

Children's Book Insider

The Newsletter for Children's Writers

At Presstime: *Publisher Seeks Fiction, Nonfiction for Ages 2-12*

Albert Whitman & Company, an independent children's book publisher since 1919, publishes approximately thirty books per year for the trade, library, and school library market. They are looking for picture books for ages 2-8; novels and chapter books for ages 8-12; and nonfiction for ages 3-12. Looking for books that feature families, social issues, character development, holidays, physical disabilities, and multicultural themes. Recent titles include *Duck for Turkey Day* by Jacqueline Jules, illustrated by Kathryn Mitter (multicultural picture book for ages 6-8); *Finding Lincoln* by Ann Malaspina, illustrated by Colin Bootman (historical picture book for ages 7-9); *Grandpa's Music: A Story About Alzheimer's* by Alison Acheson, illustrated by Bill Farnsworth (picture book for ages 8-10); and *Terrible Secrets of the Tell-All Club* by Catherine Stier (middle grade fiction). For picture books, send entire manuscript with a brief cover letter. For novels, query with three chapters (Albert Whitman is not seeking new novels for the Boxcar Children Mysteries series). For nonfiction, send entire manuscript for picture books, query with sample chapters for longer works (no fictionalized biographies). Send all material with SASE to Kathleen Tucker, Editor-in-Chief, Albert Whitman & Co., 250 South Northwest Highway, Suite 320, Park Ridge, IL 60068. Writers may notify the publisher by postal mail if five or more months pass without a response. Letters clearly marked Status Inquiry will be given immediate attention. For more titles, go to www.albertwhitman.com

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February 2010

The 2010 Writer's Digest International Self-Published Book Awards are Underway

Entries are now being accepted for the 18th Annual *Writer's Digest* International Self-Published Book Awards. Categories include Children's Picture Books and Middle Grade/Young Adult Books. Open to all English-language self-published books for which the authors have paid the full cost of publication, or the cost of printing has been paid for by a grant or as part of a prize. E-books that the author has made available for sale online (without the assistance of a traditional publisher) for download as a PDF and/or a file formatted for digital reader devices are also eligible. Entries are evaluated on content, writing quality and overall quality of production and appearance. All books published or revised and reprinted between 2005-2010 are eligible. All books must be accompanied by an Official Entry Form found at www.writersdigest.com/selfpublished. Cost to enter is \$125 for the first entry; \$75 for each additional entry. Deadline for entries is **May 3, 2010**. Winners will be notified by October 15, 2010.

One Grand Prize Winner will be awarded \$3,000 cash and promotion in *Writer's Digest* and *Publishers Weekly*. 10 copies of the book will be submitted to major review sources such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. In addition, Book Marketing Works national special sales representation, six hours of book shepherding from Poynter Book Shepherd Ellen Reid and guaranteed review in *Midwest Book Review*.

10 First-Place Winners will receive \$1000 cash and promotion in *Writer's Digest*; Book Marketing Works will provide a guaranteed review in *Midwest Book Review*, a one-year membership to Book Central Station, the e-book *Beyond the Bookstore*, a *Publishers Weekly* book by Brian Jud and a copy of *Grassroots Marketing for Authors and Publishers* by Shel Horowitz. Honorable Mention Winners will receive promotion at www.writersdigest.com, \$50 worth of *Writer's Digest* Books and a Notable Award Certificate.

Plus, all Grand Prize and First Place winners will receive book-jacket seals to promote the award-winning status of their book, promotion on the *Writer's Digest* Web site at writersdigest.com, a copy of *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing, 4th Edition* by Tom and Marilyn Ross, \$100 worth of *Writer's Digest* Books and a Notable Award Certificate.

For complete information, go to www.writersdigest.com/selfpublished

At Presstime:

Children's Book Insider makes every effort to verify the legitimacy of small and new presses and literary agents before printing information in "At Presstime." However, authors and illustrators should always proceed with caution when approaching publishers or agents with whom they are unfamiliar, and read contracts carefully. Go to www.write4kids.com/html for a free copy of our Special Report, [How to Determine If a New or Small Press is Legitimate](#).

