From the Editor

Spring is finally here, only eight days late according to the blossoms on my crabapple tree. And here is the spring issue of the Prairie Wind. This will be the last issue for Tara Haelle as managing editor and Sara Shacter as editorial advisor. We will miss them! Amy Alznauer will take over for Tara and Jenny Wagh for Sara. Thanks to all of them for all their hard work in the past and for making sure it’s a smooth transition…

Greeting
Alice McGinty’s greeting is particularly inspiring and touching…

Tales from the Front
Lisa Katzenberger’s Tale from the Front takes her from “crappy first drafts” to “I got an agent!”…

Table of Contents

- From the Editor 3
- Greeting 4
- News Roundup 6
- Don’t Miss 7
- Tales from the Front 8
- Season’s Crop 10
- Writing Tips 11
- Book Look 14
- Writer’s Bookshelf 16
- Illustrator in the Spotlight 18
- The Inside Story 22
- Diversity Initiatives 23
- Classes …
News Roundup
Tara Haelle compiles events, award-winning books and grants...

Season’s Crop
Natalie Ziarnik lists a total of 38 books...

Don’t Miss
PWID: October 27
Wild Wild Midwest: May 3–5, 2019

Writing Tips
Patricia Hruby Powell unpacks the meaning of show, don’t tell...

Writer’s Bookshelf
Elaine Bearden reviews Writing Radar by Jack Gantos...

Book Look
Elizabeth Brown gives us no fewer than five mini book reviews...

The Inside Story
Carol Coven Grannick explains why gratitude journals don’t work for her...

Illustrator in the Spotlight
Don’t miss Michelle Schneider’s funny and delicate illustrations...

Diversity Initiatives
Susanne Fairfax reports on SCBWI diversity initiatives...

Classes
Visit illinois.scbwi.org/area-classes-retreats-and-workshops/.
From the Editor

Spring is finally here, only eight days late according to the blossoms on my crabapple tree. And here is the spring issue of the Prairie Wind. This will be the last issue for Tara Haelle as managing editor and Sara Shacter as editorial advisor. We will miss them! Amy Alznauer will take over for Tara and Jenny Wagh for Sara. Thanks to all of them for all their hard work in the past and for making sure it’s a smooth transition.

This issue, I think you’ll agree, is once again full of fine articles and striking illustrations. I found Alice McGinty’s Greeting particularly inspiring and touching this time. Along with SCBWI executive director Lin Oliver, Alice went to Israel as part of an “Author Israel Adventure” sponsored by the PJ Library. While there, Alice and Lin had lunch with members of Israel’s SCBWI chapter. When the Israeli members mentioned that they couldn’t afford to fly agents, editors, and art directors to Israel, Lin offered to arrange it all. As Alice says, “In the span of just one lunch, she opened doors that would change many lives.”

Busy with her move out of state, Tara Haelle nevertheless found time to compile the News Roundup. Thanks, Tara! And thanks to Diane Telgen, who did it so perfectly for the past few years and who has now gone to the Midsouth Chapter.

Natalie Ziarnik’s Season’s Crop lists a total of 38 books. That’s more than last time, which itself was the longest yet. Illinois may be losing population but we’re publishing more children’s books.

Lisa Katzenberger’s Tale from the Front takes her from “crappy first drafts” to “I got an agent!” Read about her experience with PBParty, an online pitch fest for picture book agents, amongst her other adventures.

Patricia Hruby Powell’s Writing Tip unpacks the meaning of the familiar adage “show, don’t tell” and lets us peek over her shoulder as she puts it to use in her own books. “The dusty road [in Loving vs. Virginia] shows that the setting is rural. The hand-me-down lace-ups show that they’re poor. The saddle shoes date the piece.” Patricia is taking over the column from Michelle Falkoff. Thanks for all those clever and insightful columns, Michelle.

Our Illustrator in the Spotlight is Michelle Schneider. Don’t miss her funny and delicate illustrations of Sarge the dog, her son unfurling a roll of toilet paper, and her two children exploring the refrigerator.

For Book Look, Elizabeth Brown gives us no fewer than five “mini book reviews.” The books are The Field, by Baptiste Paul and illustrated by Jacqueline Alcantara; Alabama Spitfire: The Story of Harper Lee and To Kill a Mockingbird, by Bethany Hegedus and illustrated by Erin McGuire; A Lady Has the Floor: Belva Lockwood Speaks Out for Women’s Rights, by Kate Hannigan and illustrated by Alison Jay; Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala, written and illustrated by Lina Maslo; and Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli, by Kyo Maclear and illustrated by Julie Morstad.

On the Writer’s Bookshelf is Writing Radar by Jack Gantos, reviewed by Elaine Bearden. Elaine not only reviews the book but recounts how she used it in a NaNoWriMo group for students grades 3–8.

In her column The Inside Story, Carol Coven Grannick explains why “gratitude journals” don’t work for her. See if you agree with her that there is something more important than gratitude and what that something is.

Finally, Susanne Fairfax reports on SCBWI Diversity Initiatives, including peer guide Jiton Davidson’s moving explanation of why such initiatives are necessary: “As a little black girl growing up in Chicago, I was invisible in books. I committed self-harm, envisioning myself as a beautiful, little, blonde-haired girl with blue eyes in order to fit inside the fantasies that took me away from my world. Where were the characters of color? Where were the children’s authors and illustrators of color?”

Happy spring and happy reading and writing!

Susan Tarcov, Editor
Tara Haelle, Managing Editor
Sara Shacter, Editorial Advisor
Cedric Gliane, Webmaster
Greeting

Opening Doors in the Desert

Several acquaintances have recently expressed surprise to me about the incredibly supportive and welcoming nature of the children’s book writing industry.

“Isn’t this a competitive business?” they asked.

“Well, yes,” I answered. “It is.”

“Then why are people helping each other?” they wanted to know. “Why aren’t people hostile, competitive, and jealous? That’s how the real world works. How can this be?”

How can this be? How is it that we in the industry not only work to open doors of opportunity and learning for ourselves but hold them open for others as well, saying “Come on in. I’ll show you around!”

By way of an answer, first I want to share an amazing thing that I witnessed...proof that we are this welcoming, helpful community (just in case you need it). This event took place in March, when I got to see SCBWI’s executive director, Lin Oliver, up close and personal, in the act of opening doors.

Lin and I were both part of a lucky group of 20 children’s book authors who were chosen to go on PJ Library’s inaugural “Author Israel Adventure,” a trip designed to bring creative inspiration to each participant. While we were in Israel, in the midst of the packed trip, Lin and I were able to find the time to get together for lunch with the organizers of Israel’s SCBWI Chapter. At our lunch, overlooking the city of Jerusalem, the organizers told Lin about their small but enthusiastic chapter’s programs and how they were growing but couldn’t afford to fly American editors, agents, or art directors there. They knew that was what their members wanted and needed, but they weren’t sure how to make it happen.

Lin asked questions, assessing their needs as a chapter. Then she decided on the right art director and editor and offered to fly them to Israel to give the chapter the program they needed.

