 books have been banned, but the history of the banned book goes back to Puritanical America.) My tee-shirt, which I wore until the lettering was illegible, was printed in lines of red and white on a navy-blue shirt, referencing the flag of *The Home of the Free*. The list included the Bible and *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler, *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein and *In the Night Kitchen* by Maurice Sendak. That shirt raised discussions among the teens I worked with at the time. Some were appalled that the Bible and the Koran had been banned. One thought *Mein Kampf* should be banned. I argued against all book banning and censorship, pointing out how important it is to understand history and what happened in the past, as well as to see how other people think. They were surprised that *In the Night Kitchen* had been widely censored, often by librarians, who felt compelled to put the naked Mickey in a diaper. "That's stupid," they said. "We all know what a naked baby looks like."

In a fascinating new book about censorship of children's books, Leonard S. Marcus has given us a lot to think about. The information in *You Can't Say That* is skillfully woven into interviews with thirteen authors whose books have been censored and/or banned. The authors represent a wide range of genres, styles, and approaches to writing. The interviews personalize the impact of censorship on the author, which is very different from reading a list of banned books.

Marcus makes it clear that the discussion and the free exchange of ideas through books is the basis of freedom and at the root of democracy in the United States. This book is not discussing the pros and cons of the books these authors have written, but rather how books both protect intellectual freedom and reflect it.

At the end of his interview with Susan Kuklin, a photographer and essayist who has taken on many difficult topics, Marcus takes on the current issue of cultural misappropriation when he asks her, "What do you think about the larger question of who has the right to tell what stories?"

Her response: "I write about various people and their cultures because I believe, I strongly believe, that we need to know one another. We need to read one another. . . . Another writer who is part of a particular group will approach a subject differently. And that's great. There's plenty of room at the table."

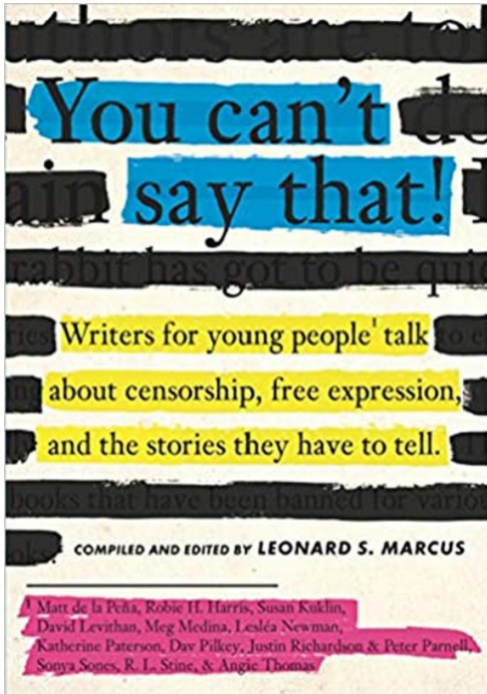
Both question and answer are beautifully put. In this country there is plenty of room at the table. How else will we ever know the vast array of experience and thought on a given topic or idea. How will we ever know what different kinds of people think about the same idea? Isn't that important in order for us to move forward as a polyglot nation?

Unlike books that have been published and meet with attempts to censor them, and are defended by fans of both free speech and the book itself, even books ready for release may currently face a cancellation before they ever greet the public if they are accused of "cultural misappropriation."

At one time publishers viewed publishing as a balanced merger of business and art, of creativity and commercialism—and once a decision was made to publish, they stood behind the book, the author

Shut Out...continued

and their investment. One famous case of support for a book that didn't sell well was *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (1947). For close to six years, this famous book barely sold. In today's world, it would have been withdrawn, and the copies literally pulped—denying millions (yes, millions) of small children access to one of the most comforting books available today. It didn't sell because it was unique in both its art and that it didn't tell a story, but was rather about childhood rituals. Although not exactly censorship, the current focus on marketing and quick profit frequently doesn't tolerate a scenario where an unusual book can languish until its sales pick up or it finds its readership.



In a strange twist on a reason to remove a book from a school curriculum, *Catcher in Rye* by J.D. Salinger was once again a target. The book has been repeatedly censored over the years, usually in protest against sex and profanity found in its pages. But recently, a liberal school district in Maryland decided to try and remove it from their curriculum because it was about a “rich, white boy.” Interestingly, kids from every ethnicity lobbied to have it retained in the curriculum.

Because topic, buzz words, and marketing are driving publishing right now, many books get published that don't do well for what seem obvious reasons to me. Teens tell me they are looking for the different and unexpected in what they read; that they are sick of endless series and teen romance. They want books to be diverse because their world is, but do not want every book to be about a diverse topic, any more than they want every book to throw in gratuitous violence or romance.

Over the years I have come on many books that have made me question why they were published for a variety of reasons, including writing quality and/or topic. Of course, that is only my opinion, so I ask kids, parents, and teachers what they think of these titles. Almost no one has heard of any of these books, which I think proves that books rise and fall on their merits, not on marketing-think/speak, or on topics, current trends or buzz words. Perhaps that is why, a few years ago there was a surge in teen interest in *Pride and Prejudice*. Kids are not looking at labels or timely topics when they pick a book. They are looking for a good, well written read and searching for a universal truth in its pages.

And surely, we want them to be intrigued by what they read. Books offer children a chance to develop abstract reasoning, to learn about the myriad points of view in our world, and encourage imagination. They offer a jumping off place to initiate conversations about sometimes controversial topics. Refocusing on taking chances and, once again, balancing the art and business of publishing a book is a paradigm that publishers who want to survive should seriously think about. In fact, perhaps they should read, *You Can't Say That*, because like it or not, publishers hold in their hands one of the keys to keeping democracy alive.

Sallie Lowenstein is the publisher of the free newsletter **Old Books, Young Readers**, and is also the owner of the 26 year old publishing company Lion Stone Books (www.lionstonebooks.com), and is the author/illustrator of 18 picture, middle grade, and young adult books. Please send titles of old books you love, comments, or requests to be on the OBYR mailing list to:

Oldbooksyoungreaders@gmail.com

FIND NEW INSPIRATION IN OLD STORIES

by Lois Wickstrom

The question everybody likes to ask writers is “Where do you get your ideas?”

