Conference Schedule and Workshop Descriptions

You may register for any session. The key below is intended to provide information to help you choose.

KEY: PB = picture books, CB = chapter books, NOV = middle grade or young adult novels, GEN = general audience/everyone, PAL = published audience, IL = illustrators, NF = Nonfiction, BEG = beginners

8:00-8:30- Doors Open, Conference Check-in, Coffee/Tea/Breakfast Items Available

8:30-8:50- Welcome, Team Introductions, and Faculty Introductions: Co-Regional Advisors, Nikki Shannon Smith and Kristen Schwartz

8:50-9:10- Opening Keynote: Mitali Perkins

9:25-10:25- Session One (Choose One)

Luana Horry: Take Center Stage PB, CB
A broad discussion of secondary characters and the vital role they play in character-driven picture books. This presentation will examine why select characters are important counterparts to famous picture book characters.

Jennifer Chen Tran: Highly Illustrated Middle Grade/Young Adult and Graphic Novels NOV, IL
Learn the difference between a highly-illustrated MG or YA novel versus a MG or YA novel. Compare elements of both to better understand what editors are looking for and what has worked successfully in the past. Learn what you need to pitch a graphic novel and what the components of a successful pitch proposal looks like.
Naomi Kinsman: Level Up - A Design Thinking Workshop to Identify Next-Step Challenges and Unleash New Possibilities PAL
In this hands-on workshop for published authors, participants will use design thinking tools to define points of friction that stand between their current circumstances and next-level dreams. The process gives us the opportunity to clarify and define a specific obstacle, ideate options, design a prototype solution and make plans for how to test and refine the prototype in the coming weeks.

Shirley Espada-Richey: First Steps: Beginning Your Writing Journey BEG
In this session designed for those in the early stages of their writing careers, learn about the various categories of children’s books, how to strengthen and format your manuscript, and how the submission process works. Mentor texts will be used as exemplars and there will be time to ask questions. After attending this session in the morning, beginning writers will have a better understanding to bring to sessions throughout the day.

10:40-11:40- Session Two (Choose One)

Mitali Perkins: Dialogue: Crafting Conversation in Fiction for Young Readers NOV
Writing excellent dialogue is crucial when your audience is young readers, who are finely attuned to the way both adults and their peers converse with each other. In this hands-on, interactive workshop, participants practice writing lively conversation and learn to avoid seven common dialogue busters.

Andrea J Loney: Mining Real Life Emotion for Fictional Stories GEN
Fantastic fictional story ideas can come from anywhere, but some of the most beloved tales can spring right from our very own lives. In this workshop we'll explore the real-life emotional journeys behind some great children’s books, and we will create our own new heartfelt fictional tales based on stories from our own lives. Be prepared to write or draw, discuss, and share.

Talia Benamy: On Process: What Happens from Acquisition to Publication GEN
Publishing is a waiting game, and for authors and illustrators, there’s often a lot of down time in the process of making a book. But plenty is happening behind the scenes! In this session, we’ll take a look at what happens on the publisher’s side of the process between a book’s acquisition and publication, reviewing the many steps and stages along the way.

11:40-12:20- Lunch Break (See Conference Menu Link)

12:20-1:00- Editor and Agent Panel: As lunch ends, our agents and editors will take the stage in the Community Hall. They’ll share information about their company, what they do, and an insider’s view of the industry.
1:15-2:15- Session Three (Choose One)

Luana Horry: Keeping Up With the Commercial PB, CB
A deep dive into the art of the commercial and character-driven picture book. This presentation will explore the key components of commercial and universal-appealing picture books, character development, the advantages of going commercial, and the potential roadblocks of building a franchise.

Mitali Perkins: A Whole New World: Weaving the Magic Carpet of Place NOV
In this interactive, hands-on workshop, participants will learn how to weave together the three strands of plot/emotion, place, and character into a single, gripping scene. They will be equipped to engage the five senses in creating a sense of place to transport readers directly into the scene. Participants will write in class and get feedback on the spot from the instructor in a guided, positive discussion.