But that wasn’t all. During lunch, Lin also encouraged each of the people to show her their own work—the books they’d written and/or illustrated—and to share their dreams and frustrations. Lin offered encouragement, support, and validation, celebrating what they’d accomplished. She also offered advice and next steps, and in one case, seeing the great promise of one of the illustrators, made plans to introduce her work to a respected agent in the U.S. who would be “the perfect match.”

In the span of just one lunch, she opened doors that would change many lives.

Now, one might argue that Lin is the executive director of SCBWI and this is her job—to create opportunities. What about the rest of us—even children’s book writers who are not organizing programs with SCBWI? Why are we door openers too?

In answer, let me tell you more about my trip to Israel. There we were, twenty authors together, experiencing such things as kayaking in the Dead Sea, seeing the Dead Sea scrolls, walking through the desert to a spring and waterfall, exploring Jerusalem, hearing Israeli authors speak, and more. Every one of us experienced the same activities. Yet, as we shared with each other our thoughts for stories we might write based on these inspirational experiences, we each had totally different ideas.

Let’s take the example of a walk through the desert. There, our tour guide, a very enthusiastic, knowledgeable Israeli man named Jonty, told us stories from biblical history, set right there in these desert caves, where David spared King Saul’s life. After listening to the stories, we hiked up the dusty, dry trail and then soaked ourselves in a rushing waterfall. It was the same experience for all of us. Yet one person came away with ideas about a middle-grade mystery set in the caves, where David spared King Saul’s life. Another thought about a very young rhyming book about desert sounds. Yet another imagined writing a book showing the importance of water in the desert.
We’d each come up with completely different ideas! Each different story was based on our own backgrounds, interests, and imaginations. Just as each of us was a unique individual, our story ideas were unique. We were not competing to find the one story that could be generated from the experience. Instead, each of us as individuals found a different story, totally unique to us, which we would write in a way only we could write.

So then what would we gain by being competitive, or by trying to stop each other from writing? Nothing at all. Because our stories were not competing against each other. They were for different markets and different audiences. They were different stories, all of which the world could enjoy.

And what could we gain by talking with each other, sharing ideas, bouncing thoughts off each other, and providing support and encouragement and camaraderie? In other words, what could be gained by opening doors for each other? A lot: Community. Camaraderie. Growth. Encouragement. In opening doors for each other we could create opportunity—for ourselves and for each other.

Oh, if only the rest of the world knew this!

The experience deepened my commitment to helping other co-journeymers in this industry. And it deepened my appreciation for all of the members of our chapter who help open doors.

Over and over I see this as our network representatives invite new people in for meetings and our conferences teach them about the industry and guide them in improving their craft. Our Diversity Network opens doors for new, diverse members. Doors are opening all the time, through critique groups, scholarship and mentorship opportunities, workshops, and more. The warmth and generosity of our community are palpable.

I hope you’ll take advantage of the many opportunities in our chapter, with the knowledge and validation that you are the only one who can find and tell your story.

Please. Come on in! Create. Enjoy. Prosper! And soon you will be one of those who are holding doors open for someone else.

Alice McGinty
Co-regional Advisor
News Roundup

Spring 2018
Compiled by Tara Haelle

**EVENTS (roughly by date)**

**ANDERSON'S BOOKSHOP**
Information is subject to change; some events require tickets. For more information on these and other upcoming events, visit www.andersonsbookshop.com or call 630-355-2665 for AB Naperville (123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville) and ATDE (Anderson's Two Doors East, 111 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville), 630-963-2665 for AB Downers Grove (5112 Main St., Downers Grove), or 708-582-6353 for AB LaGrange (26 S. LaGrange Rd., LaGrange).

- **May 19**—GenYA Book Group discussion of Love Blind by Jolene Perry and C. Desir at 6:30 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 Main St., Downers Grove, (630) 963-2665. Young Adult

- **May 21**—Alison McGhee, author of What I Leave Behind, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 26 S. La Grange Rd., La Grange, (708) 582-6353. Young Adult

- **May 23**—Sam Miller, author of A Light Too Bright, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 26 S. La Grange Rd., La Grange, (708) 582-6353. Young Adult

- **May 31**—Mark Oshiro, author of Anger Is a Gift, 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. Young Adult

- **June 6**—“Boldly Bookish” authors including Tara Altebrando (Opposite of Here), Jeff Giles (Edge of Everything), Carolyn Mackler (The Universe Is Expanding and So Am I) and Sarah Tolcser (Whisper of the Tide), 7:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 Main St., Downers Grove, (630) 963-2665. Young Adult

- **June 9**—Zoraida Cordova (Bruja Born) & Dhonielle Clayton (The Belles), 2:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. Young Adult

- **June 10**—Jacob Grant, author of Bear's Scare, 2:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. Picture Book

- **July 15**—Young Adult Author Panel including Christina June (Everywhere You Want to Be), Laurie Devore (Winner Takes All), Gloria Chao (American Panda), Stacey Kade (Finding Felicity), and Jessica Pennington (Love Songs & Other Lies), 2:00 p.m. at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville, (630) 355-2665. Young Adult

**ANNUAL SCBWI CONFERENCE**
When: August 3-6, 2018
Where: JW Marriott at LA Live, Los Angeles, CA
Details: For more information, visit www.scbwi.org/annual-conferences/

**AWARDS**

**JOHN NEWBERRY MEDAL (ALA)**
Winner
- Hello, Universe by Erin Entrada Kelly (Greenwillow/HarperCollins)

Honor Books
- Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut by Derrick Barnes, illustrated by Gordon C. James (Bolden/Agate)
- Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds (Atheneum/Simon & Schuster Children’s)
- Piecing Me Together by Renée Watson (Bloomsbury)

**MICHAEAL PRINTZ AWARD (ALA)**
Winner
- We Are Okay by Nina LaCour (Dutton Books)

Honor Books
- Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds (Caitlyn Dlouhy Books/Atheneum Books)
- The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas (Balzer + Bray)
- Strange the Dreamer by Laini Taylor (Little, Brown Books)
- Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers by Deborah Heiligman (Godwin Books/Henry Holt)

**RANDOLPH CALDECOTT MEDAL (ALA)**
Winner
- Wolf in the Snow illustrated and written by Matthew Cordell (Feiwel and Friends)

Honor Books
- Big Cat, Little Cat illustrated and written by Elisha Cooper (Roaring Brook Press)
- Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut illustrated by Gordon C. James, written by Derrick Barnes (Bolden)
- A Different Pond illustrated by Thi Bui, written by Bao Phi (Capstone Young Readers)
- Grand Canyon illustrated and written by Jason Chin (Roaring Brook Press)

**REBECCA CAUDILL YOUNG READER’S BOOK AWARD**
For readers 4th-8th grade:

First Place
- A Night Divided by Jennifer A. Nielsen (Scholastic Press)

More information at http://www.rebeccacaudill.org/
MONARCH AWARDS
For readers K–3rd grade:

First Place
• *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole* by Mac Barnett (Candlewick)

More information at www.islma.org

BLUESTEM AWARDS
For readers 3rd-5th grade:

First Place
• *Roller Girl* by Victoria Jamieson (Dial Books)

More information at www.islma.org

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AWARDS
For readers 9th–12th grade:

First Place
• *Six of Crows* by Leigh Bardugo (Henry Holt and Co.)