Sometimes we do get inspired and a fully-formed idea just pops into our heads. But, we are writers. We want to write every day. We can’t wait for inspiration. We find ideas and play with them. Two sources for ideas that I’ve found useful are Greek myths and folktales.

Greek myths are fun to modernize. You can find descriptions of the 30 most well-known Greek myths here: greektraveltellers.com/blog/30-of-the-most-famous-tales-from-greek-mythology. Readers like to recognize a story they already know, and yet find it new at the same time.

Hercules had to clean out horse stables that were so full of horse poop that he had to redirect a river to do the job. Today we have litter and other types of pollution. If this idea grabs your attention, ask yourself how your protagonist would perform the heroic deed of cleaning the city? Or the air? Or the water?

In another myth the Three Fates weave people’s lives like spiders weave webs. They start their thread when a person is born, they weave the person’s adventures and fate, and finally cut off the thread at death. Every project has a life of its own. So does every story. If you had the power to shape a life, what would you choose for that person? Or that project? That is what every writer does when s/he writes a story. But that work is invisible. That is the work the question “Where do you get your ideas?” is really asking.

You can make the process of story cre-

ation more visual for your readers by using symbols. What if your protagonist could decide the fate of a person who wore a party dress from a thrift shop? Or even the fate of a person who bought a specific skein of yarn? Would that fate be inevitable, like in the Greek myth, or would the person have free will despite their planned fate?



All the gods gave gifts to Pandora. Most of the gifts were intangibles, like wisdom and beauty and cunning. Zeus gave her a jar along with the instruction “Never open this!” Of course, she had to open it. In the myth, opening the jar unleashed all sorts of misery upon the world. The story doesn’t have to go that way. What else might be in that jar? Might somebody else open it?



In the myth of King Midas, the king loves gold so much that he asks the gods to turn everything he touches to gold. Now he can’t eat because when he touches food it turns to gold. The same thing happens when he hugs his daughter. Patrick Skene Catling’s *The Chocolate Touch* alters this tale by giving a boy the ability to turn everything he touches into chocolate. That’s great for food, but not what he wanted when he hugged his mother. What else might someone love enough to want an infinite supply? What other calamities might result?



Another approach is to look at folktales from the villain’s point of view. *Surlalune Fairytales* lists well-known folktales from around the world: surlalunefairytales.com/index.html

The giant in *Jack and the Beanstalk* is the villain. But he’s hungry. Is he

Find New Inspiration in Old Stories..continued

supposed to die, rather than eat delicious little boys? Is there another food he might enjoy? Or from his point of view, are little boys born to be food? Is he a legitimate hunter, trapping little boys much the same way humans trap animals for their meals? *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka does just that for the wolf, making the wolf the protagonist. Every villain sees himself or herself as the hero or heroine of his or her own story.

Folktales can also be inspiration for modern stories. The library blog from Toledo, OH lists many variations on *The Little Red Hen* and other favorites: toledolibrary.org/blog/modern-folk-tale-adaptations-for-kids. The variations are endless.

In *The Frog King*, a spoiled princess accidentally drops her favorite toy (a golden ball) into a deep well. A frog offers to get it back for her if she agrees to let him eat at her table and sleep in her bed. The princess promises, but has no intention of keeping her word. The frog shows up at the palace and the king orders his daughter to fulfill her promise. The princess becomes so angry that she throws the frog at the wall, whereupon he becomes a handsome prince and marries her.

By modern thinking, this makes no sense. But this story has remained popular for hundreds of years. There must be something here that people like. What else might a princess, or a child, promise in trade for recovering her toy? How else might she show her anger? How could the princess/child come to like the creature/other child who recovered her toy? Is this a chance to talk about class? Race? Prejudice? Without hitting the reader over the head. If this is a picture book, there's no need to even mention the differences—let the art do the work.

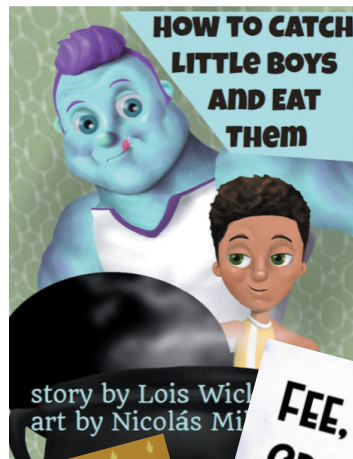
Sometimes, a story arrives as an image—an incomplete adventure. When that happens, a folktale or myth may have just the right shape to finish it. When I was writing *Zibs for Sale*, I had no trouble getting my Earth girl into trouble. All she had to do was accidentally steal what she thought was a free sample from an interstellar traveling bakery. The

alien baker wanted her to pay for it and he didn't accept Earth money. He wanted her to wash dishes, but his water heater was broken. I didn't know how to resolve the situation and get the Earth girl home safely.

Then I read *Beauty and the Beast* and saw that I had just written a modern version of the same story. Beauty's dad thought the rose he picked was a free sample and the Beast wanted him to pay for it with his life. Beauty solved the problem by treating the Beast with kindness. Now I had the ending. The Earth girl breaks her radio to get the wires she needs to fix the

alien's water heater. The alien baker gives the Earth girl not only her freedom, but what she wants most: a rocket ship of her own. Of course, it's a fixer-upper, but she's already shown she's good at repairs.

Stories that have stood the test of time have something more lovable than their exact words. People love the characters, situations, dilemmas, and resolutions. Those parts of the story are free for taking, reshaping, and making our own. There's no need to wait for inspiration. Writers get their ideas from everywhere.



