

# Workshops

ILL: Illustration

PB: Picture Book

MG/YA: Middle Grade and Young Adult

GEN: General

PD: Professional Development

## A BLOCK

### **A1: A Richness Of Invention: Finding An Original Visual Style For Every Manuscript (ILL INTENSIVE)**

**Barbara McClintock**

Every picture book manuscript has its own life, its own story to tell and way of telling it. And each presents a new and delightful challenge to the illustrator entrusted to partner in making that story an original and fresh marriage of text and pictures. If you have only one illustration style, you're going to lose the opportunity to find nuance in each new manuscript, and simply do the same book over and over. In this workshop, we'll explore different visual approaches to a selected text, and get beyond the comfort zone of a singular style of illustration. We'll talk about the story arch, rhythm, atmosphere, nuance and beat of that text, and how to shape a visual approach unique to it. Bring paper, pencil, pen, iPad, tablet — whatever your preferred drawing medium is, and get ready to loosen up and experiment!

### **A2: Rhyme That Shines (PB INTENSIVE)**

**Janet Lawler**

Editors and writing guides tell you to avoid rhyme. But we find it on most publishers' lists. Why? Because rhyme "done right" enchants readers (and editors!) in a unique way. This workshop provides a rhyming success roadmap from developing concept/story line to honing specific craft elements and self-editing before submission.

Short exercises will engage participants in evaluating ideas for suitability for rhyme, creating and using beat patterns, recognizing tortured rhyme and other rhyming "wrongs," examining read-aloud quality, and revising a rhyming text in response to editorial suggestion. Attendees may bring a rhyming WIP to edit during a guided manuscript revision.

### **A3: Chart Your Course, Part 1: Mini Blueprint (MG/YA INTENSIVE)**

**Christy Yaros**

The Mini Blueprint is a one-page distillation of your book that forces you to take off your writer's hat and start thinking like an editor and a reader. Using hands-on exercises, we'll walk through 13 elements in detail. You'll have a strong framework you can use to write forward with confidence. It can be used at any point in the writing process to bring you back to your story's basics and your purpose for writing it. The Mini Blueprint pairs well with the Inside Outline taught in Part 2 but can also be used independently.

### **A4: Learn Character, Learn Voice (GEN INTENSIVE)**

**Leah Henderson**

Voice is the soul of story. The element that magically pulls us in, often with only a few lines. As writers, we want nothing more than to execute it. But what comes first, creating an unforgettable character? Or crafting an unforgettable voice? By looking at the delicate dance between the relationship of character and voice, we will explore how elements like rhythm, life experience, and word choice play into creating a distinct character voice that becomes the undeniable, unputdownable and unforgettable soul of story.

#### **A5: Revision Tools And Techniques (GEN INTENSIVE)**

##### **Harold Underdown**

Key Revision Tools and Approaches: revising a manuscript can be daunting! So many different aspects may need work. How do you figure out what's wrong? Where do you start? To get you going, I'll give you an overview of the revision process from "big picture" to final polishing, with recommended tools to use at different stages. These will include the "revision grid," "Essential Questions," hunting for problem words, and ways to "read differently." Carefully selected from Kid's Book Revisions workshops and retreats, the tools presented will be supported with handouts.

#### **A6: What To Expect When You're Self-Publishing (PD INTENSIVE)**

##### **Katie L. Carroll**

Have you ever wondered if the self-publishing path is the right one for you? Is the process too complicated or expensive? Will it hurt your chances of being traditionally published? Can you actually make a living self-publishing? From editing to formatting to distributing to marketing, award-winning indie author Katie L. Carroll gives you an inside look at what it really takes to self-publish a book.

## **B BLOCK**

#### **B1: Let's Get Digital, Digital — Let Me Hear Your Stylus Talk (ILL INTENSIVE)**

##### **Jason Hart**

In this session we will cover hardware and software options for producing digital art, as well as tips and exercises that will help you to recreate the look and feel of your traditional art in a digital form. Attendees will leave with practical knowledge and concrete steps to take for fearlessly creating digital art.