Second Place
• *An Ember in The Ashes* by Sabaa Tahir (Razorbill)

Third Place
• *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds (Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books)

More information at www.islma.org

GRANTS

BOOK LAUNCH AWARD
What: Provides authors or illustrators with $2,000 in funds to help them promote their newly published work and take the marketing strategy into their own creative hands.

Deadline: July 1, 2018.

More information and requirements: http://www.scbwi.org/awards/book-launch-grant/

Don’t Miss

Prairie Writer’s and Illustrator’s Day

When
Saturday, October 27

Registration begins at 8:00, program runs from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Where
Wojcik Conference Center, Harper College
1200 W. Algonquin Rd.
Palatine, IL 60067

Hankering for...
• sessions on craft and business?
• critiques and portfolio reviews from industry professionals?
• opportunities to mix and mingle with colleagues?
• manuscript and illustration contests?
• opportunities for both new and published writers/illustrators?

Then don’t miss Illinois’ 2018 annual conference!

Faculty
• Esther Hershenhorn – Author
• Jim Hoover – Associate Art Director, Random House Children’s Books
• Michael Joosten – Associate Editor, Random House Children’s Books
• Kelly Light – Author-Illustrator
• Claudia Guadalupe Martínez – Author
• Eileen Meyer – Author
• Sherri Duskey Rinker – Author
• John Sanford – Senior Art Director, Cricket Media
• Sarah Shealy – Co-Principal, Blue Slip Media
• Weslie Turner – Assistant Editor, Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic
• Deborah Warren – Founder and Agent, East West Literary Agency

More details will be available this summer at our chapter’s website: www.illinois.scbwi.org. Members will receive an email blast with the link as soon as the website is up. Hope to see you there!

Wild, Wild Midwest Conference

Wild, Wild Midwest is an SCBWI, multi-chapter, weekend-long conference. Hold these dates on your calendar: May 3–5, 2019!
I had my first picture book published this year, TRICERATOPS WOULD NOT MAKE A GOOD NINJA. It has been a wild ride, and certainly not an easy one. I’m happy to share some of the details of how I got here and the ups and downs along the way.

I've Been Writing Forever

People often ask how long I've been writing, and I'm sure my answer is familiar to many of you—forever! I remember writing my first story in third grade. I took creative writing courses in grade school and all through college, where I majored in journalism. I took a job as a technical writer. While it helped me to write clearly and cleanly (and paid the bills), it certainly didn't satisfy my creative itch. I started writing short stories and got a few published. I also wrote two (really bad) novels.

Then I had kids. Twins! I chose to leave my job and focus on writing and raising a family full-time. The joke was on me. For the first two years as a stay-at-home mom, I didn't write a thing. I had little time and zero energy. I thought my life as a writer had ended.

But then I started taking my kids to story times at the library. We had oodles of books around the house, and I loved sharing stories with them, as my mom had done with me. As I started to learn about children's literature, I became fascinated with the concept of creating an entire story arc in only 500 words!

Joining SCBWI

As the kids entered preschool, I began to have some of my time back, and my energy levels increased. I remembered hearing about SCBWI when I was writing adult fiction and had even done some research on Verla's blueboards. When I researched SCBWI again, I was in awe of the information available online and the access to resources and networks in the Chicago area.

My timing was perfect. I made the commitment to join SCBWI in December of 2015. As I was poking around the blueboards, I found information about 12x12, a writing challenge to write one picture book draft a month in a year. I LOVE deadlines, so I registered. The fire was lit underneath me, and even though I didn't write 12 drafts that first year, I wrote more than I would have without the challenge encouraging me. I met critique partners and read every book I could find on the craft of kidlit (Writing Picture Books by Ann Whitford Paul was my favorite).

Crappy First Drafts

And, of course, I wrote. I wrote and wrote and wrote. And it was so bad! So very, very bad! I had no idea. I had studied the craft of writing my entire life, but I felt like I had to learn a whole new set of rules to write for children. I had too much adult involvement and didn't let my characters have enough agency. I wrote about subjects that were interesting to me as a parent but not super kid-friendly. There was often nothing at stake.

But I kept writing. And I got less bad. When I was writing for adults, I didn't tell many of my friends or family that I was a writer. Even though it was my life's dream, I treated it as a hobby.

Writing for Publication

But something about writing for children, being a parent, and having access to industry knowledge through SCBWI led me to change my thinking. I was now writing for publication. I was taking myself seriously. I told people I was writing for kids and making great friends in the kidlit world.

You Got to Have Friends

One day I was having dinner with my best friend from college, one of the few
people I talked to about my writing. I told her I was working on picture books. It turned out that one of her childhood friends was married to a writer, Rachel Ruiz, who lived in the town next to me, and she had just published a picture book with Capstone. She thought we would hit it off. Fast forward a few years and Rachel and I are now very good friends!

When Rachel and I first met, we couldn’t stop gabbing about writing. It was so nice to talk to someone who had the same passion and determination to make her dreams a reality. We clicked instantly.

And then Rachel did the kindest thing in the world. She introduced me to her editor at Capstone, Christianne Jones. I emailed Christianne with a few pitches, and she wrote back quickly that she would love to look at my manuscripts. I was elated!

Research
This book was a different challenge for me, as it was geared to the school and library market. It would include back matter about Triceratops, so I had to do—gasp—research! I hadn’t done any extensive research since college. Thank goodness for Google and a library card!

I found the research fascinating. I learned a lot about Triceratops and had fun envisioning silly situations for a Triceratops trying to be a ninja. I did a ton of market research and read every recent book I could find about ninjas and dinosaurs.

Getting Paid
I was so nervous when I turned in my first draft, but Christianne was extremely happy with it and I had to make only a few changes. And that meant I could finally, for the first time, cash a check for work as a creative writer. I’m certainly not in any of this for the money, but something about being paid for my work gave me some validation.

I Got an Agent!
Shortly after I signed the contract with Capstone, I entered PBParty, an online pitch fest for picture book agents. I was one of 20 writers out of a pool of 250 selected to post my query letter and first 50 words online for agents to review.

I had six agents request to see the manuscript, and out of that I received two offers of representation.

I ended up signing with Natascha Morris of BookEnds Jr. Natascha is a new agent and was just building her client list. We spent a lot of time revising my picture book before putting it out on submission. Ultimately, we received more rejections than we hoped and decided to shelve the story and work on something else.

I say this to highlight that just because you sell one book doesn’t mean you will sell every book after that. There are still highs and lows. The path to publication can be long and bumpy, and there’s no magical land at the end of the yellow brick road. Just as much hard work awaits you on the other side.

But if you keep at it, maybe you can start to use this phrase I have heard a lot in publishing: “I have good news that I hope to share soon!” (And I do! Yippee!)