Naomi Kinsman: Writerly Play - A Character Development Workshop GEN
Play your way to the page! In this active workshop, writers will play improvisational games to deepen their understanding of their cast of characters. Our games will focus on backstory, character motivation, conflict, interior monologue, and endowed objects.

Ellice Lee: Revising that Won’t Crush You IL
How to determine a workflow and mindset so that revising won’t crush your spirit. We’ll go through specific projects and discuss what worked best for each. This will be interactive, so questions are highly encouraged!

2:30-3:30- Session Four (Choose One)

Talia Benamy: Sticking the Landing: Ending Picture Books Well PB
Though they have fewer words, picture books can be notoriously difficult to write—and one of the most challenging components is often reaching the exact right ending. Where should a story conclude? What best drives home a message or a joke? How can an ending feel both inevitable and also surprising? There are many elements to consider, and in this session, we’ll touch upon a few of them.

Jennifer Chen Tran: Pitch to Persuade--How to Write a Stellar Query Letter to Better Position Your Middle Grade/Young Adult Manuscript NOV
We will take a big-picture view of pitching (to the agent or editor) by looking at successful query letters. We will also learn about high-concept pitches, elements of a successful query letter that will grab an agent or editor's attention, and why knowing your market will help you better position your MG/YA manuscript. Bring your questions!
Andrea J Loney: Fascinating Nonfiction: Creating Compelling Characters and Stories from Real Life NF
This workshop explores different techniques for choosing a nonfiction topic, constructing a narrative spine for stories depicting historical and/or actual events, locating and managing research materials, crafting relatable characters, and telling compelling stories based on real people and events.

Ellice Lee: A Window into Working with an Art Director IL
What’s it like to work with an art director from start to finish? We’ll walk through best practices and share cautionary tales on how to ensure the most optimal project collaboration possible.

3:45-4:00- Afternoon Sweets and Special Announcements! Co-Regional Advisors, Kristen Schwartz and Nikki Shannon Smith

4:00-4:20- Closing Keynote: Naomi Kinsman

4:20-4:30- Farewell and Critique Pick-Up

Declarations, Clarifications and PAL Bookstore

DEADLINES:

Early Bird Registration ends 3/1/20. Payment must be received by 3/1/20. Avoid paying an increased registration fee!
The deadline to register and pay for a Portfolio Critique is 3/15/20.
The deadline to submit a title for the PAL Bookstore is 3/15/20.
Written Manuscript Critiques and payments are due 3/15/20.
The deadline to register and pay for the conference is 4/15/20.

CLARIFICATIONS:

Manuscript Critiques (Please see the Manuscript Submission Guidelines link to the right.)
This is a MEMBERS ONLY opportunity. Only one manuscript per person may be submitted. All manuscripts AND payments ($50) must be received by 3/15/20. Online payments will be made at time of registration. Payment by check must be received by 3/15/20. Payments by check will clear within two weeks. WE ARE UNABLE TO ACCEPT MAIL REQUIRING A SIGNATURE.

All payments by check and manuscripts for critique must be sent to our P.O. Box:
Portfolio Critiques and payment must be received by 3/15/20. (See the conference link for illustrators for more information.)
This MEMBERS ONLY opportunity is a critique of your portfolio, performed in person by an art professional. (This is not the same as the Portfolio Showcase.) Payment ($50) must be paid at the time of registration, or if paid by check, it must arrive no later than 3/15/20. The portfolio itself will not be sent to us in advance. You will bring it with you to your critique meeting on the day of the conference.

The Portfolio Showcase doesn’t have a deadline. Just show up with your portfolio. (See the conference link for illustrators for more information.)
The Portfolio Showcase is a FREE opportunity open to MEMBERS ONLY. Artists can display their work on tables in the “Portfolio Room” during the conference. Attendees and faculty are encouraged to leave written notes. Judges will choose one winner, who will receive a free face-to-face Portfolio Critique at next year’s 2021 Spring Spirit Conference.

Portfolio Showcase vs. Portfolio Critiques: Explained
The Portfolio Showcase is FOR MEMBERS ONLY and is a display of the portfolio artwork on a table, like an informal art gallery, for conference attendees to view. It is free. Attendees and faculty are encouraged to leave comments via post-it notes on the artwork. Portfolio Critiques are paid-for critiques FOR MEMBERS ONLY, where an art professional gives you feedback on your portfolio.