Published 12 times/year by Children's Book Insider, LLC, 901 Columbia Road, Ft. Collins, CO 80525-1838.
970/495-0056.
ISSN 1073-7596
E-mail: mail@write4kids.com
Web site: www.write4kids.com
Children's Writing Web Journal: www.write4kids.com/blog

Subscribers: Please notify us immediately of change of address. CBI is mailed third class and will not be forwarded by the post office.

Publisher: Laura Backes
Managing Editor: Jon Bard
Contributing Editor:
Jane McBride Choate

Standard print subscription rate: \$49.95 for 12 issues in the U.S. Electronic options available. See www.write4kids.com or call 970/495-0056 for more information, or for subscriptions outside the U.S.

To place an order call 970/495-0056.

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Christian Magazine Seeks Submissions, and Sponsors Fiction Writing Contest

Pockets is an interdenominational Christian magazine for ages 8-12. Submissions don't need to be overtly religious, but should help children experience a Christian lifestyle that is not always a neatly wrapped moral package. Seasonal material accepted. Articles and stories should reflect a wide variety of ethnic and cultural lifestyles, living environments (suburban, urban, rural, reservation), families (extended families, single-parent homes), and individual names. Each issue is based around a theme (see below).

Looking for fiction and scripture stories 600-1000 words that help children deal with real-life situations. Prefers real settings; no stories about talking animals or inanimate objects. Fictional characters and some elaboration may be included in scripture stories, but the writer must remain faithful to the story. Use lots of action and dialogue, write in concrete words and short sentences and paragraphs, and don't preach to the reader. Nonfiction (400-1000 words) related to the monthly theme, can include biographical sketches of persons whose lives reflect Christian values, articles about holidays, other cultures, real children involved in environmental efforts, peacemaking, and helping others. Send photographs of these children with manuscript and indicate the name and address of photographer. Include parents' permission for photos. Poems up to 20 lines (seasonal and theme-related) are accepted. Pays on acceptance.

Upcoming themes (with submission deadlines) are: Jan/Feb 2011 issue—Respect (due June 1, 2010); March 2011—Jealousy (due August 1, 2010); April 2011—Hope (due September 1, 2010); May 2011—Family, In This Together (due October 1, 2010); June 2011—Caring for Creation (due November 1, 2010); July 2011—Joyful Living (due December 1, 2010); August 2011—Living in Community (due January 1, 2011); September 2011—Encouraging Others (due February 1, 2011); October 2011—Let Your Light Shine! (due March 1, 2011); November 2011—Hospitality (due April 1, 2011); December 2011—Welcoming Jesus (due May 1, 2011). For details: www.pockets.upperroom.org/themes/

Send entire manuscript with SASE to *Pockets*, Attn: Lynn Gilliam, 1908 Grand Avenue, P.O. Box 340004, Nashville, TN 37203-0004.

The 2010 *Pockets* Fiction-Writing Contest is now underway. Guidelines are essentially the same as for regularly submitted material, except that historical and biblical fiction is not eligible. Submissions should be 750-1000 words. Stories are disqualified if they are shorter or longer by even a few words. Note accurate word count on the cover sheet. Material must be previously unpublished; designate Fiction Contest on the envelope and cover sheet. Previous winners are not eligible. Stories do not have to fit a particular theme. Contest submissions must be postmarked **between March 1 and August 15, 2010**.

The winner, notified by November 1, will receive a \$500 award and publication in *Pockets*. Submit with SASE (return postage must cover manuscript plus two additional pages) to the address above. For more information about the magazine, go to www.pockets.upperroom.org

Two Agents Taking Submissions

Gwendolyn Heasley, an agent with Artists & Artisans, Inc. (www.artistsandartisans.com), is actively seeking middle grade and young adult manuscripts of all genres. She's looking for stories that have a sharp voice and vivid setting. Email a query letter and first chapter (paste all into the body of the email; no attachments) to gwen@artistsandartisans.com. Responds quickly if interested. If asked to submit the entire manuscript, please mail a hard copy that does not have to be returned. Gwendolyn is the author of *Confessions of a Teenage Recessionista*, a YA novel forthcoming from HarperCollins.