Lisa Katzenberger is a picture book writer who lives in Chicago. She is the Social Media Coordinator for the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators Illinois Region. Connect with her online at www.lisakatzenberger.com or on twitter @FictionCity.
Season’s Crop

Compiled by Natalie Ziarnik

It has been another prolific season for Illinois SCBWI authors and illustrators. This column covers books released between December 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018. The range is far-reaching, including titles for scientists still in highchairs to sparkling romances for young adults. Enjoy and celebrate these books created here in Illinois!

Board Books
• Baby Loves Gravity! by Ruth Spiro, illustrated by Irene Chan, Charlesbridge, June 2018.
• Baby Loves Coding! by Ruth Spiro, illustrated by Irene Chan, Charlesbridge, June 2018.

Picture Books
• The Two Much Sisters by Carol Brendler, illustrated by Lisa Brown, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, March 2018.
• Voices from the Underground, illustrated by Larry Day, written by Kay Winters, Dial Books for Young Readers, January 2018.
• Everything You, illustrated by Jay Fleck, written by Elizabeth McPike, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, December 2017.
• Tilly & Tank, written and illustrated by Jay Fleck, Tundra Books, January 2018.
• Flo, illustrated by Jay Fleck, written by Kyo Maclear, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, January 2018.
• Bear’s Scare, written and illustrated by Jacob Grant, Bloomsbury, June 2018.
• Triceratops Would Not Make a Good Ninja by Lisa Katzenberger, illustrated by Steph Calvert, Capstone, January 2018.
• Big Tree Down! by Laurie Lawlor, illustrated by David Gordon, February 2018.
• Astronaut Annie by Suzanne Slade, illustrated by Nicole Tadgell, Tilbury, March 2018.
• A Lullaby of Summer Things by Natalie Ziarnik, illustrated by Madeline Valentine, Schwartz & Wade, May 2018.

Chapter Books

Middle Grade
• The Wish List #2: Keep Calm and Sparkle On by Sarah Aronson, Scholastic, December 2017.
• The Wish List #3: Halfway to Happily Ever After by Sarah Aronson, Scholastic, May 2018.
• Drum Roll, Please by Lisa Jenn Bigelow, June 2018.
• The Mortification of Fovea Munson by Mary Winn Heider, June 2018.
• Captain Superlative by J. S. Puller, Disney Hyperion, May 2018.
• Grump: The (Fairly) True Tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves by Liesl Shurtliff, Knopf(Random) House, May 2018.

Nonfiction
• Iraq by Miriam Aronin, Bearport, February 2018.
• A Lady Has the Floor: Belva Lockwood Speaks Out for Women’s Rights by Kate Hannigan, illustrated by Alison Jay, Boyds Mills Press, January 2018.
• Country Profiles (six book set including Germany, England, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Russia, and Sweden) by Amy Rechner, Bellweather Media, Blastoff Discovery, 2018.

Young Adult
• The Window by Amelia Brunskill, Delacorte Press, April 2018.
• All That I Can Fix by Crystal Chan, Simon and Schuster, June 2018.
• American Panda by Gloria Chao, Simon Pulse/Simon and Schuster, February 2018.
• Here, There, Everywhere by Julia Durango and Tyler Terrones, HarperTeen, December 2017.

For more information about these titles, please check out the recent edition of Book Bounty, available through a link on the SCBWI Illinois homepage https://illinois.scbwi.org/.
Writing Tips

Show-Don't-Tell

By Patricia Hruby Powell

Show-Don't-Tell is a writer’s adage and a technique that allows readers to experience a text through their senses and emotions—which is how most of us want to experience text. We want to be drawn into the story and to empathize with the characters. There are various ways to do this and those ways overlap. I’ll describe a few here.

Tip #1A Word Bank: Senses

Writing is a sensual medium. Mostly it’s a visual medium, but all the senses can be used to make your writing come to life. I love author and workshop leader Darcy Pattison’s exercise of drawing an icon for each of the senses: eye, ear, nose, mouth, hand (for tactile). Then you make a word bank or phrase bank for your story. If you’re writing a picture book, your word bank might be a page long. If you’re writing a historical novel, your word bank might extend to hundreds of notecards.

Look at the opening of Loving vs. Virginia: A Documentary Novel of the Landmark Civil Rights Case. (Forgive me for using my own work, but it will exemplify the tips I’m highlighting. For the sake of space, I do not include all the line breaks).

Garnet and I walk in the grass alongside the road to keep our shoes clean, but Lewis doesn’t care. He’s shuffling through dust in the middle of the road. Garnet’s hand-me-down lace-ups have the most life left in them, so they’re the best. She gets the best ‘cause she’s oldest and has the feet to fit them. I wear her way wore-out saddle shoes from last year but painted and buffed till they nearly glow. To me, they’re the best—being saddle shoes—even though I can feel every stick and pebble through the thinned-down soles. Lewis wears boots so wore-out—looks like Nippy chewed them soft in the barn. Being the youngest of seven brothers—no telling who wore those boots before him.

As the scene continues, the siblings insult each other, laugh, argue, then the two big sisters grab Lewis’s elbows and fly him over the dirt road…

with him pedaling mid-air and hollerin’ and that’s how we arrive at Sycamore School.

This scene is mostly visual (you see the grass, the various shoes, the road). But you also hear the aural (hollerin’). You experience the tactile, as when Mildred feels every stick and pebble through the thinned-down soles.

Tip #1B Word Bank: Pithy Details

Whether you develop details in word banks or on the run, you want them to pack a punch. The dusty road shows that the setting is rural. The hand-me-down lace-ups show that they’re poor. The saddle shoes date the piece. The writer doesn’t have to tell us that the kids are poor, that this is historic, or that the kids get along, are lively, and live a good life. The writer shows it.

It usually takes more words to show rather than tell, but if you show well, then you’re doing double duty and conveying facts, gracefully—such as, Garnet and six brothers are older than Mildred and Lewis is younger—without those bits sounding like clunky facts being dropped into the story.

Tip #1C Word Bank: Verbs

Good verbs are the powerhouse of good writing and good showing. And they’re great to develop in the Word Bank exercise. Lewis is shuffling, Mildred painted and buffed her saddle shoes. Nippy chewed the boots soft. Lewis arrives pedaling and hollering.

Look at a couple of scenes from Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker.

[scene:]

Off the street and onto the stage, Josephine danced like she was
ON FIRE.
She arched her back and flipped her
tail like a rooster,
she flapped and pumped,
dancing the “turkey trot”
SO FINE
that the Dixie Steppers asked her
to step along with them.

[bridge:]

So long, Jones family. Josephine was steppin’ out.

[scene:]

YESSIR, she soared over the stage
as Cupid,
god of love, with leaping legs and
little wings.
Hooked on wires,
she held bow and arrow.
But her wires got crossed.
Couldn’t get down. Hanging in
midair,
she rolled her eyes like shooting
marbles,
flailed those long legs.
WHAT A CLOWN!
The audience laughed themselves
to tears.
They STOMPED.
They CLAPPED.