Other Resources

The University of Pittsburgh has an electronic archive of folklore and mythology here: <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/folk-texts.html> This page shows many different versions of Little Red Riding Hood from around the world: <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/type0333.html>

World of Tales folktales from around the world: https://www.worldoftales.com/all_books.html#gsc.tab=0

The original versions of folktale, fairy tales, myths and legends are all in public domain, having been first published 200 or more years ago, or passed down through oral storytelling. But new versions of old tales may be under copyright. The University of Chicago Press has compiled a document to explain copyright and fair use, which can be found here: press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/copyright.html

ADAM BLACKMAN

Acquisition Editor



CARDINAL RULE PRESS

by Lynne Marie

Adam comes to publishing with an MFA in Fiction and fifteen years' experience as a nonprofit management professional, including many years running a nonprofit bookstore in lower Manhattan. He is an author, educator and acquiring editor of Cardinal Rule Press (cardinalrulepress.com), who also teaches hands-on creative workshops for kids.

LYNNE MARIE: First of all, congratulations on your newest endeavor at Cardinal Rule Press! I see that you've already acquired three new books at Cardinal, for publication in 2022! CRP has certainly grown over the years. Please tell us a little bit about the company and its mission statement.

ADAM BLACKMAN:

Thanks so much! I had no idea what to expect when I joined CRP, but it's been a fantastic opportunity. The founder, Maria Dismody, started the company when she was a teacher. She was having trouble finding books that represented the diversity of her students' experiences in a realistic way (read without anthropomorphized characters or magic) while promoting the "golden rule" values of kindness and empathy. So she wrote her own, and published it. And then she wrote another, and another. Through the publishing process, she realized she could have a wider reach by publishing books written by others and the press has grown slowly and steadily since then.

My own path to working with CRP is worth noting for your readers, as I believe it highlights how engaging in the writing community

can have unexpected benefits. As a writer new to the kidlit sphere, I participated in as many events as I could, conferences, panels, SCBWI, 12X12, StoryStorm, Twitter pitch events, etc. I also joined a few critique groups. The door creaked open when I was selected for the inaugural #PBChat mentorship with the wonderful Jorge and Megan Lacera. A year after the internship, I decided to test the waters of agenting, and my mentors put me in touch with Kaitlyn Sanchez, who had recently completed interning with Anna Olswanger and was by then an



Associate Agent. Kaitlyn had just been interviewed by Maria for the CRP video series and during that conversation Maria mentioned needing an acquisitions editor, so Kaitlyn shared the opportunity with me. I then spoke with Maria who (pay attention, this is where the legwork pays off) was impressed with my understanding of picture book craft and marketplace. So, even though I hadn't set out

to become an editor, my work immersing myself in the community paved the way for this opportunity.

LM: Please tell us a little bit about *Beto's Super Cool Guayabera* by Cindy Rodriguez, illustrated by Begona Fernandez Corbalon. Was this your first acquisition? How did it come to you? What made this "the one?"

AB: All three titles scheduled for release in 2022 were part of the same process. None of them was first, though the three taken together are my first three acquisitions. I was struck by the kid-centeredness of *Beto* (which will be

Adam Blackman..continued

published under the title *Three Pockets Full*). I loved that it dealt with the deep emotions of missing an absent parent (which could arguably have been read as the result of either death or divorce) and of accepting a parent's remarriage with humor as well as tenderness.

The story is both specific to remarriage and universally relatable. Every kid knows what it's like to protest against uncomfortable clothing, be it a heavy coat, a hand-me-down, formal wear, or in this case a traditional wedding garment freighted with longing. Further, the device of Beto communicating with his mother through notes is a clever and fun way to point out the difficulty for Beto of communicating directly about his longing for his dad on the eve of his mother's remarriage. I could go on—the story is well-paced, tightly worded, and leaves plenty of room for the illustrator—but I think you get the point.

LM: What process did you go through to pair the illustrator with the author of this book? What were some of the criteria that you considered when doing so?

AB: I'm going to defer to Maria on this question as the choice of illustrator is outside my lane. I will say that I was delighted when Maria invited me to some of the design meetings as it gave me a chance to advocate for different parts of the story that I thought could be emphasized in illustrations, which is something all of us picture book text-only writers long to be able to do!

MARIA DISMONDY: (Founder and CEO of Cardinal Rule Press): *Ultimately, our goal of finding an illustrator is looking for an artist that can authentically represent the culture of the characters in the book. Other criteria we consider is the aesthetics of the artist portfolio: does it match the design concept of the manuscript? We also take into consideration*

our budget and the artist's availability according to our deadlines with our distributor. If for some reason, we can check most of these boxes but still can't find an illustrator of the same ethnicity of the characters in the story, we will hire a sensitivity reader to make sure the culture is represented appropriately.

LM: You acquired another submission, *This Could Be You* by Cindy Williams Schrauben, this past April as well. Please tell us a little bit about the concept of this book and what drew you to it.



AB: The message that you can be anything is very hard to express in a unique way. It can easily come across as didactic. But this manuscript felt both inspired and inspiring. The exuberant language, the bouncy rhyme and lively rhythm made me feel like I really can be anything. And when I read the back matter about growth-mindset, I was especially impressed at how Cindy grounded this general concept in specific scenes that would give an illustrator so much to work with.

LM: A third acquisition in April, *What the Bread Said* by Vanessa Garcia and illustrated by Tim Palin, is scheduled for Fall, 2022. Please tell us a little about this book.

AB: I don't know if it's just because of Covid lockdowns, but I received a LOT of submissions about baking, and a lot of these stories used baking to highlight different cultures and family traditions, including connections across generations. And yet, Vanessa's story stood out for the way it braided together all these elements (like the challah dough in the story). The narrator learns about global and familial history while baking challah with her grandfather.

LM: Apart from this special above-the-slush

submission opportunity for our readers, you usually open for submissions September 1st and close November 1st and then open back up January 1st and close March 1st. Can you tell us about the goals for each of these submission windows and the resulting acquisition/publishing schedule?

AB: First thing is, this is a new schedule. Last year, we nearly tripled submissions from the previous year. We figure we will continue receiving more and more submissions, especially as people see the great work we're publishing, and want to be able to accommodate that by spreading out the reading periods. Selected manuscripts will be published in 2023.