PAL Bookstore title submissions are due 3/15/20.
Each PAL member (after registering for the conference) may submit one title to be included in the conference bookstore. In the event that we receive more titles than the bookstore can stock, priority will be given to debuts and those not represented in the 2019 PAL Bookstore. At the request of our conference bookseller, all titles submitted must be PAL titles. Additionally, your book must have been published between April 1, 2019 and April 1, 2020. To submit your title, please register for the conference and then send the following information to Nikki Shannon Smith at canorthcentral-ra2@scbwi.org:
Title, Author, Illustrator (if applicable)
Publication Date
Publisher
ISBN
CANCELLATION POLICY
A full refund less a $30 processing fee will be granted through **March 15, 2020**. From March 16, 2020 through April 15, 2020, a 50% refund will be offered IF we can fill your spot using the waiting list. Otherwise, no refund will be granted. No refunds will be offered after April 15, 2020. **No refunds for manuscript or portfolio critiques** regardless of cancellation date. We are a nonprofit organization, and our region is run completely by volunteers. Refunds create additional paperwork, time, and PayPal fees for the region, so we thank you for understanding this non-negotiable cancellation policy.

Reminder
By signing up for this event, you acknowledge that audio/video recording and/or transmitting or aiding in the foregoing of any part of the conference (including, but not limited to, presentations, individual sessions and networking events) is prohibited. Additionally, the material in all handouts and presentations is copyrighted and may not be reprinted, blogged, written, orally transmitted, and/or reproduced without written permission of the copyright holder ONLY. Conference tuition is what pays for the “inside” information you’ll learn at the conference.

**Freebie Table!**
Do you have something related to your literary work that you'd like to donate or share? Something you'd like to give ... such as a cool postcard of your upcoming/past work? A business card promoting author visits? A flyer for an event you're featured in? Bring those types of materials to our Freebie Table! Conference attendees can grab anything and everything they are interested in. Please bring all materials on the day of the conference. Take home anything remaining at the end of the day. Items left behind will be recycled.

**Brag Table!**
Do you have something to show off? Something you'd like others to see, such as your new book? A fancy award? A plush toy made to look like your latest main character? Bring those kinds of items to our Brag Table! You may place your materials on a table where conference attendees can admire your most recent accomplishments. These items are not to be removed from the table by anyone except you. Please bring anything you'd like to display on the day of the conference, and take it home with you when you leave! We'd really hate to “recycle” those PLEASE be advised these treasures are on display at your discretion. We are not responsible for lost or stolen items.
**Conference Lunch**

*Lunch is available as a “conference add-on” for the low cost of $10. The region is offering lunch “at cost” and is covering all taxes and delivery fees. It is our hope that this option allows all of our conference attendees to meet their dietary needs and culinary preferences. If you do not wish to purchase a conference lunch, please feel free to bring your own bag lunch. There are very few nearby options and not enough time to leave the venue for lunch.*

Pitchers of chilled water will be available throughout the day. **Please bring your own water bottle. SCBWI-California: North/Central makes an effort to reduce single-use plastic consumption and does not provide water cups/bottles.**

*Lunch will be provided by Lunch Box Express*, and will be served in individual boxes. All sandwiches are available gluten free with gluten free chips and a gluten free cookie. Please indicate “gluten free” under dietary restrictions.