Josephine arched, flipped, flapped,
pumped, soared, and flailed—giving a
kinetic boost to the text. Hopefully the
verbs make you feel the dance. It was
really fun to dance the dances in order
to find just the right verbs—and those
verbs are pretty razz-ma-tazz. Unless it’s
called for, you don’t want to overdo the
verbs. Elsewhere in the book:

…rich white flappers and sleek
gentlemen
strolled the UPPER decks…

Using accurate verbs keeps you from
using unnecessary adverbs. The elite
strolled rather than “walked leisurely.”
Can’t you see them arm-in-arm, owning
the world, in their privileged manner?

That adverb “leisurely” would have
detracted from the succinct activity.
They strolled. I can’t think of a better
verb. Even ambled is not quite right.
They strolled.

Verbs must fit the mood of an individual
piece. Loving vs. Virginia is a quieter
book than Josephine, and the vocabulary
overall must convey a sense of quiet
people. Mildred Jeter’s people were
farmers, so they plant, slaughter, butcher,
pluck, and sugar. Mildred is lyrical,
gentle, and imaginative, so she describes
her rolling hills and woods—threaded with
creeks. Threaded.

Richard Loving is also gentle, but has
a bit of an edge. He describes the cruel
sheriff as chewin’ on his teeth . . . trying to
figure out what mean thing he could do. Or
Richard spat out the harsh moonshine—

Tip #2 Create Scenes
Whether for picture books, MG, or YA,
for fiction or nonfiction, scenes invite
your readers into the text by allowing
them to visualize your story—like
they’re watching the scene of a movie.
You set your character in a place, your
character moves the story forward by
some action, and then the scene closes.
You might create a “bridge” of necessary
information and then begin your
next scene.

The first sample above is a
complete scene from Loving vs.
Virginia. The scene
opens on the
children walking
to school on a
dirt road. You see
the characters,
get to know
them, discover
information about
their lives. When
they arrive at
school, the scene
 closes.
Besides
being drawn in by
this “movie clip,”
are you drawn in
by the pithy and
sensual details and
accurate verbs?

Background: I’d researched this subject
intending to write a nonfiction book.
I visited the Lovings’ rural Virginia
section, spoke to family members and
friends. I studied the nine-year case.
And then my editor called and asked
if I’d be willing to write Loving as a
documentary novel. “Sure,” said I. (I
wasn’t yet under contract.) “What’s a
documentary novel?”
Answer: As in Truman Capote’s novel In Cold Blood, which is the story of a real murder. Capote interviewed the murderer, police, and neighbors and read the news reports. He told the story from the point of view of the murderer. This is an informational book using a fictional element, also called a nonfiction novel.

The fictional element in Loving vs. Virginia was my writing it in the voices of the two real plaintiffs, Mildred and Richard Loving. I studied existing news and documentary footage of the couple from the sixties until I felt I knew them well enough to write scenes about their childhood, their falling in love, their exile, and their fight to return home.

What a gift this turned out to be—writing it as a documentary novel or nonfiction novel.

I used what I knew and created scenes from my imagination. However, everything in the historic record or told to me by an interviewee remains factual.

This prompts the question: can you make scenes writing actual nonfiction? Yes. It’s more challenging than it is in fiction, but aren’t we all up for a challenge? Josephine is straight nonfiction, written in verse. I have labeled the above passage “scene, bridge, scene” to help you identify the parts.

If I were telling (rather than showing) that first scene, I might say:

Because she was seen dancing in the street, Baker was invited to dance in a theater. Her execution of the popular dances of the day, such as the “turkey trot,” was so lively that professionals, the Dixie Steppers, asked her to join their troupe.

That is not a scene. It doesn’t open. And it doesn’t quite close. The facts are the same as those in the scene. But it doesn’t run like a movie clip. It doesn’t evoke much in the way of visuals or emotion.

Whatever your genre, writing in scenes will lift your writing out of the telling category and into showing. Yes, you can also TELL information within your story, but the more scenes you create, the deeper you’ll take your reader into your story so they can empathize with your characters.

Show, don’t tell. Use pithy details chosen from your word banks (which include great verbs) to write scenes. In the next issue maybe we’ll look at the sound of words or metaphors and similes or some such. Please e-mail me with questions or subjects you might want covered.

phpowell@talesforallages.com

Patricia Hruby Powell, formerly a dancer, storyteller, and librarian, is the author of Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker (Chronicle 2014), which garnered Sibert, Boston Globe Horn Book, and Bologna Ragazzi Honors; and Loving vs. Virginia (Chronicle 2017), a Junior Library Guild Selection and Arnold Adoff Poetry Honor. Forthcoming are books about Lil Hardin Armstrong, Ella Baker, and women’s suffrage. She has been a mentor for a WNDB and SCBWI-MI. Visit Patricia at talesforallages.com.
Book Look

A Look at Five 2018 Picture Books That Wow!

By Elizabeth Brown

There are many great picture books that have been released thus far in 2018—too many to count! For this Book Look column, I chose to focus on looking at five of them that have captured my heart, arranged in a series of mini book reviews. Each of these books is beautifully written and illustrated and is being enjoyed by readers everywhere. All of these books will continue to inspire young readers in the future as well. Here they are!

The Field

The Field, written by Baptiste Paul and illustrated by Jacqueline Alcantara, was published by NorthSouth Books. This book, which is Paul’s debut picture book, captures important universal ideas such as friendship, good sportsmanship, and playing futbol as a team. The text, written in Creole and English, lends authenticity to the story as well as highlights the inclusivity in futbol, a most beloved sport around the world. Paul was born in Saint Lucia, and his Creole/Patois language brings the text alive on the page. Some examples:

“Vini! Come! The field calls!”

“Onbyen? You okay?”

“Mwen byen. I’m good.”

The above examples lend an engaging voice as well as a tenderness to the story. Baptiste Paul’s writing is exquisite, simple yet beautiful.

Additionally, Jacqueline Alcantara’s illustrations are stunning. Alcantara is a debut children’s book illustrator, winning the We Need Diverse Books Illustration Mentorship Award. Her vibrant colors and action-packed spreads highlight Paul’s winning words. She adds a completely new and meaningful layer to the text, expressing the joy and camaraderie of childhood friendships through her art. Her double spread at the end, depicting the children sleeping at night while dreaming of playing again, is exceptional coupled with Paul’s text: “We dream about futbol. We dream about friends. Until the field calls again. Vini!”

It will be wonderful to see more books by both Baptiste Paul and Jacqueline Alcantara in the future. This book is a must-read for young readers and picture book lovers everywhere.

Alabama Spitfire: The Story of Harper Lee and To Kill a Mockingbird

Alabama Spitfire: The Story of Harper Lee and To Kill a Mockingbird, written by Bethany Hegedus and illustrated by Erin McGuire, was published by Balzer and Bray. It is the story of Harper Lee and her journey to becoming the author of To Kill a Mockingbird. The book details Lee’s childhood, depicting her upbringing and the roots of the novel, including her friendship with Truman Capote and the town of Monroeville, Alabama. It weaves in her writing journey, showing the reader Lee’s path to becoming a novelist as well as providing insight into her personality:

With the crash and clatter of the city all around her, Nelle left short stories behind. She began a novel. All those years of tree house spying served her well. Nelle started with what she knew best, writing about a small Alabama town inspired by her Monroeville roots. The scents of perspiration and talcum powder, the memories of lazy Sunday afternoons, the hubbub of the town square, plus the drama of watching A.C. in the courtroom all got mixed together to make a story as satisfying as a serving of grits and gravy.