LM: What is your slush pile like? What do you see too much of? What do you see too little of?

AB: Last year, I saw too much unrealistic fiction, talking animals and silverware and such. This decreased once we put a definition of realistic fiction on the website.

I hesitate to say that I see too much of any one type of story, because I don't want to discourage anyone. As I mentioned, I read a lot of manuscripts about baking with a grandparent and learning family history or about global cultures in the process, and yet *What the Bread Says* is 1 of 3 manuscripts (out of over 1,300) that we're publishing. So, it's not the what, it's the how that matters. Tell the story well, tell it evocatively, and it will stand out.

Having said that, we are not interested in stories about marquee mainstream holidays (ahem, Christmas) and would like to see more stories that incorporate disabilities, diverse body types, and socio-economic disparities. And humor! I think people look at our mission and send us the most earnest thing they can. But you can inspire kindness and empathy with humor, too!

LM: In general, how many submissions are you looking to take on each publishing season of Spring and Fall? What criteria do you use to decide whether a book will be released in Spring or Fall?

AB: Again, a word from our publisher...

MARIA DISMONDY: *This is an evolving number which could be much higher but I have built this company on the concept of 'slow and steady wins the race' and am trying to continue on the path of steady growth. Right now, we are looking to take two titles per season. We are a small publishing house and we put a ton of time, money, and other resources into educating and mentoring our authors on building their brand pre-publication.*

LM: Please share what you look for in a book to acquire, as well as things you would not consider, like anthropomorphic animals. Please describe realistic fiction and explain the goal to represent "the modern day child."

AB: I am looking first and foremost for gripping writing. I want the emotions to ring true and the elements of the story to accumulate to more than the sum of their parts. Humor is great.

The definition of realistic fiction is fairly cut and dry (I think). It's simply a story that could happen in the physical world in which we live.

LM: What are your thoughts about pagination in manuscripts and/or art notes? If art notes are acceptable to you, what guidelines should an author use when including them?

AB: I'm fine with or without pagination. Regarding art notes, I think the general rule to include them only when they are essential to convey the story, is a good guideline.

LM: Please share what you would like to see in a query letter. How important is it that the author has a connection to the story? How important is experience? Do you consider the writer's social media and presence when making a decision on which author to take on?

AB: Brevity. I receive a lot of cover letters that are longer than the manuscripts themselves, or whose long-windedness presages a manuscript that is written more like a short story than a picture book manuscript.

Adam Blackman..continued

I care a lot less about the cover letter than the manuscript itself and often read manuscripts first. Having a platform and/or strong connection to the story are definitely nice, but these are not as important as a manuscript that grabs me. After all, platforms can be built. In fact, the beauty of working with CRP (and from what I've heard, many other small presses) is the attention and support CRP will provide authors.

LM: What kind of distribution do you get from IPG (Independent Publishers Group)? What might this mean to the authors?

MARIA DISMONDY: *Our books are distributed in the retail market as well as in schools, libraries and the gift market. We work with our distributor on world distribution which includes on ebook versions as well. We also pitch our titles to publishers to acquire foreign rights.*

LM: What are a few ways which you require the author to assist in promotion and marketing of the book? How does Cardinal Rule Press supplement that?

MARIA DISMONDY: *We are super clear about what we require versus what we suggest as far as marketing goes for our authors. We have one on one meetings to present our marketing campaign with month by month ideas for authors to work on. We feel when we map it out like a timeline, with plenty of time for our authors to work on the campaign, they are more likely to do the tasks and have time to ask clarifying questions. We prefer for our marketing to be clear to our team, with little room for gray areas with the element of surprise.*

LM: Please share your current needs as far as authors and illustrators, as well as your personal wish list.

AB: We are looking for more diversity in both authors and illustrators. Personally, recognizing that, despite much progress, our culture still embeds ideas of machismo that can stifle emotional growth and hamper boys' ability to communicate and connect. I would like a story that finds a fun and creative way to support the emotional lives of boys.

Adam Blackman is offering CBI subscribers a special **ABOVE THE SLUSHPILE** submission opportunity for the month of October 2021. Accepting manuscripts of up to 1000 words of realistic fiction that empowers children ages 4-11 through meaningful stories. See full guidelines and current titles at <https://cardinalrule-press.com/submissions/>. On the submission form, put "[Manuscript Title], CBI CRP October ATS Submission" in the Title field. **Responds by February 15, 2022 if interested.** Please use the Above the Slushpile code for one submission only.

---Please Read Before You Proceed---

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

- 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 manuscript falls within standard word counts of the particular age group for which you're writing. (If you don't know standard word counts, get our free Ultimate Children's Writing Cheat Sheet at: writeforkids.org/ultimate-cheatsheet)
- Your work has been critiqued by a beta reader, critique partner/group, or a freelance editor.
- You have thoroughly revised and polished your manuscript.

USE EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE TO HEIGHTEN CONFLICT

by Jane McBride

Each of us has our own emotional language. How a character responds to any given situation is often dependent upon which language he is most "fluent" in or which language he has been denied. If the character needs a certain language and has never received it, he can be vulnerable to bad influences or act out in ways he doesn't understand.

Consider the story conflicts that can arise from differing emotional languages. What if a seventeen-year-old girl sorely needs kind words, but her parents don't know how to give them? Instead, they give her expensive gifts, none of which she wants. Both are confused and angry with each other.

What are some emotional languages? Encouragement and attention, kind words, quality time, gifts, acts of service, physical touch.

Let's look at examples of each:

Encouragement

Sixteen-year-old Josh grew up with no parental encouragement or involvement and responds positively to Victoria, who shows interest in him and praises his efforts. Josh suspects she is only using him, but so strong is his need for encouragement that he puts up with it. Josh has one outstanding skill: he is a whiz with computers. What will happen when she asks him to hack into the school computer system and change her grades? She tells him that she hasn't been able to study because her mother has been very sick and that she, Victoria, needs to take care of her after school. What will Josh do? Can you see the conflict that Josh is facing? Will he find the strength to stand up to her and tell her no? Or will he give in because he is so flattered by her attention? Josh knows that what Victoria is asking him to do is wrong, but he has been so starved for any atten-

tion and encouragement that he is seriously considering doing what she's asked. In the end, Josh does what he knows is right and refuses to do what she asks. Not surprisingly, Victoria drops him but not before telling him that he's a pathetic excuse for a human being. Josh realizes now that he is worthy of respect. When his parents continue to ignore him, he finds what he needs in an after-school mentoring program where he helps other kids with their computer skills.