Carrie Hannigan is the children's book agent for Russell & Volkening, Inc. (www.randvinc.com). She is accepting email queries for all ages of children's books and is looking for unique ideas and original voices. She's got a fairly full client list now, so only send work of the highest caliber. It takes her about three weeks to respond to email queries. Send queries to carrie@randvinc.com.

Two Bootcamps Now in the Works for 2010!

Two Bootcamps are currently scheduled for 2010: **Children's Authors' Bootcamp Southeast**, April 24-25 at the Best Western Sterling Hotel & Suites in Charlotte, NC; and **Children's Authors' Bootcamp Midwest**, May 1-2 at the Best Western Chicago/Hillside just outside of Chicago, IL. CBI's Laura Backes and award-winning author Linda Arms White will teach you how to write fiction for children and young adults in two fun and info-packed days. We'll cover creating characters and plots that sell; writing dialogue, description and point of view; show don't tell; editing your own work; writing cover and query letters; finding a publisher and much more. Cost for the weekend (includes lunches, snacks and handouts) is \$269. Discounts on hotel rooms are available. For more information or to register, go to www.WeMakeWriters.com. (Note: There will only be two more Bootcamps in 2010: the Denver area in June, and the Seattle area in October. We'll post details as they're available.)

The CBI Challenge: Module 10

Developing Sub-plots

by Laura Backes

If you're writing a book that's longer than an easy reader or early chapter book, you're going to need sub-plots. Sub-plots give heft to longer fiction and allow you to introduce more characters and other aspects of your protagonist's life. Well-crafted sub-plots are related to the main action plot line, and often give the main character the tools he needs to solve his most pressing conflict.

Like your main story, your sub-plots will also have a beginning, middle, and probably an end (more on this later). As with the action plotline, your sub-plots begin with a catalyst (see Module 7 for a review of plot catalysts). Where in the book your sub-plots begin, and how often they weave through the primary plot line, depends on what purpose they serve. Sub-plots tend to have one or more of the following jobs:

To develop secondary characters and their relationship with the protagonist. In *Charlotte's Web*, Wilbur the pig is the main character. He's got the problem that defines the action of the overall plot: he learns he's being fattened up for slaughter. But Charlotte, the spider, is a vital secondary character. We get to know Charlotte as she reveals herself to Wilbur. Without Wilbur, we'd never learn Charlotte existed (this is another clue as to who is the protagonist and who is the secondary character). But without Charlotte's involvement in Wilbur's life, we'd have a very different book. This is an example of a sub-plot that provides essential support for the main story arc.

When creating secondary characters, especially those as complex as Charlotte, go back to Module 5 and follow the same steps as you used to develop your protagonist. These supporting characters must be fully formed, with their own lives, to add substance to the protagonist's story.

To add texture and depth to the main action plot. Sub-plots simply make a story more interesting. Where would *Charlotte's Web* be without Templeton the rat, and his evolution from self-centered, gluttonous scavenger to heroic, gluttonous ally? Some sub-plots are small diversions (think of Fern's spending less time in the barnyard as she gets older), others crucial to the protagonist resolving his problem. Sub-plots offer the author another opportunity to throw obstacles

in the main character's path (by distracting the protagonist, making his life more difficult, or introducing characters with their own competing agendas), or give the protagonist tools to make his life easier.

To press the "pause" button. Sometimes, a story may be so tension-filled or stressful that the reader simply needs a break. Sub-plots keep the reader involved in the characters' lives but offer a rest from the action. Conversely, if the main story is quiet and thoughtful, a more action-filled sub-plot helps vary the pacing. Be sure your sub-plots always develop elements of character or story that give the reader new information that relates to the primary story arc. Plot tangents that dead end, rather than loop around and eventually come back to the central story, are pointless.