Hegedus’s prose is sharp and accurate, possessing lyricism and a strong voice. The opening of the book is especially strong: “The red soil of Monroeville, Alabama, is as rocky as the state’s past. But born in that same soil are the roots of the girl who grew up to write ‘the book of the century.’” Bethany Hegedus is a fine writer.
Erin McGuire’s colorful illustrations add much to the story, providing additional authenticity to the book as they magically express and show Harper Lee’s life. Alabama Spitfire offers a brilliant introduction to young readers of Lee’s literary genius and her novel which these same young readers will undoubtedly read and study in their futures.

A Lady Has the Floor: Belva Lockwood Speaks Out for Women’s Rights

A Lady Has the Floor: Belva Lockwood Speaks Out for Women’s Rights, written by Kate Hannigan and illustrated by Alison Jay, is published by Calkins Creek. It is an inspiring picture book biography of Belva Lockwood, who devoted her life to women’s rights, demanding that all women be given equal pay and treated fairly. Hannigan’s accurate and engaging text lends itself well to Alison Jay’s colorful earth-tone illustrations. The use of dialogue and other pertinent speech excerpts incorporated into the illustrations make the text soar, showing Belva’s character and determination. The text gives young readers a feel for the history and era and a timeframe in which the story takes place. Some examples of this are: (1) “I was ready to stand. It is not for the number of votes I should get. But for the chance to prove that a lady can be a candidate.” (2) “Are women not worth the same as men? Belva spent her whole life asking that question. ‘Has God given to one half of his creatures talents and gifts that are but a mockery—wings but not to fly?’” and (3) “Fight, fight, fight everlastingly—not with your claws and fists, but with your wits.”

Additionally, the back matter lends so much to the strength of the book. It includes an author’s note, photos, timeline, bibliography, and source notes. Overall, this book details the struggles and triumphs of Lockwood and allows the reader to understand the life and work of this important figure in the fight for women’s rights. This is a book that must be read and shared!

Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala

Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala, written and illustrated by Lina Maslo, was published by Balzer and Bray. This is a stunning exceptionally beautiful book detailing the life of Malala Yousafzai and her struggle to fight for the education of girls in Pakistan and beyond. The use of the motif and symbol of a bird flying free works well and helps to show Malala’s journey, especially after being shot. Maslo’s double spread done in panels shows the events leading up to her shooting and breaks down the moments right before she is injured. What follows this is another spread depicting Malala falling, with red, blue, and black colors moving across the page, symbolizing a bird dropping from the sky. These and all of Maslo’s illustrations are exceptionally rendered—such powerful book making!

Another strong aspect of the book is the weaving in of dialogue from Malala’s father and from Malala herself. Such beautiful lines as (1) “Look at her! Don’t you think…she is meant for the skies!” and (2) “When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful” show just how inspiring this book is. These and so many other lines make Free as a Bird a memorable reading experience. One must read it—savor it—to see for oneself. This book will undoubtedly stand the test of time.

Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli

Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli, words by Kyo Maclear and pictures by Julie Morstad, was published by Harper. This picture book biography has so much to offer. Maclear’s voice and elegant prose bring the story to life. Written in first person point of view and in the present tense, the words bloom on the page: “I sit and wait. Wait to bloom. Wait to bloom…. but a different kind of seed is planted … a seed of wild imagination.” Maclear brings in quotations from Schiaparelli’s autobiography that help the young reader to connect with Elsa and her journey to becoming a fashion designer:

The color flashed in front of my eyes.

Bright, impossible, impudent, becoming, life-giving, like all the light and the birds and the fish in the world put together.

The exquisite art of Julie Morstad adds much to the book, especially her use of color, which was such an
important element to Elsa’s work. Morstad’s illustrations create a sense of wonder and magic on the page that does so much to express Schiaparelli’s story. Bloom is an exceptional picture book and should be shared with young readers everywhere.

！

**Writer’s Bookshelf**

**Writing Radar by Jack Gantos**

Reviewed by Elaine Bearden

The setting. Last fall I was getting ready to co-facilitate a NaNoWriMo group for students grades 3-8. The problem. I was feeling terribly uninspired in writing, let alone leading a group of students through a month of writing. What to do?

And then, as I was looking through the NaNoWriMo materials online, I discovered *Writing Radar* by Jack Gantos. It looked intriguing. The library where I work had a copy on the shelf and it was available. A bout of strep throat gave me the time to savor my first reading.

What I discovered was a highly appealing guide to the creative writing process that offered something for both the students and me. Some of the content I had heard before. Other content was new, or presented in a way that made my inner writer stand up and say “WOW!” Gantos brought me back to thinking of my own writing life and my own stories with his characteristic humor and tales of growing up. (If you enjoyed any of his Joey Pigza or Norvelt books, you will not be disappointed.)

What I discovered was a highly appealing guide to the creative writing process that offered something for both the students and me. Some of the content I had heard before. Other content was new, or presented in a way that made my inner writer stand up and say “WOW!” Gantos brought me back to thinking of my own writing life and my own stories with his characteristic humor and tales of growing up. (If you enjoyed any of his Joey Pigza or Norvelt books, you will not be disappointed.)

**Line your pockets like a spy.** In his typically humorous way, Gantos describes how he lines his pockets with notebooks of all sizes. (He even shares an illustration.) He laments his attempt at keeping notes on an electronic device, one of which took a dive into the toilet. No matter how you keep a journal, Gantos believes the journal is where you prime the pump for story, so that when you sit down to write, the story has already started.

**Reach out your hand.** I really can’t say it any better than Gantos when he says, “It is the human feelings that create a handshake between the reader and the character.” What a great metaphor for the connection between these two story elements, and a great way to share this concept with young writers.

**Brush your teeth.** Gantos suggests five basic writing habits, which reminds me a little of remembering to brush my teeth every day. Habit number 4 is a great reminder for me: “Set writing goals: ten or fifteen minutes per day for new material, every day if possible.” I need to be reminded of this over and over; my best writing comes from my 10–15 minute timed writing practice. During our NaNoWriMo sessions, we allowed for even more time than this, giving each other room to write, while we built a community to cheer each other on.
**Use a coatrack.** While some brains crave the tidiness of a point-by-point outline, my brain serves me ideas at random intervals and in no particular order. Gantos artfully describes structure as a friendly tool that accepts your ideas whenever and wherever they arrive, gently guiding them to the place they are most useful. I imagine a friendly coatrack.

**Eat a layer cake one layer at a time.** This is huge. Instinctively I approached a recent writing project this way—focusing on the big picture instead of the smaller details. But now I know that was a smart and brilliant choice and nothing to be apologetic about. There will be more drafts and with each one I can tend to one more layer. (Gantos’s metaphor and sketch of a giant layer cake is helpful as a motivator to continue moving through all of those drafts.)