Kind words

Thirteen-year-old Rachel has lived with her grandmother her entire life and has received nothing but constant criticism from her. Her grandmother took Rachel in when Rachel's mother gave birth to her at sixteen and then abandoned her. Ever since then, the grandmother has preached to Rachel about the dangers of getting involved with a boy. She keeps Rachel to a strict schedule of chores, school, chores, homework, and, on Sundays and Wednesday evenings, church meetings. Rachel desperately needs to hear kind words and may respond well to kind words from a much older boy, Jerry. Can Jerry convince her to go against the strictures that have been drummed into her? Rachel fights her attraction to the boy, at the same time rebelling against her grandmother's rules and harsh words. In the end, Rachel finds a feeling of self-worth, ironically, at the church meetings her grandmother insisted she go to. There, she finds friends and leaders who appreciate her.

Time

Five-year-old Caleb's parents work long hours and send him to a daycare center ten hours a day five days a week. There, he grows close to the daycare provider, Cindy, but fails to develop a relationship

with his parents. What will happen when his family moves to a new location and he is sent to a new day care center staffed by strangers? Can he find the courage to reach out even though he doesn't know that's what he's looking for?

Gifts

Ten-year-old Sarah grew up in an orphanage where gifts were rare. The few gifts she received were held over her head in an attempt to exact “good” behavior from her. She learned not to trust people when they give her something, even though she longs for something that is hers alone. She is adopted by an older couple who love her deeply. She wants to love them back but is confused when they give her a birthday party. She struggles to accept the presents they lavish upon her, believing that the gifts can be—and will be—taken back if she makes a mistake. When she talks back to her mother one night, she goes to get the birthday gifts (which she hasn't used) and gives them back to her parents. Her parents are surprised and hurt, believing that Sarah doesn't like the gifts. Sarah starts to cry and tells them that she has to give the presents back because she made a mistake. Her parents cry as well and reassure her that their love and the gifts aren't dependent upon Sarah being perfect. This is the beginning of healing for Sarah.

Acts of service

Twelve-year-old Geoff is on constant call when he is at home. Geoff's seven-year-old sister Leah has spina-bifida and is paralyzed from the waist down and confined to a wheelchair. Geoff is often called to help put her shoes and socks on her, taking her to the car, and getting her inside it. Though he loves his sister deeply, he is tired of always being “on call.” When is it his turn, he wonders, for somebody to help him? When Geoff needs to turn in a big project for his science class, he knows he's in trouble. He's put it off for a month and now faces a deadline of having to turn it in in two days. He knows he can't go to his parents—they've already reminded him multiple times about doing the project. When Leah learns of his predicament, she offers to help. He is about to turn her down when he sees the plea in her eyes. She wants to help him; moreover, she needs to help him. She points out that she has excellent lettering skills. She helps him

make a stand-out poster. Leah's act of service is a learning experience for Geoff and her. They both benefit, and their relationship deepens.

Physical touch

Have you ever heard about children in foreign orphanages who literally waste away for lack of physical touch? It's beyond sad for these babies and older children who have never experienced physical touch. They long to be held, to be hugged, to just have someone reach out and take their hands. This need is universal. We all need the comfort of touch.

Nine-year-old Johnny knows his parents love him, but they never hug him or even pat him on the shoulder when he does a good job at something. He can't explain his feelings in words, but he knows something is missing. When his mother's sister visits, she hugs him and kisses him. So startled is he that he starts to push her away, but she won't let him. He asks her why she did that, and she tells him it's because she loves him and that she wanted to show it. Johnny is careful to avoid his aunt after that, but she continues to hug him, wrap an arm around his shoulders, and just touch him for no reason. He notices that she also hugs his mother and even his father though neither appear comfortable with it. One day after his aunt leaves, he impulsively wraps his arms around his mother's waist. She starts to push him away, but he holds on. Gradually, she relaxes and returns the hug. It is the start of a new relationship between them.

IN CONCLUSION

Each of us has our own special emotional language. We give it and respond to it. When you use these languages in your stories, you can create conflict and also heal wounded hearts in your characters.

This article is inspired by *The 5 Love Languages*. Learn more (and see links to love languages for parents, teens and children, at 5lovelanguages.com). Figuring out your characters' love language is another way of finding their strengths and weaknesses, how they may communicate with other characters, and how they may react to plot obstacles.

Whooo Knew? Informational Children's Book Author

ANNETTE WHIPPLE

interview by PJ McIlvaine

Annette Whipple didn't have any great childhood ambitions about becoming a published author. In fact, it wasn't until she took time off from being a classroom teacher to focus on her growing family that she discovered her love of blogging. Bitten by the writing bug, Whipple decided to hone her writing abilities, with great results. Since 2016, she's had an incredible eight informational books for "curious young readers" published including *Scurry! The Truth About Spiders* (Reycraft Books, Fall 2021), *Woof! The Truth About Dogs* (Reycraft Books, June 2021), *Whooo Knew? The Truth About Owls* (Reycraft Books, 2020), *The Laura Ingalls Wilder Companion: A Chapter-by-Chapter Guide* (Chicago Review Press, 2020), and *The Story of the Wright Brothers* (Rockridge Press, 2020). An enthusiastic researcher who lives in Pennsylvania with her husband and three children, you're likely to find Whipple snacking on warm chocolate chip cookies when she's not writing or teaching children, ecators, and writers.



PJ McILVAINE: In another life you were a teacher. Did that influence your writing and the stories you want to tell?

