



Conference Schedule

Friday—5:00pm-6:30pm (choose one)

Writing For Children: Everything You Needed to Know (But Didn't Know to Ask):

The Basics

JANAY BROWN-WOOD (AUTHOR) & GAYLE PITMAN (AUTHOR)

Have you always wanted to write a children's book but didn't know how to get started? Maybe you've started a children's book but aren't sure where to go next. Get some tips on the craft of writing children's books, and learn about the nuts and bolts of the publication process. Learn about board books, picture books, early readers, chapter books and middle grade. Why does a reader's age range dictate word count? Does word choice matter? What makes a child want to listen to a book over and over? This will be an interactive session, with time for Q&A at the end.

YA Dos and Don'ts

JESSICA TAYLOR (AUTHOR) & STEPHANIE GARBER (AUTHOR)

What makes a young adult manuscript stand out? Jessica and Stephanie will go over a checklist of best and worst practices to make sure your YA manuscript stands out

for all the right reasons.

Beginners will learn more than they thought possible at this interactive and engaging workshop with faculty members representing a wide variety of expertise. Whether you're thinking about becoming a picture book author, or middle grade, YA, or anywhere in between, learn what it takes to succeed in today's talented and crowded children's book market. If you've already written your manuscript, come learn if you're on track!

This workshop is best suited for the beginner and intermediate writer.

Illustration Techniques: Learning New Skills

JOY ALLEN (ILLUSTRATOR)

How do character tags like "dignified" or "smug" affect how a character is drawn or how they change throughout the story? Each artist has their own approach and skills no matter what medium they use, but building story thru pictures is a common goal. Bring your sketch pad and learn how to build character development. This is a working session! Artist Joy Allen will share years of experience with Art Directors, authors, and a range of boutique to trade publishers to help you walk away with a stronger sense of how to make your

characters ring true. (Did she mention one of her books is on Oprah's Young Reading list?) Joy will also touch on her success in the licensing artwork she has sold to manufacturers of ornament, fabric, outdoor/indoor decor, cards, flags, and wall design ("is that all?" haha). Ideally, there will be time left for Q&A...

This hands-on workshop is suited for artists that are just beginning all the way up to the multi-published illustrator. Come one, come all!

Jump Start Your Writing with Poetry!

LINDA BOYDEN (AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR)

You know you should be writing, but your Muse has gone off on a cruise and left you staring at a blank Word doc. Fear not: writer's block is as common as house dust. This workshop will present a unique method to ease (lure?) writers back into the joy of writing. Learn not only engaging ways to write poems but also will how poetry can stretch "writing muscles" and keep your writing Muse happily at home.

This hands-on workshop will show how fifteen minutes a day writing a rough draft of a poem can rev up your prose writing. Doubtful? Come and see for yourself! Don't forget paper and pens/pencils.

This workshop is best suited for anyone at any level looking to add a lyrical, poetic touch to their work. Your Muse will thank you!

Saturday—8:00am-5:00pm

Registration/Check In begins—7:45am

Breakfast social—8:10-8:30am

Welcome from RA—8:35-8:45

Keynote—8:45-9:15

Warrior's Mind, Writer's Mind

BRUCE HALE (AUTHOR)

To get published and keep publishing, it takes more than luck. It takes the right work habits, support, and lots of persistence. Author Bruce Hale breaks down some concepts that can help you win the war of art.

Breakout sessions—9:30-10:30
(choose one)

The Business of School Visits: price, cost, negotiation, approach BIZ TRACK

ALEXIS O'NEILL (AUTHOR)

You're published. Now what? In this interactive session, you'll learn the business basics of setting fees, getting gigs at schools and other places, and designing memorable presentations.

