

# 2021 New England SCBWI Spring Event “Virtual Voyage: Finding Joy in the Journey”

## *Workshop Descriptions*

### *SATURDAY Workshops, May 1, 2021*

**All workshops will be 45 minutes hosted via ZOOM.**

#### **A-Block: 9:00 am–9:45 am**

##### **A1 ~ What Rhymes with NESCBWI? with Josh Funk**

*(Writers)*

Do you write in rhyme? If you answered YES, then this workshop is for you. If you answered NO, then this workshop will make you change your answer to YES! Rhyming picture books continue to get published every year, so why do people think they're so hard to write? Why do agents and editors (supposedly) frown/cry/hit-delete when they receive them in their inboxes? Josh Funk, author of several rhyming picture books, will explain the most important aspects of writing in rhyme. He'll share the detailed reasons that seemingly make writing in rhyme such a challenge. And of course, he'll provide secret tips regarding what to avoid, what tools to use, and how to get your manuscript in front of the right editors and agents. You might think writing in rhyme isn't for everyone. But when it's done right, it adds an extra element of charm that no reader can resist.

##### **A2 ~ Comic-Making Crash Course with Jarrett Lerner**

*(Writers and Illustrators)*

Authors, illustrators, author-illustrators -- are you curious about comics? Do you think you might want to make some in the future, or improve those you're already making? Comics and graphic novels, already hugely popular with young readers, are only growing more so, and publishers are increasingly hungry for stories told in the medium. In this session, author-illustrator Jarrett Lerner will arm you with the information, tools, and techniques you need in order to immediately begin writing, drawing, or writing and drawing your own comics and/or graphic novels. He'll also provide a brief overview of the current comics/graphic novel market, helping you figure out where your stories might fit.

##### **A3 ~ Marie Kondo Your Scenes: Eliminate Plot Clutter and Find Moments That Spark Joy**

with **Lisa Papademetriou**

*(Writers)*

Every scene hangs on a pivotal moment, yet often must also sustain several plot strands. What makes a moment? Explore how to craft each scene so that actions and reactions have maximum emotional impact while ensuring that the reader keeps turning pages.

**A4 ~ Extreme Research: If You Dare with Sera Rivers**

*(Writers)*

What's it like to crawl on your belly in complete darkness through a narrow passageway 150 feet below ground? What does the mouth of an active volcano look and smell like? Books, videos, audio clips, and the Internet make it possible to research just about anything—but the knowledge you gain is second hand. If you really want to know what your characters experience, you must live in their worlds. See what your characters see with your own eyes, feel what they feel, trace their steps as they journey to new lands. Find out how extreme research can strengthen your world building, plotting, and character development.

**A5 ~ Query Letters: Let's Start at the Beginning with Alison Green Myers**

*(Writers and Illustrators)*

The heart of your story becomes the pulse of your query letter. Come with your finished story in mind, leave with the beginning lines of your query letter. This is a hands-on session for those ready to start the submission process.

**A6 ~ From Personal to Publication: How to use your own experiences to inspire your writing with Rajani LaRocca**

*(Writers)*

How do you "write what you know," but make it fresh and interesting to readers? Rajani will discuss how to mine your own interests/expertise/experiences and translate them into books, using examples from her work and others'. We will do exercises to help you discover these topics. We will also learn how even in fiction, tapping into a core of truth and using this very specificity is the key to making a story universal.

**AND**

**B-Block: 10:00 am–10:45 am**

**B1 ~ Nonfiction Voice with Heidi E.Y. Stemple**

*(Writers)*

Now that you have found your brilliant nonfiction idea, how will you write your book? The best nonfictions not only have all the facts, but they find their own unique voice. Explore the different ways you can tell your nonfiction story-- expository, narrative, humorous, serious, poetic, or a new way altogether.

**B2 ~ Picture Book Pacing with J.R. Krause**

*(Writers and Illustrators)*

Properly pacing a picture book will strengthen the elements of surprise, delight, humor, anticipation, momentum and emotional resonance. Here we will learn how to pace different types of picture books along with creating dynamic page turns.

### **B3 ~ Tackling Mature Themes in Middle Grade with Janae Marks**

*(Writers)*

The middle grade market is booming, and more and more books are tackling mature themes, like incarceration and systemic racism (e.g., Janae's debut *From the Desk of Zoe Washington*), the #MeToo movement (e.g., *Chirp* by Kate Messner) and mental illness (e.g., *Where the Watermelons Grow* by Cindy Baldwin). While these subjects are no longer taboo in middle grade, they still must be handled with sensitivity and care. In this workshop, attendees will learn how to incorporate these types of themes into their own middle grade stories in an age-appropriate manner.

### **B4 ~ Let's Start at the Very Beginning: A Very Good Place to Start with Lesléa Newman**

*(Writers)*

Every word in a book counts, but none so much as the opening lines. It is estimated that the average reader takes about fourteen seconds to decide whether or not to purchase a book at a bookstore, and the pattern is: look at the front cover, look at the back cover, scan the flap copy, and then read the first few lines. So what makes a compelling start to a story? We will look at and discuss many different types of beginnings: a snippet of dialogue, description of place, action, introduction of character, question, etc. Each student should bring two examples of "story starts" he or she felt particularly drawn in by and be prepared to explain why each one is so compelling.