To illustrate your theme. Sub-plots are often emotionally-based, exploring relationships or internal aspects of your protagonist. Because of this, a story's theme is often revealed in the sub-plots. If the main plot of *Charlotte's Web* is whether or not Wilbur will die, then the friendship between Charlotte and Wilbur is a primary theme. This friendship ultimately saves Wilbur's life. Because E.B. White illustrated the power of friendship through a complex sub-plot, he *showed* us the theme. He never had to *tell* us what his message might be.

Another way to show theme is through the growth and change of your protagonist. Sub-plots are a vehicle for this as well. Wilbur grew from a timid, hysterical, lonely piglet who lacked self-confidence to a radiant, resourceful, loyal pig. Elements from every sub-plot in the book contributed to his transformation.

Sub-plots don't necessarily end with a firm resolution as your action storyline will. Sub-plots give your character skills and experiences that he'll take with him beyond the last page of the book, so they can be more open-ended. For upper middle grade and young adult audiences, some sub-plots might end with the death of a loved one, or a friendship ending. But reserve a few hopeful threads for the final pages that show the protagonist is moving in the right direction. The most satisfying stories give a balance, as in real life.

How many sub-plots do you need?

Picture books have sub-plots only rarely; usually in longer picture books for readers in second through fourth grades. In 99% of picture book stories, the way the protagonist acts and reacts to the events in the primary plot demonstrate the story's theme and the character's growth. Sometimes a minor sub-plot is shown through the illustrations alone.

Easy readers and early chapter books (for kids up to age 8) fall into the same category. When you get into longer chapter books (for ages 7-10), one or two sub-plots is standard. Middle grade and young adult books can have more, depending on the story and number of necessary characters. Read several published books similar to what you're writing to get a good sense of how many layers your story needs.



www.CBIclubhouse.com

Subscribers: Visit the CBI Challenge, Module 10 section to read related articles and find this month's Challenge exercise.

Prolific Author Gives Advice for

Nancy I. Sanders is the best-selling author of over 75 books, including the picture book *D is for Drinking Gourd: An African American Alphabet*, which was awarded the NAPPA Honors award, the IRA Teacher's Choices award, and was chosen as a Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People. One of her newest titles for writers, *Yes! You Can Learn How to Write Children's Books, Get Them Published, and Build a Successful Writing Career*, was named an award-winning finalist for the National "Best Books 2009" Award, sponsored by the online review site *USA Book News*. Nancy writes the children's column for *The Writer's* online magazine (www.writermag.com). Read more about Nancy's books at www.nancyisanders.com, or visit her blog at <http://nancyisanders.wordpress.com>.

Nancy recently shared some of her best writing advice with CBI.

Your publishing credits range from novelty books and picture books to nonfiction, Bible crafts and teacher resources. Can you tell us a bit about writing novelty books?

Usually for the very young, from birth to 3 years (0-3) the pages of a novelty book can be made of fabric, plastic, board, or sturdy cardboard—anything that makes it easier to read without tearing the pages. Often, a novelty book has a special gimmick such as lift-the-flaps, scratch-and-sniff, and places to touch-and-feel. Some of my novelty books include *Jonah: A Bible Touch Book*, *Moses: a Bible Touch Book*, four Kingdom Kidz Bible stories, and *The Pet I'll Get*.

If you're not an illustrator, there are two great ways to catch an editor's eye when submitting a simple manuscript such as a novelty book that relies heavily on art to convey the story. The first way is to write the manuscript in two versions. In the first version, simply write the text as it would appear in the final book. Then skip several spaces and type a second version of the text. This time, in brackets, add detailed instructions for each portion of text that explains the art or concept or how the novelty would work. In the world of publishing, anything in [brackets] tells the editor that this is not part of the final book, but is for the editor to read.

The second way to catch an editor's eye when submitting a novelty book is to prepare an actual mock-up, or dummy, of the book [with the flaps, touch-and-feel elements, etc. included and

rough sketches that imply the illustrations].

You've written several books with multicultural subjects. How can someone break into writing for the ethnic market?

There are two types of publishers in the ethnic market—those who publish books or articles written by people of the same ethnicity as their market, and those who publish books or articles by any author of any background, relying on research to fill in the gaps. Both views have valid reasons for the choices they make.