**LUNCH OPTIONS:** (All lunches include a beverage and a cookie.)

- Turkey sandwich
- Ham sandwich
- Roast beef sandwich
- Chicken Salad Sandwich
- Tuna Salad Sandwich
- Vegetarian Sandwich

**DIETARY NEEDS:**

* Gluten free

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**Written Manuscript Critique Submission Guidelines**

Written Manuscript Critiques are available to SCBWI members only for a $50 additional fee, paid at the time of registration. This is a lower fee than almost all other conferences, and we highly encourage participation. The majority of feedback we get from attendees is how helpful the manuscript consults are. (Even published authors love this part of the conference!) Your manuscript can be a board book, picture book, early reader, chapter book, middle grade, or young adult manuscript. **See below for formatting and submission requirements.** Submissions that don’t adhere to guidelines will not be accepted.
Written critiques will be completed by members of our faculty and by PAL Critique Providers (see faculty bios for genre/age range preferences). Faculty readers, at their own discretion, will select up to three submissions for 15-minute face-to-face critiques on conference day. Not all manuscripts will be selected. Being chosen for a face-to-face critique does not in any way mean an editor will ask you to submit your manuscript, but it does mean your work shows promise! You will find out if your manuscript has been selected when you arrive on conference day.

When you register for the conference, you will have an opportunity to add a critique, and to select your top three choices of readers. Before selecting your top three readers, please refer to the Faculty Bios page and read their critique preferences. If you are unsure what category/genre you will submit for critique, choose people who will accept all of the categories you are considering submitting. Please note that we can’t guarantee you will receive one of your preferred critique providers.

Your written critique will be handed out AT THE CLOSE OF THE CONFERENCE, at 4:20 pm. If you need to leave the conference early, your critique will be mailed to you. There will be no exceptions, for any reason. Please do not ask for your critique before 4:20 pm.

Manuscripts and payments must be received by 3/15/2020 or your work will not be critiqued (or refunded). There are no exceptions to this. Please note that we are unable to accept mail requiring a signature. If paying by check, please make it payable to SCBWI. Mail manuscripts and checks to:

SCBWI  
P.O. Box 1017  
Davis, CA 95617

**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: please follow carefully**

*Please take note of all deadlines. We will send general reminders in the monthly eblast, but we are unable to send out individual reminders for manuscript critiques.*

Name, contact information, genre of work, and expected number of words MUST be at the top of the first page.

The title begins halfway down your page. This means you will only have 10-12 lines of manuscript text on your first page.

All story text is double-spaced with one inch margins all around (top, bottom, left, and right) including headers and footers. Exceptions to double-spacing are made for works in verse.
Manuscripts not adhering to the formatting guidelines will not be sent for critique. (We will notify you if your manuscript is rejected based on being formatted incorrectly.) **We are unable to offer refunds due to formatting errors so please follow carefully!**

- **Picture books:** Submit entire manuscript, no longer than 6 double-spaced pages. (If your manuscript is longer than 6 pages, cut it. Virtually all picture books are within the 6-page limit, especially now that editors are looking for shorter picture books.)

- **Longer fiction and non-fiction:** Submit a one page, single spaced synopsis and the first ten (10) double-spaced manuscript pages (even if it cuts off mid-chapter). Your *synopsis* must follow the margin and font guidelines above, but you may single-space.

**With your manuscript please include:**
- A brief cover letter (no more than three paragraphs) including:
  - A non-personalized greeting, such as "Dear Reader" or "Dear Critique Provider"
  - Your contact information
  - Your genre
  - What you hope to get out of the critique, ie. help with characterization; plot suggestions; developing a catchy opening

Mail **manuscripts** to SCBWI at the address above (P.O. Box 1017 DAVIS, CA 95617). **Please DO NOT send your manuscript with a “signature required.”** Do NOT mail in a cardboard or non-flexible envelope. You may fold your manuscript in half and send it in a 6” x 9” envelope, or in thirds and send in a standard envelope, or you may keep it flat and send it in a 9” x 12” envelope. Nothing larger, please! Make sure you’ve put on enough postage.

**Payments:** If you are sending your payment by check, make it payable to SCBWI. It must also be sent to our regional P.O. Box above.

**Again, all submissions and payments must be received by 3/15/2020.** We are not responsible for mail holidays. **Please take note of all deadlines. We will send general reminders in the monthly eblast, but we are unable to send out individual reminders for manuscript critiques.**

No refunds on manuscript critiques. No exceptions.
Illustrator Information: Portfolio Critiques and Showcase

Portfolio Showcase

The Portfolio Showcase doesn’t have a deadline. Just bring your portfolio to the Portfolio Showcase Room from 8:15-8:45 am and sign a release.