#### **B2: Picture Books: The Kitchen Sink Edition (PB INTENSIVE)**

##### **Tara Lazar**

You know how to write a picture book, but you NEED to know how to take your story to an irresistible level. In this workshop, you'll learn the nitty gritty details that take your story from just "good" to the acquisitions meeting. From character and theme to word choice and twisty-turny surprises...it's everything plus the kitchen sink.

#### **B3: Where to Start? Middle Grade First Chapter Do's and Don'ts (MG/YA)**

##### **Janae Marks**

First chapters are crucial in hooking your reader, especially in middle grade novels. In this workshop, author Janae Marks will discuss the elements that every middle grade first chapter needs, as well as things to avoid. Workshop attendees will also study examples of successful first chapters.

#### **B4: Setting Your Course By the Stars: Plotting, Pacing and Successfully Journeying Through Your Story From Beginning To End (GEN)**

**Padma Venkatraman**

Do you begin with a bang and then get bogged down in the marsh of your story's middle? This workshop is designed to give you tips and tools to plot your way from the beginning of the story to the end, without getting stuck, no matter what type of story you're writing. We'll examine different kinds of plot, so you can decide which one you're working on and see how this choice may guide you. We'll also discuss when and why award-winning authors speed up or slow down and look at how showing versus telling affects pacing. Finally, we'll explore techniques to get unstuck and look at how to weave themes and sub-plots into the fabric of a novel so that you end up with a beautiful tapestry rather than tattered threads.

#### **B5: High-Low Books: Finding Your Star by Writing Books for Reluctant Readers (GEN)**

**Rebecca Allen**

High-low books are a hot segment of the middle-grade market. What are they? HIGH engagement, LOW reading level. They have exciting plots, engaging characters, and fun graphics—perfect for reluctant readers. High-low books address more grown-up topics than other books of similar length, helping struggling readers build vocabulary, reading confidence, and love of story. This workshop covers what publishers look for in high-low books and tips on developing concepts, characters, and pitches. By writing high-low, you won't just find the star that guides you to a book deal. You'll create the star that draws a reluctant reader to love reading.

#### **B6: Build Your Successful Kickstarter (GEN)**

**Kristen Wixted and Heather Kelly**

Kickstarting a book is a no-brainer. Why? Because when you crowdsource your project, you begin the process by finding your fans, which is the single best way to become successful in the publishing world. In this workshop, Heather Kelly and Kristen Wixted, editors and publishers at Pocket Moon Press, will take you step-by-step through the process of creating your successful Kickstarter campaign, from developing your fan base, through creating enticing extras and prizes, to effectively telling your story on Kickstarter to push your campaign beyond fully funded. Learn how to plan, prep, and design a successful Kickstarter campaign from start to finish! You'll come away with your own stylized calendar and individual plan. Pocket Moon Press successfully Kickstarted middle-grade book *The Pterrible Pteranodon* in 2021 and have mentored other successful Kickstarter projects.

## **C BLOCK**

#### **C1: Building A Fantasy World From The Blank Page (MG/YA)**

**Sam Taylor**

Sam Taylor will walk through a step-by-step process for crafting entirely new fantasy worlds, as well as fantasy worlds grounded in real-world history and folklore. Includes techniques for ironing out the premise, visualization and mapping, designing magic systems, along with thoughtfully (and sensitively!) constructing a society, history, and folklore for your story world.

## **C2: How BookTok Can Make Your Book Stronger (GEN)**

### **A.C. Gaughen**

Do you deeply understand the snappy, immediate appeal of your characters and plot? TikTok is a multiverse of personal experiences, and one of the most interesting corners is BookTok, where devoted readers make videos designed to influence readers. In this workshop we'll go over a few of the most common types of fan videos on TikTok and what they can teach you about editing, pitching, and developing your story and characters.