Mirrors, Windows, and Walls: Diversity in the World of Children's Books CRAFT TRACK

JANAY BROWN-WOOD (AUTHOR) AND GAYLE PITMAN (AUTHOR)

Despite our increasingly diverse society, the world of children's books continues to be overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and heterosexual. This session will address and discuss the importance of diversifying children's literature. We will discuss how children's books can allow kids to see themselves reflected in the world (mirrors), to better understand the experiences of others (windows), and to break down or, unfortunately, reinforce stereotypes (walls). Be prepared to engage in some simple writing and experiential exercises.

Make Your Story Unputdownable: 7

Secrets of Creating Suspense NUTS & BOLTS TRACK

BRUCE HALE (AUTHOR)

How do you craft a story that agents, editors, and readers won't be able to put down? Come learn the secrets of suspense, whether you're writing a picture book, novel, or something in between.

BONUS: Panel: Who I am, What I'm Looking For

TAMAR MAYS (EDITOR) AND JOHN RUDOLPH (AGENT)

It seems like everyone these days wants to write a children's book. And almost everyone has. But that doesn't mean they're all good stories. How can YOUR manuscript stand out in a crowd? How can YOUR manuscript submission make the cut? Editor Tamar Mays and agent John Rudolph have many years of experience weeding through manuscripts and they've seen it all. What does it take to get their attention? Learn how to make it to the top of their slush pile as they talk about not only what it rock THEIR world, but what it takes to look your very best in today's competitive world.

Breakout sessions—10:45-11:45

(choose one)

Contract negotiation: What to look for in a contract including movie rights, international, etc. BIZ TRACK

JOHN RUDOLPH (AGENT)

Publishing contracts can often be a source of great anxiety for writers and illustrators. In this workshop, I'll walk attendees through a typical contract, explain the various clauses, and highlight the key points that authors/illustrators should focus on. I'll also talk about red flags, what's negotiable, deal breakers, and why you really don't need to

hire a lawyer.

Building a cast of characters

CRAFT TRACK

JESSICA TAYLOR (AUTHOR) AND STEPHANIE GARBER (AUTHOR)

What makes an unforgettable cast of supporting characters? Whether your novel has a large set of characters or just few, Jessica and Stephanie will talk about how to give your characters varied personalities, unique goals, complete arcs, and more.

Early Reader Interactivity and Young Reader Comprehension (their actual abilities tend to surprise people—even writers!) NUTS & BOLTS TRACK

TIM MYERS (AUTHOR)

Writers for children, especially picture-book writers, should have some sense at least of how children comprehend text, particularly what qualities of literary writing affect that comprehension. And you may be surprised at how good they can be—under the right circumstances.

BONUS: Indy Publishing: Added tasks, budgeting and accounting

CHRISTINA MERCER (AUTHOR & CPA)

Lunch—11:45-12:45 and FIRST PAGES ROUNDTABLE CRITIQUES—For Everyone! (including artists!)

Bring a first page of your favorite (or most challenging) Work in Progress [WIP] to read aloud to your lunchmates, and get real time feedback from a faculty member that will be stationed at your lunch table! It will be timed, so each person will have the same amount of time to share. There is no additional fee for this invaluable exercise! **Bring 10 copies of your ONE PAGE so others can follow**

along as you read. Artists should bring a single piece of artwork to show. Faculty members will be randomly assigned AFTER you've been seated.

Book signings, general socializing—12:45-1:00

Workshops—1:15-2:45 (choose one)

Taxes, a working session BIZ TRACK

CHRISTINA MERCER (AUTHOR AND CPA)

Though the professions of Author and Accountant couldn't be more different in their main functions, authors come closer to becoming mini-accountants than they know. Why? Because once anyone becomes an official business owner, he/she crosses into the realm of accounting and taxation. Join this author and trained CPA to get serious about your business by learning important basics on "Bean Counting for Authors".

Character development, creating a setting, and how to plot for page-turning excitement CRAFT TRACK

PENNY WARNER (AUTHOR)

Writing for today's young reader requires realistic and relatable characters, a fun, familiar setting, and a compelling story that keeps the pages turning all the way to the exciting conclusion! Learn tips, tricks, and techniques for turning your story into a published—and popular—book for kids.