If you are a certain ethnicity and want to publish a manuscript about your ethnic background, it would be to your advantage to study and target publishers who are actively seeking an author like yourself. If you want to write for an ethnic market different than your own background, look for publishers whose catalog includes authors from a variety of ethnicities.

This is a first step in breaking into this market. The second step I recommend is to look for publishers who do series about different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Try to find a series that is already established but does not yet have a book on the culture you want to write about. Then pitch an idea for the next book in their series.

I did this successfully for several of my books that I wrote about African American history. Chicago Review Press has a series of books on various cultures but didn't have one on African American history. I pitched them an idea and *A Kid's Guide to African American History* was born. Pitching ideas that fill in the gaps in existing series about various cultures is one of the best ways I've found to break into the ethnic market.

What are your specific writing techniques for the multicultural market, or the types of ethnic books you write?

My newest children's book is a result of years of intense research and utilizes a very comprehensive personal research library that I have collected over time. *America's Black Founders: Revolutionary Heroes and Early Leaders* took me a year to write as I also had to find and acquire the numerous historic images within its pages. Each day before I sat down to write, first I read over my research and added notes to my working outline. I learned to step back from the books and art I was investigating and ask myself if the source handled the topic in a respectful and inspiring way. If not, I chose to use it as a better understanding of view-

Writing Outside Personal Experience

by Jan Parys

points that existed during various eras of history, but I did not necessarily use it within the pages of my book. Instead, I chose to use text and images that would both inspire my readers and present a better understanding of my topic.

Do you need to convey universal experiences in the books, or is it better to focus on the growing-up experiences of this ethnic group?

I always recommend to writers that it's important to study and target a particular publisher as you develop an idea for a book. If your target publisher produces books that relate universal experiences that can apply to most readers, make sure your book does the same. If your target publisher has books in their catalog that focus on the growing-up experiences of particular ethnic groups, make sure your book does the same.

What credentials, if any, qualify a writer to write a multicultural book?

I think one of the most important "credentials" a writer can have is the ability to step inside someone else's shoes, and have the heart to "walk" around in them. This is an important "credential" for a writer—whether you're a woman trying to write in the voice of a teenage boy, someone without a background in science trying to write from the viewpoint of an astronaut, or a Kansas farm boy trying to write from the viewpoint of a Cuban immigrant in NYC. It's not necessarily a matter of "right versus wrong" as much as it's a matter of perceptions and viewpoints, experiences and emotion. It's important to remember that children see things from their own front porch, often without any rhyme or reason to someone else's understanding as to why they form the opinions and perceptions that they do. If writers can respect another person's perspective on a situation without taking offense or letting their own personal opinions slip into the manuscript, then those writers have very strong credentials for writing for the ethnic market even if they are not of the same background as the market they're writing for.

One author I know has said that she received 164 rejections before having one book published. Since everyone gets rejections, what can be learned from rejections?

At one writer's conference, I won the award for getting the most rejections that year. I received over 100. What did I learn from rejections? To try a new tactic instead.

So I tried a new tactic. I spoke with two editors at a conference and asked them what kind of books they were looking for. They told me, and I sent each of them proposals for exactly what they requested. I landed my very first book contracts, and I was hooked.

In my book, *Yes! You Can*, I share how I have had success pitching ideas to editors and landing a contract before I write the book. After over 75 books under my belt with publishers big and small, I still do it today.

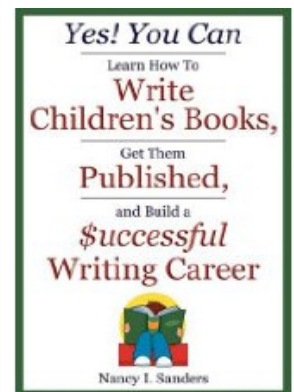
What's the most important thing you've learned on your journey?