### **B5 ~ Singing with Joy on the Journey with Padma Venkatraman**

*(Writers and Illustrators)*

Guided meditations and suggestions to help writers and illustrators find the emotional space and strength to continue to create during this stressful time. A yoga instructor as well as an author, Padma will provide workshop attendees with hands-on tools to help them create through the ups and downs of life.

## **AND**

## **C-Block: 11:00 am–11:45 am**

### **C1 ~ Giving Characters Life and Voice with Charlotte Wenger (*Agent, Prospect Agency*)**

*(Writers)*

What makes a story character-driven? How can you get your characters to jump off the page? What elements create a successful character with a distinct voice? Utilizing techniques and examples from both theatre acting and children's literature, we'll explore these questions and unpack tools to build rich characters with standout voices and unique personalities.

### **C2 ~ Visual Outlining Techniques for Your Story with Chris Tebbetts**

*(Writers and Illustrators)*

This workshop will offer a variety of tools for conceiving, outlining, and taking stock of our stories in progress, to create visual spreads that help us vision (and re-vision) the work we're trying to accomplish. We'll cover color coding; visual spreads; grids and tables; storyboarding; map-making; and several other methods that may help writers see their plots and characters in a whole new way. We'll also look at how writers can draw from the filmmaker's storytelling vocabulary to inform our own choices on the page.

**C3 ~ Plot Meets Character with Katherine Proswimmer (*Editor, Simon & Schuster*)**  
(Writers)

Discover how to optimize your story by exploring the intersection of plot structure and character development. We will look at several approaches people use to map out these two story components, familiarizing ourselves with each one and identifying how they overlap to illustrate basic tent poles of strong storytelling.

**C4 ~ Building an Illusion: Fantasy World Building with AC Gaughen**  
(Writers)

How do you build a high fantasy world from the literal ground up? How do you weave a fantasy plotline into an existing world? This workshop will explore all the elements of creating an immersive, epic, gripping and emotionally rich world.

**C5 ~ Creating Vision Boards for Inspiration with Carrie Firestone**  
(Writers and Illustrators)

Participants will have a set list of suggested items (magazines, scissors, glue, etc.) and we will explore fun ways to use recycled magazines and found objects to add layers to works in progress.

**AND**

**D-Block: 12:00 pm–12:45 pm**

**D1 ~ Refresh Your Picture Book Revision Process with Julie Bliven (*Editor, Charlesbridge*)**

(Writers)

Revisit tried-and-true processes for revising your fiction or nonfiction picture book, or discover approaches you may not be putting into practice just yet. With examples from manuscript drafts that became published picture books, observe methods that may strengthen your next project.

**D2 ~ From Inspiration to Publication: The Essentials of a Picture Book Dummy with Dan Yaccarino**

(Illustrators)

A picture book isn't just drawings depicting text, but images and words uniquely intertwined to create a story. This workshop teaches the fundamentals of picture books, from format, character development to basic storytelling.

### **D3 ~ Say what?! Crafting Realistic Dialogue with Erin Dionne**

*(Writers)*

Writing convincing, natural-sounding dialogue is one of the most difficult challenges for writers of all levels. In this active workshop session we will identify what constitutes “good” dialogue, the significance of what is not being said, how to differentiate characters through dialogue, and when to use slang, profanity, and regional dialects. Together, we’ll explore the common conversational ailments of “floating head syndrome” and its cousin, “locomotion-itis” –and strategize ways to avoid them. Be prepared to read aloud—developing an “ear” for dialogue requires listening skills as well as writing skills!

### **D4 ~ Plotting and Characterization: The Art of Conflict and Personality with Quressa Robinson (Agent, Nelson Literary Agency)**

*(Writers)*

Using classic craft techniques and exercises, we’ll plot stories as well as develop existing and new characters.

### **D5 ~ Bits of Brilliance: Flash Fiction as a Writing Practice with Dana Meachen Rau**

*(Writers)*

You’ve heard the phrases “short and sweet” and “less is more,” but how do these apply to writing? Flash fiction is a term coined in the early 1990s to define stories of only a few hundred words. Since then, writers have experimented with this “short short story” format to create compelling pieces with the fewest and best words possible. Isn’t this what we hope to achieve as children’s authors as well? This workshop will introduce flash fiction—a modern genre with some guidelines, but very few rules. We’ll engage in writing exercises and learn how to apply flash fiction techniques of compression, description, and ambiguity to create moments with emotional impact. We’ll explore the importance of micro-moments in details, dialogue, setting, and scenes to help reflect themes of longer narratives. By incorporating flash fiction as part of your writing practice, authors will find they will be able to use just a few words to echo deep emotion, layered characters, and extensive stories.

## ***Sunday Ask-a-Mentor Sessions***

**All sessions will be 45 minutes hosted via ZOOM.**

### **Session 1: 9:00 am–9:45 am**

**Choose one Ask-a-Mentor session. Sessions are offered with the following faculty:**

- **Jane Yolen**
- **Julie Bliven (Editor, Charlesbridge)**
- **Quressa Robinson (Agent, Nelson Literary Agency)**

- Dan Yaccarino
- Padma Venkatraman

**AND**

## **Session 2: 10:00 am–10:45 am**

Choose one Ask-a-Mentor session. Sessions are offered with the following faculty:

- Charlotte Wenger (Agent, Prospect Agency)
- Katherine Proswimmer (Editor, Simon & Schuster)
- Heidi E.Y. Stemple
- Lesléa Newman
- Josh Funk

You must read the [SCBWI Anti-Harassment Policy](#) before registering for the conference.