## **C3: Make It Snappy! Strategies For Developing A Funny, Engaging, Nonfiction Voice (GEN)**

### **Sarah Albee**

It's an exciting time to be a nonfiction writer. Editors are actively looking for nonfiction submissions on high interest topics written with a dynamic voice — from humorous and high-energy to suspenseful and dramatic. Using mentor texts and myriad examples, nonfiction author Sarah Albee will propose tools and strategies for revision that will help you hone your voice and add energy and humor to your writing. We'll discuss rhythm, word choice, and specific literary devices that will help you channel the funny, entertaining, charming side of you onto the page.

## **C4: Letting Your Star Shine (PD)**

### **Rajani LaRocca**

Writing is never easy. But given the events of the past two years, sometimes it can feel downright impossible. Rajani LaRocca discusses how to keep writing when it's hard and how to let your light shine even when the world seems dark. This workshop will include practical advice on: Creating art during difficult times; Overcoming imposter syndrome; Making your stories unique and uniquely yours; Writing even when you're overwhelmed with other duties.

## **D BLOCK**

### **D1: Finding Your Visual Voice: The Illustrator's Journey (ILL)**

#### **Rebekah Lowell**

As an illustrator we're often instructed to find our "style". But, instead of style, I like to call it our "visual voice"— the way in which interpret the world. We'll explore how you can find your visual voice by drawing upon a combination of your interests, hobbies, and tastes, as well as your favorite illustrators. Over time, you'll hone your own, authentic, visual voice. I'll share my own struggles and successes in finding the visual voice that helped me sign with the Andrea Brown Literary Agency and sell my debut novel in verse, *THE ROAD TO AFTER*, (Nancy Paulsen 2022) and debut picture book, *CATCHING FLIGHT* (Doubleday 2023).

### **D2: Help! I'm On Draft 39! (PB)**

#### **Marcie Colleen**

Marcie's first picture book sale, *PENGUINAUT!* (Scholastic, 2018) sold after 2.5 years and 39 drafts. Drawing from her own personal experience, Marcie will share her concrete tips on how to re-imagine and revise your manuscript so you can get unstuck no matter what draft number you are on.

### **D3: Writing The Novel In Verse (MG/YA)**

#### **Rajani LaRocca**

Novels in verse for young people are becoming more popular among publishers, schools, and readers. Shorter than their prose counterparts, yet not as intimidating to some as pure poetry, verse novels can be a bridge for reluctant readers and can tackle difficult subjects in a way that is accessible rather than overwhelming. But how do you write a novel in verse? In this intensive, you'll learn from Rajani LaRocca, author of *RED, WHITE, AND WHOLE* (Quill Tree/HarperCollins, 2021) about how to approach writing a verse novel, including: Advantages and limitations to the verse novel format; What types of stories are best suited for verse; Balancing character, voice, and plot; Poetic forms and how to use them; How to write the most powerful “chapters”; Imagery and theme; Verse novels to study; Approaching revision.

#### **D4: Work-For-Hire: Let Your Star Shine By Getting Your Foot In The Publishing Door (GEN)**

**Rebecca Allen and Meg Thacher**

Work-for-hire is a little-known sector of the publishing industry that accounts for hundreds of titles each year. The concept for these books and series is developed by a publishing house, and an author is hired to write the book to their specifications. The work-for-hire market — a concept we both learned about at NESCBWI conferences — was the star that guided us on our publishing journeys! Work-for-hire boosted our confidence, honed our writing skills, and increased our understanding of the children’s book market. This workshop will cover how and where to apply and what to expect when you’re hired to write a work-for-hire book.

#### **D5: Stick With Your Buddy: The Benefits Of Collaboration (GEN)**

**Kristen Wixted and Heather Kelley**

Ever feel like writing a book is overwhelming? Working with partners can help in many ways: it can unlock creativity, help you stay focused and accountable, keep you organized, and more. In this unique workshop, you’ll see that whether your project is MG or YA, a picture book, or an illustrated anthology, you don’t have to do it alone. This includes big projects and little ones, both traditional publishing and self-publishing, for writers and artists. Write with a friend (or relative!) or make a book with a whole group of writers and artists. Kristen Wixted and Heather Kelly, co-editors of *An Assortment of Animals: A Children’s Poetry Anthology*, have done just about all of it, including co-authored picture books, MG novels, and YA series. They’ll show you how you can, too. Leave the workshop inspired and with a blueprint of how to get going and collaborate!