**Sketch your world.** Gantos uses a couple of two-page spreads to share his sketches of story maps for his world, to show how they help you find stories you know not only on the outside, but on the inside. (I had heard this suggestion before but this was the first time the why was addressed.) The book closes with a few writing exercises, including one involving a clock to dredge emotions out of your day and into great stories.

**Ask questions like any good spy.** For Gantos, this is the tool that teases stories out of your observations about yourself and the world around you. He said this idea isn’t original. His mom taught him this over nightly family dinners.

So how did my NaNoWriMo program go? I was really happy with it. I was pleased with the age range of the children who made a point of coming each session. They truly enjoyed the companion video content at [www.jackgantos.com](http://www.jackgantos.com) that helped set the tone for the sessions. At the end of the month, we finished with a celebration that involved, of course, food and making our own inspiration boxes to take home. Best of all, one of the mothers told me that this was the first library program her daughter had asked to do, instead of mom suggesting it. And she recruited a couple of friends as well. Many of the students continued coming to monthly writing workshops afterward. Next year will bring a new year for NaNoWriMo and the challenge of finding a new way into the material. But now that I know how to tune my “writing radar,” I know I can trust myself to discover great things.

Gantos ends his book with a special thank you to Mr. Andolino, a teacher who gave him the hope and tools to write. I thought I would follow his lead and write a thank you to Mr. Jack Gantos here:

Dear Mr. Gantos,

How did you do it? How did you know what was in my brain? How did you know about that fourth-grade student who decided she wanted to create books when she grew up? Thank you for the story map idea and the clock idea. And for all of the juicy tidbits about your life with Bad and Dizzy Deal. I did not have neighbors as crazy as that. Or the desire to put myself in corporeal danger growing up. But I do want to write. Thank you for bringing me back to my own stories not once, but twice, and for the inspiration to keep inspiring kids who are just like I was.

In gratitude,
Elaine Bearden

Elaine Bearden is a youth services librarian by day in Urbana, IL, and a writer by night. In her free time, she enjoys the outdoors and playing music. She is the most recent recipient of the Laura Crawford Memorial Mentorship for her manuscript “Grow” and a new network co-representative for the Central Illinois (Champaign-Urbana) Network.
Are you an illustrator or an author/illustrator?
I write and illustrate my own picture books, but would also love to work with other authors to create illustrations for both picture and middle-grade books that I have not written.

What is your preferred medium to work in?
If I have to choose, I’d probably say watercolor and colored pencil, but I’m always pushing myself to be adventurous and try new things. I’ve recently started incorporating ink and gouache into my work, and I really love the different textures it allows me to make in a single image. I’m also excited to try my new Tombow markers!

Tell us a little of your beginnings and journey as an illustrator.
I’ve wanted to be an artist since I was very young. My dad gave me my first sketchbook when I was still little enough to watch Saturday morning cartoons, and I’ve been living in my own fantasy world ever since! I remember my mom suggesting I become a children’s book illustrator when she saw my obsession with drawing and reading, but I completely dismissed the idea. I thought, “There’s no way someone would actually PAY me to make a book for kids.” (I was totally ignorant of the art world, but at least my parents were encouraging!)
It wasn't until I graduated college and started out on my own that my eyes were opened to see the many many possibilities of being an artist in today's world. (Why it took me so long to see this I'm not sure. We should be telling our children to become artists! There is so much opportunity!)

Right now I work on commission selling custom portraits out of my home studio. It's fantastic! I've been able to grow the business to work into my lifestyle, which is great, but I'm definitely ready for a full-time career in children's illustration. It's my true passion.

Do you have favorite themes or characters you return to in your art?
Right now I'm mostly fascinated with children. I love to study the way my own children move, how they never walk in a straight line or do anything in a direct way, and how they emote through facial expressions but also with their entire bodies.

They live by their own rules, like when my daughter wore mismatched shoes to church one day because we couldn't agree on a pair. She loved all the attention she got from it, and I was laughing all morning watching her walk around in 2 different shoes.

I love how they make everything a game and have the most incredible imaginations. Nothing is impossible to them! And NO ONE is funnier than a three-year-old.

What does your workspace look like?
My handy husband converted our one-car garage into the most beautiful studio. I have several desks and plenty of
storage space plus a lot of windows for natural light. It is the most blessed thing to be able to come out here every day while the kids are napping.

My desk is overflowing with pencils, paints, markers, ink pens, etc. I work traditionally, so the materials are all over all the time. I don’t worry too much about keeping everything in its proper place. A studio is like a house—it should look “lived in.”

somewhat melodramatic miniature wiener dog named Sarge. He did NOT approve of the changes in our household, nor did he appreciate my divided attention, and he wasn’t afraid to show his true feelings in the form of frequent dirty looks, angry grunts, and occasionally nudging Josie (our daughter) off my lap (unsuccessfully, I might add).

Our daughter grew up to be, that’s right, an extreme animal lover whose one wish in life was for Sarge to love her back. He did not. The dynamic between them was humorous to me (albeit annoying at times), so I wrote a story and created a book dummy loosely based on this dynamic. I’m pitching the story to agents and art directors right now, actually!

What three words best sum you up?
Christian, mom, driven

Which illustrators were your favorites when you were little?
All of them! Honestly, I wasn’t picky. I devoured every book I could get my hands on.

Which illustrators are your favorites now?
There are SO many. Rebecca Green, Carson Ellis, Richard Scarry, Alice and Martin Provensen, Leila Rudge, Laura Hughes. So many great female illustrators working today!

What’s one thing that may surprise people about you?
I went to college on a full-ride scholarship to play NAIA D1 volleyball. I’m probably taller than you. :)

Please share an instance in which the seed of an idea or experience (though small at the start) took root and grew to become one of your books or illustrations.
This happens all the time, which is the main reason I love to keep a sketchbook and write all my ideas down!

One thing that comes to mind right away is my experience bringing our daughter home from the hospital for the first time and introducing her to our cranky, very possessive,
What inspires you creatively, spiritually or emotionally?
My kids give me so many ideas for books and illustrations. They’re three and one, so my husband and I are in this unique stage of life right now where we get front-row seats to watch these little humans discover the world, learn about their surroundings, grow, talk, interact, and love each other. We get to watch their personalities come out more and more every day. It’s opening my eyes to see the world as they see it, which has had a huge impact on my illustration work. I try very hard to write as much stuff down as possible and have made it a personal goal of mine to do 100 illustrations of the kids by the end of the year. (You can follow the hashtag #100DrawingsofToddlerhood to see those!)

That being said, REST is the thing that feeds me creatively, spiritually, and emotionally at this stage in my life. Give me a good night’s sleep, a strong cup of coffee, and time to myself, and I’m endlessly inspired!

What gets in the way of your creativity?
Exhaustion and forgetting to take care of myself.

Where can we find you?
For illustration work:
MichelleSchneiderArt.com
For portrait work:
CustomPortraitsbyMichelle.com
Instagram: @MichelleSchneiderArt
The Inside Story: Short Reports from the Inner Journey

Grateful for...Good News

By Carol Coven Grannick

I’ve begun gratitude journals half a dozen times, and for some reason they don’t work for me. I don’t think I ever tried to figure out why. I knew and now that gratitude has become a significant part of creating positive emotions that underlie resilience. It’s the darling of researchers. All that’s okay.