The Portfolio Showcase is a FREE opportunity open to MEMBERS ONLY. Portfolio drop-off is from 8:15-8:45 am, and pick-up is at 4:20pm. Artists may display their work on tables in our “Portfolio Showcase Room” during the conference. To participate, please complete a release form and leave it with Co-RA Kristen Schwartz when you arrive to drop your portfolio off. The release form will be available the day of the conference, or you can find it HERE for quicker drop-off. Portfolio Guidelines are HERE.

Attendees and faculty will be encouraged to leave written notes for artists. Faculty Judges will choose one winner, who will receive a FREE Portfolio Critique at next year’s Spring Spirit Conference.

Face-to-Face Portfolio Critiques

Portfolio critiques are paid, 15 minute, face-to-face consultations for feedback on your illustrations with our faculty Art Director. Only SCBWI members are eligible. Please note this is different from the Portfolio Showcase. THERE ARE NO REFUNDS ON PORTFOLIO CRITIQUES! NO EXCEPTIONS.

Fee: $50. Payment for critique and registration must be received by March 15, 2020 for you to be included in the schedule of meetings. We have a limited number of available spaces. Assignments are made on first-come, first-served basis. You will receive your scheduled time on the morning of the conference. All portfolio critiques will be performed by Art Director Ellice Lee. You can read about her on the faculty bios page on the website. Remember, this is a critique session. Though an industry professional may invite you to submit samples later, it is highly unlikely that you will be offered a contract at this meeting.

Critique Guidelines

See Portfolio section HERE for portfolio guidelines.

Before Your Critique:
- Put ONLY your very best work in your portfolio and make sure it reflects the type of work you will be pursuing.
- Use the best printouts of your work that you can.
- Decide what you want to accomplish in your consultation. i.e., how to improve your work, get suggestions for marketing, etc.
- Be prepared to discuss your work, i.e., genres/subjects you prefer (fiction, nonfiction, novel covers, picture books, board books, etc.); target audience; and what is unique about your work. You may even want to practice what you’re going to say or ask.
- Make a small lo-res printout of your portfolio to make notetaking easier.
- Be on time – appointments are booked back to back. If you are late, you still have to end on time. Arrive early, so you can start on time.
- **Missed appointments cannot be made up or receive a refund.**
- You may have to leave a session early or come to a session late because of your consultation. Try to enter/exit as unobtrusively as possible.
- If applicable, remember to give yourself plenty of time to quietly pick up your portfolio ahead of time from the Portfolio Showcase. (Portfolios are judged at the very beginning of the conference, so you won’t miss the judging.)

**During Your Critique:**

- Be concise and ask specific questions.
- Take notes.
- Be professional, organized, courteous, and responsible.

**After Your Critique Remember Artist-To-Industry-Pro Etiquette:**

- Depart graciously and promptly when your time is up – (others are waiting or the faculty member is scheduled for a workshop or much needed break).
- Do not ask your reviewer to take art samples home.
- Do not contact an art director, editor, or agent unless invited specifically to do so (except when submitting samples allowed using submission guidelines supplied by the AD).
- You may submit samples to the faculty after the conference according to the instructions in your conference folder.
Faculty and PAL Critique Providers

FACULTY:

Talia Benamy is an associate editor at Philomel Books (an imprint of Penguin Young Readers), where she focuses on everything from picture books to middle grade and young adult novels. She has worked on books by Chelsea Clinton, Sonia Sotomayor, Temple Grandin, Jane Yolen, Atia Abawi, Jeffrey Kluger, Lisa Graff, Ruta Sepetys, Dev Petty, Sarah Brannen, and Terry Border. She sees books as having the amazing power to shape kids’ worldviews, and looks for manuscripts that have the potential to do just that. Follow Talia on twitter @TaliaBenamy 

Critique preferences: (fiction or nonfiction) picture books, middle grade and young adult