Work/life balance: Organizing for success, a working session NUTS & BOLTS TRACK

TIM MYERS (AUTHOR)

Writing is not only a matter of craft, but also of crafting a life in which to create. How do you think of yourself as a writer? How does writing affect your relationships? How does the writing life shape a writer psychologically? Without some

understanding of such things, you might not be prepared for the long haul!

BONUS: Doing Your Homework Now to Maximize Acceptance Later, a working session

TAMAR MAYS (EDITOR)

Focusing on books for young readers, especially board books up to the elementary age, Tamar will help you learn how to increase your chances of getting an offer by giving an inside look at how publishers study book retailers, and how they try to apply what they know about the marketplace to what they know about storylines. Will a book sell tomorrow based on what's selling today? What have they learned about what's NOT selling now that will help them figure out what MIGHT sell next year? Is there safety in numbers? How trendy is too trendy? Learn how timing might make the difference on a why a great idea simply might not work...for now. Give your manuscript the best chance it can get by doing your homework before you submit it.

Workshops—3:00-4:15 (choose one)

The Business Side of Writing BIZ TRACK

SUE FORD (AUTHOR)

Wish you knew the basics of the Business Side of Writing? Then this workshop is for you. We'll cover accurate record keeping & organization, accounting & taxes, protecting your records & your writing, and time management. There will be handouts!

Creating a World in 800 Words or Less CRAFT TRACK

ALEXIS O'NEILL (AUTHOR)

In picture books, less is more. Learn how to build a rich world for readers in small word counts. Try your hand at writing juicy verbs, repeating patterns, employing perfect similes and metaphors, and cutting excess.

Buy my Book! – Promoting your book once it's published NUTS & BOLTS TRACK

PENNY WARNER (AUTHOR)

You've written your thrilling story, you've edited, rewritten, and polished it to perfection --and you've sold it to a publisher! Now...how do you get the word out and sell enough copies to recover your advance, get a second contract for your next book, and maybe even pay for your round-the-world book tour? Find out the secret to reaching your readers and selling your book!

BONUS: Perfecting the Pitch Letter, a workshop

JOHN RUDOLPH (AGENT)

Pitch letters are usually your first introduction to an agent or an editor, so you've got to get them right! In this session, we'll go over the basic components of the

pitch letter and discuss techniques that can help your work stand out, using your letters as examples. We'll also try some elevator pitching to help identify your selling points and get you comfortable with summarizing your work.

Blueboards, Blogs, and SCBWI Oh my! Powerful Resources at our Fingertips-4:20-4:50

SUE FORD (AUTHOR)

Are you getting everything you can out of the online SCBWI resources? Join me for a quick trip on the Internet road to see what the wizard, er, website, has for you. Those of little brain, cowardly, or wishing they only “had a heart” welcome.

Closing remarks, art winner, large door prize winner—4:50-5:00

Notes:

*The Portfolio Showcase FOR MEMBERS ONLY will be going on throughout the day: artists are invited to bring their portfolios and have them on display (for no charge!). Attendees are invited to leave comments and encouraging feedback. The faculty art professionals will choose one winner, who will receive a face-to-face free portfolio critique at the 2017 Spring Spirit Conference (the following year).

*There are also face-to-face portfolio critiques, which is different than the Portfolio Showcase. Please see the link to the right for details and differences.

*Written manuscript critiques for authors will be handed out AT THE CLOSE OF THE CONFERENCE at 5pm. If you need to leave early, your critique will be mailed to you. No exceptions, for any reason, please do not ask.

*Don't forget to bring a First Page of a WIP to read aloud during lunch at the First Pages Roundtable! Reading off a laptop or mobile device is fine, but paper copies are a better idea so others can write and give you notes.

*We are extremely proud of our faculty line up! We hope you are as excited as we are!

Deadlines, Clarifications & Fine Print

Conference Tuition (includes lunch, snacks, and drinks throughout the day)

SCBWI Member: \$120 (\$176 after February 4) BARGAIN! Same price as last year!