ANNETTE WHIPPLE: Yes! I loved teaching children. Now I write informational books for kids—so it's my new way to teach. I want the words I write to help readers celebrate their own curiosity.

PM: You've had eight books published with more on the way. To what do you attribute this success?

AW: I never assumed I would be a good writer without a lot of learning. Despite my published books, I still have lots to learn. I've learned the most from

other writers...both published writers at conferences and through conversations and by working with my critique partners, critique group, and even professional critiques. Early on I began studying other kidlit books (instead of just reading them). These became my mentor texts and really helped me write without my "teacher" voice and to have fun with manuscripts. It's true: Readers make the best writers. I highly recommend using mentor texts!

PM: You've become quite adept in a niche educational/nonfiction market. Was this intentional or deliberate on your part?

AW: At this point, I have only written nonfiction/informational books and articles. I never intended it to be that way, but I think it's my strength.

PM: Do you propose the projects or ideas or do editors come to you?

AW: My first five books were for the educational market. I met an editor with an educational publisher at a writing conference over dinner. She invited me to share my work-for-hire introductory packet since she was looking for more writers for book projects. I did not have one yet, but of course I put one together and emailed her after the conference! The WFH introductory packet included my resume, cover letter, and two writing samples (focused for the age you want to write and the general topic such as STEM that you are interested in). Over three years, I wrote five books with that publisher. I call the educational market the publishing world's best kept secret. Another publisher (not educational) knew of my interest in science and history which led to the invitation to write *The Story of*

Annette Whipple..continued

the Wright Brothers. I pitched *The Laura Ingalls Wilder Companion: A Chapter-by-Chapter Guide* by finding a publisher through a market guide.

PM: What advice do you have for writers who'd like to break into the educational market?

AW: The educational market is a fabulous way to break into the publishing world OR gain experience (and income)! I've taught workshops about it with SCBWI and other organizations. I have a couple of blog posts about the educational market for those wanting to know more.

This one explains how the educational market compares to the trade market: annetwhipple.com/2020/08/what-are-educational-and-trade.html

This one includes FAQ about the educational market: annetwhipple.com/2019/01/writing-for-educational-market.html

PM: How much research do your books entail? It almost seems as if you have to become an expert in the subject. Do you have the books reviewed by other experts for accuracy?

AW: I spend a long time (while still meeting deadlines) researching my projects. Writing nonfiction for children is just as demanding of accuracy and solid research as writing for adults. I fill notebooks and folders with notes and printed articles as well as digital files. I always want to be knowledgeable—even if I'm not an expert on my topic. I do have my projects reviewed by experts since I am not one. I prefer to get hands-on with my topic during research and then follow up with my expert once my manuscript is close to submission. I learn so much more from meeting experts than I do from books and videos!

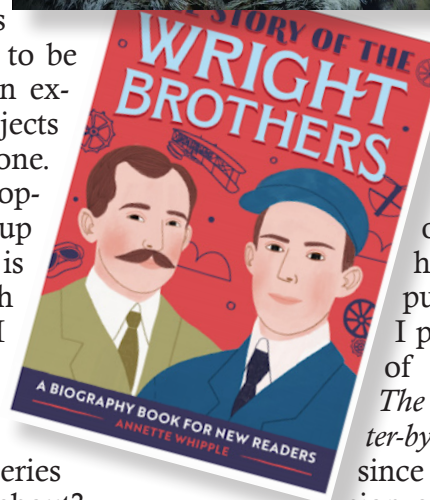
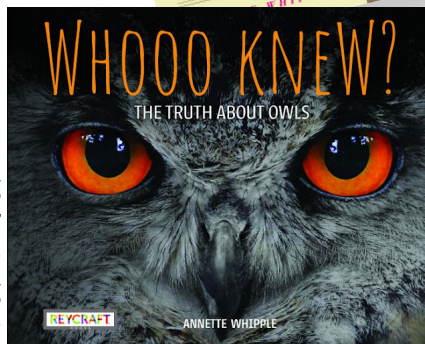
PM: For your current publisher, you've developed a nonfiction series about animals. How did that come about?

AW: I pitched *Whooo Knew? The Truth About Owls* after meeting my editor from Reycraft Books at a Highlights Foundation workshop. He expressed

interest (and his vision for the book) in a one-on-one meeting. Despite his invitation and interest, I didn't submit it for another month or so. I needed time to perfect and polish it properly. Since then, it's become a five-book series! In addition to the owl book, *Woof! The Truth About Dogs* and *Scurry! The Truth About Spiders* released. Two more titles will be released in 2022 about frogs and cats. I'm so excited! (Unlike large writing conferences, *Highlights's* workshops are small and intimate. Before our meeting, the editor and I had already shared a meal and I'd already heard his passion for his writers and their books. It's a great place to really develop relationships and connect with other writers and editors.)

PM: You've also written a book/compilation about writer Laura Ingalls Wilder, the author of the beloved *Little House on the Prairie* books. What was the inspiration for that?

AW: In 2014, I was reading C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* series with my family. We had a companion guide called *Roar* to go with it. My kids and I loved using the guide with the Narnia books. *Roar* became my mentor text—long before I knew what the term meant! I had already been writing for adults at that point, but I had a lot to learn about the kid lit publishing world. As I read mentor texts, they helped me understand the need of writing concisely and in engaging ways for kids. More than that, mentor texts helped me understand the importance of nonfiction text features. I added a lot more sidebars (so many my editor said there wasn't room for all of them), photographs and images (both historic and modern...some were in the public domain, some were my own, others I purchased rights to use in the book), and of course...back matter! Some would call *The Laura Ingalls Wilder Companion: A Chapter-by-Chapter Guide* a book full of back matter since it's full of historical information, discussion guides, and 75 activities. But I still used the back matter to connect the reader to additional resources—including museums, hundreds of pioneer terms defined, and more.



Annette Whipple..continued

PM: How long does it take you to complete a book? How much rewriting do you do? Do you belong to any writer groups or organizations from which you get feedback?