Shirley Espada-Richey serves as the Assistant Regional Advisor for our region. Once upon a time, she was a Library Story Time Lady and a Spanish Immersion Teacher. She’s been an active SCBWI member since 2014 and has been all-about-the-craft by harvesting ideas with Tara Lazar’s Storystorm, devouring and dissecting picture books with REFOREMO (Read For Research Month) and Julie Hedlund’s 12×12 Challenge, and by attending as many webinars as she can. She writes picture books, middle-grade novels, and dabbles with chapter books, too. Shirley has been the recipient of the 2017 SCBWI Nevada Mentorship (Eric Elfman), the 2019 #PBChat Mentorship (Jessie Oliveros), and the 2019 Las Musas Mentorship (Adrianna Cuevas). Shirley lives in the Sacramento area with her husband and their four children. Follow Shirley on Twitter @shirleyrichey. 

Critiques not available.
**Luana Horry** is an editor of picture books at Harper Collins Children’s Publishers. She has been part of Nancy Inteli’s group for over three years and worked on key titles such as the Pete the Cat series created by Kimberly and James Dean; the Fancy Nancy series written by Jane O’Connor; I’ve Loved You Since Forever written by Hoda Kotb; Fresh Princess written by Denene Millner; Not Quite Snow White written by Ashley Franklin and more. Luana is looking for character-driven, inspirational, and clever commercial picture books.

**Critique preferences:** (fiction or nonfiction) picture books

**Naomi Kinsman** is the award-winning author of Spilled Ink, A Writer’s Notebook, and the From Sadie’s Sketchbook series. She is the founder and Executive Director of Society of Young Inklings, an organization that empowers young writers. Over the past twenty years, Naomi has developed Writerly Play, an improv-based writing methodology that brings joy, deep inquiry, and play into the writing process. Naomi has a MFA in Writing for Children from Hamline University. Visit Naomi’s website at [www.naomikinsman.com](http://www.naomikinsman.com) or connect on Twitter and Instagram @naomikinsman.

**Critique preferences:** middle grade fiction

**Ellice Lee** is the Art Director of Philomel Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, where she designs fiction and non-fiction picture books, board books and novels. She has worked with award-winning talent including Alexandra Boiger, Rafael Lopez, Loren Long, Le Uyen Pham, Christian Robinson, Kadir Nelson, Ed Young, and Floyd Cooper. Titles she has worked on have appeared on the New York Times best-seller lists (most recently, Just Ask! by Sonia Sotomayor and She Persisted by Chelsea Clinton), featured in New York magazine, TIME magazine and have won Caldecott honors, Coretta Scott King awards, as well as being a finalist for the National Book Award. Learn more at [https://www.penguin.com/publishers/philomel/](https://www.penguin.com/publishers/philomel/).

**Portfolio critiques only**
Andrea J. Loney is an award-winning author of children’s picture books. Her works include TAKE A PICTURE OF ME, JAMES VAN DER ZEE (Winner of the Lee & Low Books New Voices Award and an NAACP New Image Award Nominee), BUNNYBEAR (Albert Whitman & Company and on the ALA Rainbow List), and DOUBLE BASS BLUES (Random House Knopf and a Junior Library Guild Selection). She is also a proud faculty member of the Highlights Foundation and at SCBWI events nationwide. You can find Andrea at andreajloney.com or @andreajloney on Twitter, Instagram, or Pinterest.

Critique preferences: picture books and nonfiction

Mitali Perkins has written many books for young readers, including Between Us and Abuela (2020 Charlotte Huck Honor Book), Forward Me Back To You (one of 2019 SLJ’s and Kirkus’ Best YA Books of the Year), You Bring the Distant Near (nominated for a National Book Award, six starred reviews), and Rickshaw Girl (adapted into a film by Sleeperwave Productions), all of which explore crossing different kinds of borders. Mitali also writes about light topics like poverty, immigration, child soldiers, microcredit, and human trafficking, thanks to living overseas for many years and studying Political Science at Stanford and Public Policy at U.C. Berkeley. Her goal in fiction is to make readers laugh or cry, preferably both, as long as their hearts are widening. She lives and writes in the East Bay. You can find Mitali online at www.mitaliperkins.com, on Twitter @MitaliPerkins, or on her Facebook Author Page (Author Mitali Perkins).