The most important tip I'd like to share with a new writer is what I call the Triple Crown of Success. I discuss this strategy in detail in my book, *Yes! You Can Learn How to Write Children's Books, Get Them Published, and Build a Successful Writing Career*. Basically, the Triple Crown of Success is to always be working on three separate manuscripts to meet three separate goals. I'm always working on one manuscript just to get published. How do I do this? I get published frequently because I'm constantly writing and submitting a manuscript to the no-pay/low-pay markets. These publishers are in constant need for manuscripts because most writers overlook them. I submit to them and get published frequently. This builds my publishing credits and boosts my confidence while sharpening my writing skills.

The second manuscript I work on is for personal fulfillment. I'm always working on a manuscript of my dreams. When I'm finished, I submit it to the publisher of my dreams. This keeps my passion for writing strong.

The third manuscript I am always working on is to earn income. To earn a steady income as a writer, first I target publishers who accept queries. I study their product list with a fine-toothed comb and pitch ideas to them that fit into their catalog. I keep pitching ideas and writing proposals to a variety of publishers until I land my next contract. And then I write the book.

Most writers try to accomplish all three goals with one manuscript. They're often left without published credits, an overabundance of rejections, and a frustrated writer's heart. I encourage every writer to try the Triple Crown of Success. Work on three separate manuscripts to meet three separate goals and discover the difference it makes in your life as a writer!



Yes! You Can Learn How to Write Children's Books, Get Them Published, and Build a Successful Writing Career by Nancy I. Sanders (E & E Publishing)

Order the book online at <http://is.gd/7vBpB>

Jan Parys is an aspiring children's book author.

From the Editor

Dear Reader:

A wise owl. A trickster fox. An innocent heroine who needs a brave warrior knight to save her. How many stories can you name that have versions of these characters?

Throughout the ages, writers from William Shakespeare to George Lucas have drawn from archetypes, or prototypical characters, to populate their stories. Certain character types have always fit into the literature that's been passed down over time. Psychiatrist Carl Jung said archetypes are part of our collective unconsciousness. And scholars such as Joseph Campbell point to archetypal characters in mythology and folklore to explain universal story structures such as the hero's journey.

Author Christopher Vogler gives writers a handy guide in his book *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters*. Vogler describes seven character archetypes:

Hero: This is the classic protagonist with whom the reader identifies. The Hero ultimately embodies our most cherished values, though may have to go through a period of learning or transition to get there. Heroes can be willing or unwilling, deliberate or accidental.

Mentor: The Mentor assists the Hero in some way, giving him advice or teaching him skills. Mentors can appear at crucial moments, or be present in large chunks of the story. Mentors symbolize wisdom, knowledge and experience.

Threshold Guardian: This is a character who shows up to pose an obstacle to the hero at a transitional point in the story (a gatekeeper would be a classic Threshold Guardian). In classic myths, the guardian often required the Hero to answer a riddle, give a gift, or even fight the guardian before proceeding on his journey. When the Hero passes the Guardian and crosses the threshold, he's achieved a significant point of growth.

Herald: The Herald provides the information that triggers the Hero into action. The Herald can be a person, a letter, a phone call, a newspaper article; anything that sets the Hero's story in motion.

Shapeshifter: The Shapeshifter represents uncertainty and change. He may be a character who keeps changing sides or whose allegiance is uncertain. Shapeshifters can combine with other characters (such as the Trickster or Mentor) to keep the Hero on his toes.

Shadow: The Shadow creates the tension in the story. The Shadow is often opposes the hero and is typically the main antagonist. They may also be people who provide obstacles along the way, although not as a guardian. The shadow also represents the darker side of our own nature.

Trickster: The Trickster provides entertainment in the story. Tricksters can be silly, clever or even wise. They often keep the Hero a bit off balance.

These are not the only archetypes recognized in literature. In her book *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By*, Carol Pearson identifies the Innocent, Orphan, Wanderer, Warrior, Martyr, and Magician. She expanded on these ideas in *Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World*. Type the keyword "archetypes" in Amazon.com, and you'll pull up dozens of other listings. It's easy to get lost in academic studies of archetypes and what they mean to our shared human history. But the bottom line is this: certain characters have always struck a chord with storytellers because they represent different aspects of our own nature. This is especially true with science fiction and fantasy, where stories contain many symbolic elements (think of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Star Wars*). If we throw these often-competing aspects into the same pot and stir it up, we get some interesting results.