Non-member: \$156 (\$201 after February 4)

***NEW** Add on Friday Night Session (for signups after 2/4/15) \$25 member, \$40 non-member

EARLY BIRD SPECIAL: SIGN UP BEFORE FEB 4th AND GET OUR NEW FRIDAY NIGHT SESSION FREE! Please note that our conference price has not gone up in years. Sign up early to get the best deal and reserve your spot.

The Fine Print in Not So Fine Print:

1. No walk-ins. Everyone must pay in advance. **We accept PayPal and check payments. Checks payable to SCBWI CA North/Central. Please send checks to PO Box 4516, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762.**
2. Written manuscript critiques will be available for an extra \$45 fee. You may request your top three readers and we'll do our best but cannot guarantee your choices. Assignments are first-come, first-served based on your registration date. Faculty members will select up to 3 authors to meet with face-to-face on conference day.
3. Face-to-face portfolio critiques for illustrators will be available for an extra \$45 fee. Assignments are first-come, first-served based on your registration date.
4. The portfolio showcase is for illustrators and is offered at no charge.
- 5.

Early Bird Registration ends Feb 4, 2016 To avoid paying an increased registration fee AND get a free Friday night workshop add-on, register before this date.

Deadline to register for the conference is April 20, 2016

Written Manuscript Critiques and payments are due 2/18/16

- All manuscripts AND payments (\$45) must be received by 2/18/16. Payment by check must be in the same envelop as the manuscript; online payments will be made at time of registration.
- Only one manuscript per person may be submitted.

Don't Forget About First Pages Roundtable during Saturday Lunch!

There's another change to get some feedback on Work in Progress: **bring a first page to read aloud during lunch at the First Pages Roundtable!** Reading off a laptop or mobile device is fine, but paper copies are a better idea so others can write down and hand you notes. Artists: bring your latest WIP art/illustration/sketch/drawing; we'll have illustrator's tables too. Deadline: Bring it with you on Saturday.

Face to Face Portfolio Critiques don't really have a deadline as they are held on Saturday

- This is a critique of your portfolio, performed on the spot, between you and an art professional. [Not the same as the Portfolio Showcase.] Payment (\$45) is due at the time of registration, or if paid by check, it must arrive no later than 4/20/16, which is the close of registration.

The Portfolio Showcase doesn't have a deadline. Just show up with your portfolio.

The Portfolio Showcase is open to MEMBERS ONLY. Artists can display their work for the day in Saturday, at no charge. 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 2017 Spring Spirit.

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 where an art professional gives you face to face feedback on your portfolio.

Friday Night Workshops are Add-On not Stand-Alone Sessions

There are three Friday night workshops that are a brand new addition this year! Check the conference schedule to see the topics and faculty members presenting. Early bird registrants receive their choice of one workshop FOR FREE; otherwise conference attendees can choose a workshop for a small additional \$25 add-on fee for members and \$40 for nonmembers. Worth it! Deadlines to sign up and register for these workshops are the same deadlines as registration for the conference. The Friday workshops are add-on sessions, not standalone. You may not register for or attend the Friday not workshop without attending the Saturday conference. (Well, technically you COULD, but you'd be paying for both. So, don't be silly.)

CANCELLATION POLICY

Full refund less \$30 processing fee before March 15, 2016. From March 16, 2016 on, a 50% refund will be offered IF we can fill your spot off the waiting list. Otherwise, no refund. No refunds for manuscript or portfolio critiques regardless of when cancelled. We are a nonprofit, and our region is run by completely volunteers. Refunds are a huge challenge that require a ton of paperwork, and are more work than you can imagine. We thank you for understanding the need for such a strict refund policy.

Reminder

By signing up for this event, you acknowledge that audio-taping, video-taping 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. The information you learn at the conference is what you're paying for. Don't be a jerk by making any of this Grade A content public or by sharing it with those that didn't pay to attend the conference.