Critiques not available.
Jennifer Chen Tran is an agent at Bradford Literary. She represents both fiction and non-fiction. Originally from New York, Jennifer is a lifelong reader and has over six years of experience as an agent. As a person of color and second-generation daughter of Taiwanese immigrants, Jennifer is very interested in diverse writers and #ownvoices from underrepresented/marginalized communities. As a former art major, Jennifer is also eager to grow her list of illustrators and actively looking for graphic novel projects, in both MG and YA. She obtained her Juris Doctor from Northeastern School of Law in Boston, MA, and a Bachelors of Arts in English Literature from Washington University in St. Louis. You can connect with her on Twitter @jenchentran or on Instagram @jenchentran.

Critique preferences: MG and YA graphic novels, MG with emotion and heart, and contemporary YA that has a keen sense of place and realistic dialogue.

PAL CRITIQUE PROVIDERS:

The SCBWI members below are local “Published and Listed” authors with years of writing and speaking experience and multiple published titles. While they are not on the speaking faculty, you may select them if you sign up for a manuscript critique. Please note that they are not offering face-to-face meetings during the conference.

JaNay Brown-Wood is an author and educator. Her first picture book Imani’s Moon won the NAESP Children’s Book of the Year Award, was a Northern CA ACL 2014 Distinguished Book, as well as a “NYC Reads 365” pick for 2016 and 2017 and a RIF Multicultural Book pick for 2015. Her second book Grandma’s Tiny House: A Counting Story received a starred review from Publisher’s Weekly, was a Bank Street Books Best book of 2018, and won the CELI Read Aloud Book Award through the University of Mississippi. She has published poems featured in Highlights for Kids and Highlights High Five and her poem Falling Leaves was included in the poetry anthology titled Thanku: Poems of Gratitude (Lerner/Millbrook, Fall 2019). Furthermore, JaNay has eight forthcoming picture books including Shhh! The Baby’s Asleep (Charlesbridge, forthcoming 2021) and the Where in the
Garden four-picture-book series (Peachtree Publishing, 2021-22). JaNay has also served as a mentor in the #WeNeedDiverseBooks mentorship program, has been a faculty member and speaker at several SCBWI conferences, and is represented by the fabulous Karen Grendnik of Red Fox Literary. JaNay is on Twitter @janaybrownwood and her Facebook page is JaNay Brown-Wood, Author & Educator.

Critique preferences: (fiction, rhyme or prose) picture books and middle grade

Lori Mortensen is an award-winning children’s book author of more than 100 books and over 500 stories and articles. Recent titles include, Nonsense, the Curious Story of Edward Gorey (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), Away with Words, the Daring Story of Isabella Bird (Peachtree), about a Victorian traveler who defied society’s boundaries for women and became the first woman inducted into the Royal Geographical Society, If Wendell Had a Walrus (Henry Holt), Chicken Lily, (Henry Holt), Mousequerade Ball (Bloomsbury) illustrated by New York Times bestselling illustrator Betsy Lewin, and Cowpoke Clyde Rides the Range (Clarion, 2016) a sequel to Cowpoke Clyde & Dirty Dawg, one of Amazon’s best picture books of 2013. When she’s not letting her cat in or out, she’s tapping away at her computer, conjuring, coaxing, and prodding her latest stories to life. For more information about her books, upcoming releases, teacher activities, and critique service, visit her website at www.lorimortensen.com. You can connect with Lori on Twitter @lorimortensen.

Critique preferences: (fiction or nonfiction) picture books and early chapter books

Danna Smith is an award-winning author of over a dozen picture books, including ARCTIC WHITE, SWALLOW THE LEADER, MOTHER GOOSE’S PAJAMA PARTY, and four Little Golden Books. Her nonfiction picture book, THE HAWK OF THE CASTLE: A STORY OF MEDIEVAL FALCONRY, received two starred reviews and is a Junior Library Guild Selection. Danna is currently living in Northern California, where she is hard at work on her next book. Website: www.dannasmithbooks.com. FaceBook: @dannasmithauthor. Twitter: @dannasmith8.

Critique Preferences: picture books (rhyme or prose)