#### **D6: Lessons Learned from Debuting During A Pandemic (and how to make the most of YOUR debut!) (PD)**

**Sam Taylor**

The world went on lockdown, but book releases didn't. (Thankfully!) Learn how one author still got the word out about her book through virtual events, partnering with a local indie bookstore on a preorder giveaway, postcard campaigns to libraries and indie bookstores, virtual school visits, podcast interviews and advertisements, and leaning on Bookstagram influencer outreach.

## **E BLOCK**

#### **E1: Let Your Artwork Shine (ILL)**

**John Parra**

Participants will be with professional illustrator John Parra as he introduces his background and shares his artist working methods in a fun, creative, and informative session. He will explore the development of characters and sketches along with a focus in demonstrating his painting techniques that will cover transferring images, color and composition, details and shading, and material handling.

## **E2: The Business Of Writing Picture Books (PB)**

### **Casey Robinson**

You turned that great idea into a finished picture book manuscript, well done! But now what? How do you turn those 500 words into a book on the shelf? And once you've done that, how do you turn this hobby into a career? This workshop is the jumpstart every beginning picture book writer needs. From mindset to marketing, this session will hone in on the key tools and resources you need to build a strong foundation for creative and business success. Bring an empty notebook, a sharp pencil, and plenty of curiosity.

## **E3: First Ten Pages Checklist (MG/YA)**

### **A.C. Gaughen**

Whether your next step is a critique partner, agent, editor, or reader, your first ten pages should be the tightest part of your work. What exactly does your reader expect? What **MUST** be conveyed within these first ten pages? During this workshop, we'll discuss general guidelines before creating a personalized checklist for your novel and an action plan to achieve it.

## **E4: What's The Big Idea? Turning Your Reams Of Research Into A Compelling Nonfiction (GEN)**

### **Sarah Albee**

Are you a research geek? Most nonfiction writers are. But great nonfiction books do more than just regurgitate facts. They help readers make connections, draw conclusions, and understand universal truths. When do you decide that you've done enough research? How do you avoid feeling overwhelmed by all of the information you've accumulated, and figure out what to focus on? Where should you start your story? What information is essential to include? What can you leave out, or include in the back matter? Nonfiction author Sarah Albee will discuss strategies to help you hone in on the heart of your nonfiction story, stay on track, cut through the clutter, and show the reader why your story matters.

## **E5: Chart Your Course, Part 2: The Inside Outline (MG/YA)**

### **Christy Yaros**

This workshop is for plotters or pantsers and everyone in between. You'll learn a simple and easy-to-use tool with a very clear goal: get down the key elements of your story and your plot without wringing the life out of either. Figure out not only what happens in your story, but why it happens. Trace the point of each scene to lock down the cause-and-effect trajectory that leads to the next scene and shows the protagonist's inner journey. This tool can be used at any point in the writing process—drafting, revising, and even querying. The Inside Outline pairs well with the Mini Blueprint taught in Part 1 but can also be used independently.

## **E6: Keep Shining: How To Trust In Your Star (PD)**

### **Liza Fleissig and Sam Gentry**

Offering perspectives from both sides, Agent and Editor will show how they charted the course of a book they both immediately fell for at a time when the market pushed back, how that led to the birth of another project, opened new doors for the author, and then ultimately brought them back to the original project. They will share additional anecdotes about other successes that would shock authors to know almost never saw the light of day. They will open the floor to questions — open or anonymous — and offer suggestions and possible work arounds for industry hurdles.