AW: My books can take years to write—or just a couple of months if I have a quick deadline. *Whooo Knew? The Truth About Owls* took me nearly five years to write. But the other books in the series have taken me less than six months to research and write since I already have my mentor text.

PM: Do you have an agent?

AW: No, but once I have time later this year between contracted projects, I hope to seek an agent with new projects.

PM: From your personal author website, you're quite proficient in giving class presentations, workshops, professional writer's development, etc. What do you like most about that? How has the current pandemic challenged that?

AW: Over the years, other writers have helped me become the writer I am today. I love helping other writers understand the writing business and craft better. I suppose it's the teacher in me, but I love all of it. My goal is to connect with writers and readers in a personal, yet professional way. I want to connect by providing meaningful content. Of course, some

of my newsletter is self-promotional. (Readers expect AND want that.) But more than that, I want to share things that might be of interest to readers and teachers. In my monthly newsletter, I include a regular feature called *Celebrate Curiosity* where I share interesting bits of science or history that can engage people of all ages. Another section is called *Good to Know*. There I might include an upcoming webinar, a writing tip, or a fabulous website or book that I recommend. (I share more about this in my course called *Author Newsletters: Connect with Content*.) And it's great to recommend others' books—so I do!

Some helping happens formally through classes, coaching, or critiquing, but other times it's over coffee or between conference workshops or during a meal. I was already comfortable teaching online, so the pandemic just widened my audience and pushed me to create the *KidLit Creatives* video courses for writers.

PM: What are you most excited about writing-wise, currently?

AW: I'm really excited that the second book in *The Truth About* series came out this summer, for curious kids and dog lovers of all ages! It's *Woof! The Truth About Dogs*. This month (October 2021), *Scurry: The Truth About Spiders* comes out. Next year the series continues with frogs and cats!



Follow Annette Whipple on Twitter at [@AnnetteWhipple](#), on Facebook and Instagram at [@AnnetteWhippleBooks](#), and see her websites at [annetthewhipple.com](#) and [wildercompanion.com](#)

Annette has several on-demand courses at <https://kidlit-creatives.teachable.com/> She's offering CBI subscribers 15% off her courses with the coupon code WRITE15.

THE VALUE OF OUTLINING— EVEN IF YOU'RE A PANTSER

by Jane McBride

How does an outline differ from a synopsis? How can a writer use an outline to become a better writer? How can an outline save a writer time? How can an outline allow a writer to go back and "fix" a story problem without rewriting half or all a book?

Confession: I am not an outliner. I am not a plotter. I am a dyed-in-the-wool pantser (meaning I write by the seat of my pants). Lately, though, I've been trying to incorporate outlining into my writing. After watching talented writer friends work from outlines, I decided I needed to try it and maybe save myself some grief down the road when the plot points don't fit together as they should.

Let's address the above questions one by one:

How does an outline differ from a synopsis? A synopsis is an overview of the action of a story usually written in present tense and in narrative form. A synopsis allows an editor and/or agent to get a feel of a story without wading through numerous chapters and as such is a marketing tool. Learning to write a good synopsis (or at least one that doesn't stink) is vital for a working writer. I have written many synopses that were so terrible that I blush looking back on them. An outline, on the other hand, lists the action step by step. It may be divided into chapters or acts or scenes. It may be written in complete sentences or it may be written more informally in the writer's personal type of shorthand. Back in the dark ages, aka my high school years, English teachers required their students to write outlines using a very formal manner with Roman numerals, capital letters, numbers, small letters, etc. This was tedious in the extreme, but it did teach me the basics of outlining. Now that I am a working writer who also spends as much time as possible

with grandchildren and going to garage sales on the side, and saving time and energy is paramount, I use a bullet point system. I list my chapters, then write down every piece of action or feeling and occasionally even pieces of dialogue that I can think of that belong in those chapters. Many times I have to move a piece of action from one chapter to another. That's easy enough with block and paste. When I've completed the outline, I have a fairly detailed chronological telling of the story.

How can a writer use an outline to become a better writer? A good writer entertains. He invites a reader into a story and keeps her there. A story that doesn't hang together won't keep a reader engaged. She may finish the book, but she probably won't buy the next. Nor will she recommend it to a fellow reader. Outlines help a story hang together. A well-done outline keeps a story moving, letting it flow naturally from one scene to the next. The segues are smooth, and the actions make sense as the cause-and-effect sequence builds.

Can outlining save a writer time? In one of my earlier books, I had to revamp, rethink, and rewrite the entire second half because I couldn't make the parts fit together. Not only did I waste a lot of time, I was beyond frustrated with myself for not thinking through the story line. If I had outlined, had done even a minimal one, I could have foreseen this major story problem and saved myself a lot of time and aggravation. Since then, my writing has improved, I hope, but I still struggle with parts of the story that don't fit and, like a person trying to force a puzzle piece to where it doesn't belong, I end up with an awkward segue that my inner-editor tells me is going to have to be changed or taken out altogether.

The Value of Outlining...continued

How can an outline allow a writer to go back and “fix” a story problem without rewriting half or all of a book? In the above example, I related how I had to fix the second half of the book. In outlining, writers can actually see where and when a story problem occurs. Because I hadn't thought through the story, the hero's actions didn't match up with his motivation. That's a big no-no. How had I allowed that to happen? Because I wasn't paying attention. My editor was patient and helped me rewrite the second half of the book, but I could have saved her and myself a lot of time if I'd made certain that the hero was acting out of his reality, not of something that was convenient and contrived on my part. I could have also saved myself a lot of embarrassment by not having to ask my busy editor for help.

ARE THERE DRAWBACKS TO OUTLINING?

Outlining takes time. When I have a new story idea, I want to start writing immediately. I don't want to take the time and effort to go through the process of writing an outline. Just as it was in high school, it's still tedious. I don't want to have to ask myself, “What happens next?” I just want to write.

I want to write as fast as I can and, if I reach a sticking point, skip it and get back to the fun part: creating.

What to do? I devised my own system where I write as fast as I can to a natural stopping point, whether it be a scene or a chapter break, without stopping to edit, then, return to the outline and start all over again. I may have to go back and add transitions, but what matters is that I am writing and moving forward.