But the journal thing just didn’t seem to “take.” Still, I kept my brain open to the notion that gratitude created positive emotions, although I stopped searching for a way to catalogue it.

Then one early morning I decided it was time to take out my Passover planning list. I retrieved it from a drawer that holds Thanksgiving and Passover planning menus and cooking plans from years past. Particularly for Passover, the planning list is longer, and in previous years, I’d told myself, “Remember to get less gefilte fish,” or “Buy a second baking pan,” but had forgotten.

But there on top of my 2017 Passover planning list was a sheet called “For 2018.” I saw in an instant that I’d not trusted my memory this time and listed the things I would need to do now.

I could feel my positive emotions bubble. Good News! My Passover planning just took a really positive upturn. “Buy less brisket—really!” and “New can opener!” and “Less chicken soup!”

That’s the moment I realized that “good news” instead of “gratitude” was my trigger for more exuberant positive emotions.

Then I began wondering why “good news” felt more solid and maybe even more important than “gratitude,” at least for me.

I mused…It’s the actual “good news” that creates the gratitude. And I realized—for me—I needed to step back to the source of the feeling, rather than the feeling. When I said, or wrote in my gratitude journal, “I am grateful for ________,” I felt one step away, more distant from a positive emotion. When I say to myself, “I did good work today on my revision!” or “I submitted to another agent today!” I experience a definite and immediate “uptick” in positive emotion.

Then I examined the specific differences. If I say:

I’m grateful for the ability to self-edit my manuscript with a sharper vision than I used to have,

I feel a calm, warm glow. Nice. Appreciative. “Gratitude.”

If I say:

I just self-edited my manuscript with a really sharp vision that I didn’t used to have!


Both positive experiences are valid and valuable.

The second one, triggered by “good news,” is something I definitely want and need.

So…the “good news” takeaway? Know what works for you and use that to create positive emotions as many times a day as possible.

Oh – and call it whatever you want!

Carol would love to hear your thoughts and questions at: carolgrannick@gmail.com. Her MG novel in verse, REENI’S TURN, won an Honorable Mention in the 2018 Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in Cricket, Ladybug, and Highlights, and her articles on resilience and the inner journey of writers are also found at Cynsations and other online and print publications.
Diversity Initiatives
By Susanne Fairfax

Here are some updates on the progress of your chapter’s work to improve the diversity, inclusion, and equity of SCBWI-IL and children’s literature.

Please welcome Felicia Whaley, the winner of our 2018 Diverse New Member Pathway!

Felicia Whaley, an illustrator from Oak Park, IL, received a BFA in Illustration and design from the Illinois Institute of Art in Chicago. In her application she stated, “Growing up reading books I rarely saw characters that represented me. Being an African American illustrator I have a chance to put more imagery in society that African American children can relate to.”

Felicia’s website is https://www.feliciawhaley.com/.

We’re thrilled to have Felicia join us! Thank you to Jiton Davidson for serving as this year’s peer guide! At Jiton’s excellent suggestion, the Diverse New Member Pathway recipient from one year will now serve as the peer guide for the next year’s recipient.

Thoughts from Jiton Davidson, winner of our very first Diverse New Member Pathway in 2017.

As a little black girl growing up in Chicago, I was invisible in books. I committed self-harm, envisioning myself as a beautiful, little, blonde-haired girl with blue eyes in order to fit inside the fantasies that took me away from my world. Where were the characters of color? Where were the children’s authors and illustrators of color?

During my first year as an MFA student in writing for children and young adults at the Vermont College of Fine Arts, it became even more apparent that books by and about people of color were scarce. Before my friend and schoolmate Diane Telgen told me about SCBWI’s Diverse New Member Pathways opportunity, I was comfortable being on the outside. I could not afford an SCBWI membership, nor did I feel the urgency to be on the inside of the traditional industry as a children’s book author of color. I was disconnected and a total newbie to the world of children’s literature. But when I was chosen the 2017 Diverse New Member Pathway winner, I found a family.

Through the SCBWI-IL Diverse New Member Pathway initiative, I have become immersed in the drive to connect with diverse creators of books for children. I became an active participant in SCBWI-IL’s diversity community and a vocal advocate for authentic stories by diverse writers and illustrators. I believe that black children must be given images that reflect them as citizens of this world. Black children should see themselves as living, growing up, loving and...
being loved within the context of their own multiple cultural experiences. Further, I believe that these books must find a broader audience than black children. We need diverse books not only for diverse readers, but also for white children. Children need to see not only diverse characters but also diverse writers and illustrators creating those characters.

This year, I strive to be a worthy peer guide for our 2018 Diverse New Pathways awardee, illustrator Felicia Whaley. As the DNMP initiative evolves into its second year under the direction of two amazingly driven women writers, Urania Smith and Susanne Fairfax, I’d like to congratulate and welcome Felicia into our family. I am honored to be her peer guide.

In other exciting diversity news, we have two new members of our Diversity Committee, Jacqueline Alcántara and Beth Finke. They bring valuable perspectives that are informed by their lived experience and professional experience. We are fortunate to have these two published creators working with us. Thank you for your participation!

Beth Finke—Author, teacher, NPR commentator, NEA grant recipient www.bethfinke.com

Jacqueline Alcántara—Illustrator jacquelinealcantara.com

We have multiple layers to our diversity efforts:

• **Diversity Committee:** works with the Regional Advisors toward an organization and industry that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive.
  » Susanne Fairfax, Urania Smith, Beth Finke, Jacqueline Alcántara

• **Diversity Network Meetings:** a broad affinity group that meets in person.
  » Currently we have a Chicago Area meeting that meets monthly in Hyde Park.
  » It would be wonderful if other diverse members start Diversity Networks in other parts of the state. If you are interested please email susannefairfax@gmail.com or urania_1@msn.com

• **Online Diversity Community**
  » A public Facebook Page for outreach and engagement with other organizations.
  » A private Facebook Group for continued conversations, shared resources, and community building. Also a great way to communicate updates, invite people to events, and poll members.

• **Annual Opportunities**
  » Many Voices Outstanding Manuscript Prize
  » Diverse New Member Pathway

• **More to come... Stay tuned.**

Details: [https://illinois.scbwi.org/diversity-initiatives/](https://illinois.scbwi.org/diversity-initiatives/)

Our focus on diversity springs from #WeNeedDiverseBooks:

We recognize all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities.

We’re conscious that people lead intersectional lives and that there is work to do regarding harassment and discrimination specific to marginalized writers and illustrators.

Allies are welcome at meetings, events, and in online spaces. (An ally is a person who supports, empowers, or stands up for another person or a group of people.) Here is an article about being an ally. [http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/be-an-ally/main](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/be-an-ally/main)

Susanne Fairfax
SCBWI-IL Diversity Committee Chairperson
Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators
[http://illinois.scbwi.org/diversity-initiatives/](http://illinois.scbwi.org/diversity-initiatives/)
[https://www.facebook.com/scbwiDiversityIL/](https://www.facebook.com/scbwiDiversityIL/)