## **F BLOCK**

### **F1: More Than Words Can Say: The Role Of Illustration In Books With Tough Topics (ILL)**

#### **Rebekah Lowell**

Young readers experience real life struggles every day, and books can offer a safe place to process the tough stuff. But what if the emotion an author is trying to share on a page is so strong that words can't express it? What if the suffering a character faces is best conveyed visually and needs to be brushed across the page instead of spelled out? That's when narrative illustration can help carry the reader even further into the story and connect deeper with the characters, the setting, the emotion on the page, even relate and begin to process their own experiences. As a survivor of over a decade of captivity and domestic abuse living with cPTSD, I've experienced my share of trauma, but each story is unique and deserves to be told, when desired. In this workshop we will start by asking questions: How can art help expand on tough topics? How can illustration impact the experience of a book about trauma, addiction, loss, or other struggle? How can illustrations bear some of the burden and carry part of the narrative in a way that creates a well-rounded experience for the reader? How can visual storytelling magnify the narrative experience? We will explore this and more.

## **F2: Tight Language, Loose Narratives: Crafting A Non-Traditional Picture Book (PB)**

**Matt Forrest Esenwine**

So long, Freytag's Pyramid. Goodbye, Rule of Threes! Using "Flashlight Night," "Once Upon Another Time," and other books as mentor texts, learn how one can write a children's book without worrying about traditional narratives and instead using unusual points of view, sparse text, and/or poetic language.

## **F3: Starry-Eyed: Looking At A Story Through Different Lenses (MG/YA)**

**Padma Venkatraman**

One of the most important choices authors make while writing fiction is point of view (POV). It is through the POV character(s) that readers sense, feel, and understand a story. We will begin with a brief talk that shows how authors of contemporary and classic works (e.g. Faulkner, White, Le Guin, Woodson, Anderson, Nelson, and Engle) have explored unusual points of view or wielded "common" points of view exceptionally well. We'll also discuss how and why we chose unusual points of view to tell our stories (the second person direct address in THE BRIDGE HOME and a dog's point of view in the FENWAY AND HATTIE series). We'll then encourage attendees to participate in a hands-on exercise in which they rewrite paragraphs using a different point of view, so they can experience the advantages and disadvantages of using typical versus atypical viewpoints and find the POV that will leave their readers starry-eyed.

## **F4: Nuts, Bolts, And Layer Cakes: A Crash Course In Chapter Books (GEN)**

**Marcie Colleen**

Acclaimed author Marcie Colleen (The Super Happy Party Bears series) will introduce you to the world of chapter books and take you through the first steps to creating a series that kids will love!

## **F5: Their Voice, Their Perspective: Writing Cross-Cultural Stories We All Deserve (GEN)**

**Leah Henderson**

With the growing demand for added diversity in children's literature, it is more important than ever to depict characters authentically. This workshop explores various strategies and resources to help writers create fully-rounded and authentic characters which mirror a perspective different from their own. The pitfalls and false starts many writers encounter will also be discussed, as well as approaches to work through or beyond them with the mindset of striving to do no harm. This session is a safe space in which to ask any and all questions in pursuit of telling a more accurate and well-balanced cross-cultural story.

## **F6: YAY! I'm (Going To Be) Published. Now What? (PD)**

**Valerie Bolling and Janae Marks**

We will discuss the process of what happens once a book is acquired. We will discuss questions such as: What are the questions to direct to your agent, if you have one? How do you work with an editor? What's the difference between marketing and publicity, and what's my responsibility in this process? What about social media? How do I set up authors' visits, get invited to festivals, and present at conferences? We will be sure to leave time for audience questions.

# Ask-A-Mentor Sessions

## G BLOCK

**G1: Valerie Bolling**

*picture books*

**G2: Sarah Albee**

*non-fiction*

**G3: Janae Marks**

*middle grade fiction*

**G4: Katie Carroll**

*self-publishing*

**G5: Harold Underdown**

*publishing*

**G6: Kristine Asselin**

*queries*

## H BLOCK

**H1: Tara Lazar**

*picture books*

**H2: Marcie Colleen**

*picture and chapter books*

**H3: A.C. Gaughen**

*young adult*

**H4: Jason Hart**

*illustration*

**H5: Sam Gentry**

*publishing*

**H6: Liza Fleissig**

*publishing*