Conference Menu

On Saturday, a delightful continental breakfast will be provided and included in the cost of registration.

A luscious lunch fare catered by [Splendid Gourmet](#) will again be offered. You will select your meal choice on the online registration form, but specific ingredients are included below for those with allergies. All food is nut-free. All sandwiches include a quinoa spinach salad.

- * Breast of turkey with pesto aioli, roasted pepper, provolone cheese on baguette
- * Brie cheese with sliced cucumbers, tomatoes, olive tapenade on whole wheat (a vegetarian and kosher option)
- * Roast beef with caramelized onion and blue cheese aioli on ciabatta
- * Brown Rice Medley with roasted squash, spinach, cucumber and green beans (vegan/gluten free, and a kosher option)
- * You may also choose to bring your own lunch if one of the above choices does not meet your dietary needs, however please understand we are unable to reduce conference tuition.

To ensure that each attendee receives the lunch that he/she ordered, we require that you give your lunch ticket to one of our lunch volunteers. Lunch volunteers will distribute all lunches. Lunch tickets will be available in your folder on conference day.

Afternoon snacks including iced tea will be provided too!

Chilled water will be available throughout the day. SCBWI California North/Central does not provide water cups. Please bring a water bottle to reduce single-use plastic consumption.

Thanks

We would like to extend our deepest thanks to San Joaquin County illustrator and SCBWI member Chad Hunter for this year's Spring Spirit logo! To see more of Chad's work, visit <http://chadhunterstudio.com>

Written Manuscript Critiques—SCBWI Members Only

Written Critique Submission Fee: \$45 (additional fee, paid at time of registration). *See below for formatting and submission requirements.* Submissions that don't adhere to guidelines will not be accepted.

If paying by check, payment must be received by 2/18/2016 for your manuscript to be critiqued! No exceptions.

Written critiques will be completed by members of our faculty (see faculty bios for genre/age range preferences). Faculty readers will select up to three submissions for 15-minute face-to-face critiques on conference day. Not all manuscripts will be selected. You will find out if your manuscript has been selected when you arrive on conference day.

Your written critique will be handed out AT THE CLOSE OF THE CONFERENCE, at 5pm. 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.

[There's another change to get some feedback on Work in Progress: bring a first page to read aloud during lunch at the First Pages Roundtable! Reading off a laptop or mobile device is fine, but paper copies are a better idea so others can write down and hand you notes. There will be illustrator tables for artists to share their artwork, too.]

Manuscripts must be received by 2/18/2016 or your work will not be critiqued (or refunded). Period.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: please follow carefully

- * 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.
- * Font: Times New Roman or Arial **ONLY**. Size: 12 point—no larger, no smaller.
- * 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, younger PBs.)
- * 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 in mid-chapter). Your *synopsis* must follow the margin and font guidelines above, but you may single-space.

Mail manuscripts to **SCBWI CA North/Central, PO Box 4516, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762. Please DO NOT send your manuscript with a "signature required." We have to stand in line at the post office to collect those manuscripts and that make us cranky.** Include:

A brief cover letter (no more than three paragraphs) including:

- * Your contact information
- * Your genre
- * What you hope to get out of the critique, i.e. help with characterization; plot suggestions; developing a catchy opening

Again, all submissions must be received by 2/18/16. We are not responsible for mail holidays.

No refunds on manuscript critiques. No exceptions.

Manuscripts are assigned to the best of our abilities one of your three preferred readers on a first-come, first-served basis based on the date of your registration.

Editors and agents fill up quickly, so register early.

Face-to-Face Portfolio Consultations—SCBWI Members Only

Fee: \$45. Payment must be received by March 15, 2015 for you to be included in the schedule of meetings. **Only SCBWI members are eligible.** We have a finite number of available spaces. Assignments are made on first-come, first-served basis. Please read the faculty bios for faculty members critiquing portfolios.