A word of caution: Don't rely on standard archetypes exclusively when developing your characters, or you'll quickly devolve into stereotypes. We all know these characters inside and out because we've seen them so often. So while it's useful to have a general understanding of archetypes and how they react to one another, use them as inspiration but take them in unexpected directions. As a starting point, try combining two archetypes into one character: a Martyr/Shapeshifter (a jealous boyfriend who pretends to support a girl's dream of being an actress, but really sabotages it); a Shadow/Trickster (an antagonist who uses humor to work against the Hero); a Wanderer/Hero who craves independence and autonomy but must learn to work with others to get what he wants.

If you see your characters reflected closely in the definitions of literary archetypes, you haven't worked hard enough to make them unique. Use these definitions as a tool: learn what purpose each character serves in the story, understand how the characters react to each other, see what happens to the plot when a new archetype enters the scene. Then trust that an intuitive knowledge of archetypes is part of your storyteller's DNA, and just write.

LB

Laura will be on the faculty of the Pacific Coast Children's Writer's Workshop for middle grade and young adult novelists, held on August 20-22 in Santa Cruz, CA. The weekend's theme is "A Novelist's Toolkit: Architecture, Archetypes, and Arcs." Visit www.childrenswritersworkshop.com for details about this intergenerational seminar; use the web site's contact form to inquire about teaching in the teen program.

Book Publishing Today

3 Magic Words: *E-mail Submissions Accepted*

by Mary Bowman-Kruhm

Have you ever noticed that some of the finest phrases in the English language are groups of three words? *I love you. For deposit only. Bacon and eggs.* Add to those a new triumvirate of words: *E-mail submissions accepted.*

As a writer, I seek a publisher I feel is right for my manuscript. I research to target queries and submissions through reading newsletters like this one, trolling the latest edition of *Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market*, and checking online for follow-up information. Increasingly though, I resent time spent preparing a packet to send to a publisher and driving to and from the post office to mail it off. If I can hit "send" and whip that submission onto an editor's desk in nanoseconds, I am — prepare for a three-word pun — *happy beyond words.*

Obviously, publishers have valid reasons, like computer viruses that may lurk in an attached file, for accepting only snail-mail submissions. Excellent reasons, such as speeding up the process when working worldwide, also exist for handling materials electronically. Regardless of publishers' reasons pro and con, many writers and illustrators welcome the opportunity to submit electronically. Susan Detwiler, illustrator of *Pandas' Earthquake Escape* (Sylvan Dell, 2010), says, "Sylvan Dell's email submission policy opened the door for me. I submitted a picture book manuscript and illustrations electronically, which was rejected by editor Donna German. However, she was impressed with my artwork and has since asked me to illustrate several books by other authors." She adds that, although most art directors still accept printed samples, "The URL of an online portfolio is usually encouraged."

In seeking a home for a recent manuscript, I searched extensively for publishers whose submission guidelines included the magic words that they would accept my work electronically. At right is a limited but varied list of publishers, with web sites and relevant annotations. Publishing guidelines are often carved in ice, not stone, so I recommend you thoroughly investigate current guidelines before you hit "Send."

Mary Bowman-Kruhm is the author of *The Leakeys: A Biography*, is now available in paperback from Prometheus Books www.prometheusbooks.com. Follow Mary's process of writing a new nonfiction book about Kenya on <http://marybk.blogspot.com>.

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Free Spirit Publishing www.freespirit.com: Nonfiction books dealing with young people's social and emotional health. Electronic queries welcomed, but not submissions.

Hinkler Books www.hinkler.com.au: International company that publishes educational, board, and novelty materials. E-mail queries accepted. Detailed guidelines on web site.

InfoBase (parent company of Facts On File, Chelsea House, Ferguson Publishing, and Bloom's Literary Criticism) <http://chelseahouse.infobasepublishing.com>: Web site has detailed information on both submission, including electronic, and proposal review processes.