Outlining means knowing the story from beginning to end. It is a long-standing joke between my husband Larry and myself that I don't know what will happen in my story until the characters tell me. That's pretty much true. I listen to my characters and write down what they say and do. I know that the story ending will be happy. Other than that, it's a free-for-all. Outlining doesn't let me get away with that. If I'm going to outline, I need to know what's going to happen in any given scene.

What to do? I need to know my characters inside and out so that I know how they will act and re-

act in various scenes. This means doing character charts of one form or another and paying attention to characters' motivation and goals.

Outlining requires a lot of pre-writing work. Pre-writing, at least for me, isn't fun. It's the writing that's fun. It's the creating that's fun. It's the watching characters come alive and fight and make up and fail and succeed that's fun.

What to do? I need to remind myself that if I want to write a quality book, I need to spend the requisite time on it, even the non-fun parts. Because I'm not very disciplined, this is darn hard.

SUMMING UP

If outlining isn't for you, don't beat yourself over it. It isn't for everyone. It hasn't been my thing until recently and I'm still working to get the hang of it. Outlining is but one more tool in our writers' toolbox. Use it if it works for you. If it doesn't, shrug it off and do what allows you to be the best writer you can be.

Nathan Swartz

CREATOR AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



interview by Sharon O. Blumberg

Editor's Note: Several times a year we run Bonus Market interviews by Sharon O. Blumberg that highlight writing opportunities outside of the traditional children's book market, but that still may be of interest to those who write for children. If you're taking a break from your current manuscript but still want to work on bylines for your resume, want to repurpose some research from your nonfiction book, or perhaps just write about a topic you find compelling, these Bonus Markets are a great place to start.

This month we're chatting with Nathan Swartz, the creator and Editor-in-Chief of *Wand'rly Magazine*. This is an online magazine that caters to people and families who travel full-time, anywhere in the world! *Wand'rly Magazine* covers a number of topics that may be of interest to children's book writers, including camping with kids and road-schooling. See all back issues here: wandrlymagazine.com/issues/

SHARON BLUMBERG: Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to create *Wand'rly Magazine*?

NATHAN SWARTZ: In 2008, my family began traveling around the United States in a big ol' RV. A year later, we ditched that RV for a VW bus so we could be a bit more agile with where we went, and where we could fit, trying to spend more time up in the desert mountains and forests. Anyway, this ended up being something we really loved. A couple of kids later, we were living in Asheville, NC while awaiting our third son. I decided to take what was at the time a personal blog and turn it into a resource that could help other families, or anyone really, figure out how to travel full-time.

That was in 2012. Here we are today in 2021, and it

seems hundreds — if not thousands — of families are doing this. COVID helped show the world that remote working doesn't have to mean slacking off in your PJs all day (you can work hard in your PJs too!) So that's the long story short.

Our magazine is 100% online, as receiving regular mail is kind of a pain for those who travel all the time.



SB: How do readers find your magazine? Is it subscription based?

NS: *Wand'rly* is an online magazine and can be found at wandrlymagazine.com.

Subscriptions are optional. Anyone can read all of our articles and blog posts. For \$5/month, subscribers get early access to new articles, plus other goodies like subscribers-only content which are regularly posted, short notes on travel, raising kids and life in general.

SB: What kind of audience reads your magazine?

NS: The magazine itself deals with topics involved in traveling full-time. Sometimes this means 6000 word articles on camping in national forests, how to choose the right type of RV, or how to road-

Nathan Swartz...continued

school. Other times it's stories from other travels, interviews with these folks, or articles designed to challenge people's perceptions. These would be, whether "roadschooling" just means your kids get to play all day (they do, but that's part of the learning process over here), or whether Mexico is a safe place to take a family. There's also a blog aspect where other travelers tell their stories over a longer period of time, or I write short notes about particular places we've visited.

Our readers come from all over the world, though primarily from the US. As to demographics, we reach audiences of all ages more or less equally, with the exception of 25 - 34 year olds. This group is our largest audience, who make up about 25% of our readership as a whole. This is likely because our articles are focused often on helping young families learn to work, teach, and travel while they and their kids are still young.

I don't know for certain which types of organizations read our magazine, but I did receive a note from a park ranger once. She told me that she reads our article on Arches National Park to her tour groups regularly.

SB: What kind of background do your future writers need to have, such as parents or school-related staff?

NS: We don't require any specific credentials. We do look for folks who travel often or full-time, but anyone who can write exceptionally well and has a story to tell about long-term travel, homeschooling, or remote work, typically fits the bill.

SB: What is the best way for writers to submit to your magazine?

NS: Anyone interested in writing for the magazine should thoroughly review this page and submit their pitch there: wandrlymagazine.com/contact/submissions/

SB: How do you respond to writers' submissions,

and how long does it generally take for you to respond back?

NS: I personally receive all submissions, and tend to respond within a few days. It depends on what our own personal travel schedule is at the time. I respond to all submissions, whether we will use them or not.

SB: What kinds of rights do you buy from writers?

NS: We work on digital handshakes and ask that our writers not publish their work on any other websites. They do retain all rights to their work, and can publish them in print to their hearts' content.

SB: How much do you pay for articles?

NS: We pay by the amount of editing that needs done, and the quality of work. While we really want exceptional writing, if someone has experience and the wherewithal to string syllables together in a way that conveys something we believe will be useful to our writers, we're typically down with publishing them. But first-time writers who need a lot of editing tend to get paid 5 cents/word and it goes up from there.

As to the actual payment, PayPal is the preferred method.

SB: Is there anything else that I have not asked you, that you would like to add regarding yourself or the magazine?

NS: I'm a wordy fellow, so I could go on and on. But this seems to be an interview focused on how your readership might pitch us an article. So if you have experience with teaching your own children, camping, remote working, traveling the US or this planet in general, we may be interested. We ask that you read the submissions page, but we're pretty easy going over here. If we don't like your idea, you're welcome to submit another, and we're happy to provide input on different angles.