Pacific Press www.pacificpress.com (click on "information" at top of home page, then "submission guidelines"): Picture books that incorporate a distinctive Adventist belief for ages 1-3. Guidelines and FAQs on web site.

Pauline Books & Media www.pauline.org: Nonfiction with strong Christian values. Electronic submissions encouraged with Microsoft Word attachments.

Sylvan Dell Publishing www.sylvandellpublishing.com: Picture books with fictional stories that relate to animals, nature, the environment, and science and have an educational theme. Accepts *only* electronic submissions for both writing and illustration; detailed information on web site.

John Kremer has a vast listing of contact information for children's book publishers, including many writers who self-publish. www.bookmarket.com/childrens.htm

Your Publishing Career

Pitch Like a Pro

by Jane McBride Choate

You're attending your first writers' conference. The workshops inspire you. Evening parties give you a chance to network with editors and agents.

Only one thing mars your enjoyment of the event. You signed up for an interview with an editor or maybe an agent where you will pitch your story. The very idea of meeting one of these industry professionals fills you with dread. What will you say? What will you do? What will you wear?

Relax. A little preparation will have you pitching your story like a pro. Typically, you have only five to ten minutes to pitch a story. You want your pitch to shine, to make clear what type of book you're offering and what the theme or the plot line is.

So how do you condense a full book into a few minutes? Come up with a one-line pitch to give an idea of your plot. A pitch line is a short, punchy, oral presentation of your story. The best pitch lines elicit the "ooh" factor. It makes the listener say, "Ooh, I want to know more. I want to read that book."

Another way to get that ooh factor is through a hook. A hook, or as Hollywood insiders call it, a premise, leaves the listener eager to hear more. (Example: *My book is set in an exclusive all-girls boarding school for vampires which has fallen on hard times and must open their doors to human students.*)

Without a hook, you will probably have a difficult time describing your project, which, in turn, means you are also going to have a difficult time selling your project. That hook must be in your pitch (and in your query letter). If you don't have a hook, your manuscript isn't ready to pitch to an editor.

Know your major characters and plot points inside and out. Come up with a couple of key words that will remind you of your central ideas. If you get nervous or distracted,

a keyword can get you back on track. Many authors make notes on index cards and discreetly refer to them during the interview.

Many writers' conferences, especially local ones, are going to a speed-pitch format. In that case, you may have only three minutes to hook an editor/agent with your story. One method is to have a business card with the title of the book written on it. The editor or agent will appreciate your professionalism, and you will put your name and story title in front of them.

Practice your pitch in front of a mirror. Watch your facial expressions. When you have only a few minutes to capture an editor's interest, it's tempting to rush through the words. Don't.

Take a deep breath and speak at a normal rate. It helps to lower your voice a notch. Speaking in a lower tone helps you appear more confident.

Some authors practice their pitch with a tape recorder or a video tape. Listening to your speech patterns and watching your body language will help you know where you need to improve.

Your mother was right: good manners count. Please and thank you go a long way. In the flurry of giving your presentation, make sure you take time to listen as well.

Okay. You've given your pitch. The interview is drawing to a close. What now?

When the agent/editor hands you a business card, write exactly what they requested on the back of the card. Do they want a synopsis only? Three chapters? A complete manuscript? You'll be grateful later on that you made these notes to yourself. Shake the editor or agent's hand and thank them for taking the time to meet with you.

The final step? Be sure to carry through and send off the requested work.

What Should You Wear?

It goes without saying (or it should) that you should dress appropriately when pitching to an editor or an agent. Writers frequently enjoy writing in our pajamas or sweats (I know I do). That's great. Not having to dress for the office (I cringe at the idea of struggling into panty hose every day) is one of the perks of being a writer. However, when meeting with an industry professional, you want to appear as professional as they do.

You need not buy a special outfit for the meeting, but you should look neat and presentable. Wear business attire. Keep it comfortable, however. Clothes that are too tight, too restrictive will end up making you uncomfortable, which will translate to a lack of confidence.

Jane McBride Choate is a CBI Contributing Editor. Her newest adult romance, *Bride Price*, will come out in June 2010 from Avalon.