THIS IS DIFFERENT THAN THE PORTFOLIO SHOWCASE, WHICH IS A FREE DISPLAY OF ARTOWRK FOR ALL ATTENDEES TO VIEW. *Portfolio consultations are paid-for, 15-minute face to face consultations with an art professional to get feedback on your artwork.*

Remember, this is a critique session. Though an agent may invite you to submit samples later, it is highly unlikely that you will be offered a contract at this meeting.

- * Decide what you want to accomplish in your consultation...How to improve your work? Suggestions for marketing?
- * 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.
- * Depart graciously and promptly when your time is up – either others are waiting, or the editor/agent/illustrator is scheduled for a workshop or much needed break. Missed appointments cannot be made up or receive a refund.
- * Be prepared to discuss your work, i.e. genres/subjects you prefer (fiction, nonfiction, novel covers or picture books); targeted audience; and what is unique about your work.
- * Be concise – practice what you're going to say or ask

- * Ask specific questions
- * Take notes
- * Be professional...organized, courteous, responsible
- * 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.

After your consultation, remember artist-to-industry-pro etiquette:

- * Do not ask your reviewer to take art samples home – if they ask for samples mail them later, following their guidelines provided.
- * Do not telephone an art director or agent unless invited to do so – his/her contact information is in your registration packet.
- * You and other attendees at the conference may submit samples to the agent after the conference according to the instructions in your conference folder.
- * In your cover letter, refer to your attendance and consultation at the conference. Mention why you think your enclosed work might be of interest, and/or thank the agent for inviting you to submit it.



Faculty

We've culled a fine group of quality faculty members for you this year. Meet our dynamic group of experienced authors, illustrators, editors and agents. See what they've done, what they're doing, and how they're going to help you become better writers and illustrators. Their preferences for written manuscript critiques and portfolio consultations are noted.



JOY ALLEN (Illustrator) Joy Allen has illustrated over 60 books for several publishers including picture books BEING FRIENDS, PRINCESS PARTY and BABY SIGNS, which is on Oprah's Young Reading List. She has illustrated the CAM JANSEN series for the last 8 years and has done several books for American Girl. She's received many awards too! You may have seen some of her licensed artwork in ornaments, fabrics, outdoor/indoor decor, cards, flags, and wall designs. To think she lives right here in the Sacramento area!

Critique Preferences: Portfolio Critique



LINDA BOYDEN (Author/Illustrator) Since 2011, Linda Boyden has written a poem almost every day. She taught school for thirty years, but when her husband's work took them to Maui, Hawai'i, she abandoned teaching and focused on writing and illustrating. She has five picture books published and two more under contract (another picture book plus her first Young Adult novel) as well as many poems published in literary journals.

Critique Preferences: PBs, especially in rhyme



JANAY BROWN-WOOD (Author & Educator) is a children's author and educator. She works as an Early Childhood Education professor at American River College. Her first picture book, *Imani's Moon*, is the winner of the NAESP Children's Book of the Year Award, is a Northern CA ACL 2014 Distinguished Book, a recommended pick on the "NYC Reads 365" 1st grade reading list, as well as a Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) Multicultural Book pick for 2015.

Critique Preferences: PB



STEPHANIE GARBER (Young Adult Author) is the author of *Caraval*, a young adult fantasy slated for publication by Flatiron Books/Macmillan in fall 2016. *Caraval* has already sold in over twenty foreign territories and the movie rights were pre-empted by Twentieth Century Fox. When not writing, Stephanie teaches a variety of creative writing courses at a private university in Northern CA. For fun, she's also a blogger for the popular website Pub(lishing) Crawl.

Critique Preferences: YA

SUE FORD (Author) writes for children under her maiden name, Susan Uhlig, and has been an avid SCBWIer since 1993! Her most recent titles were ebooks published in 2015 with Schoolwide. She has also written 10 work-for-hire books for two Korean publishers and has sold over 160 magazine pieces for children and adults.

Critique Preferences: PB



BRUCE HALE (Author, Speaker & Troublemaker) Raised by wolves just outside of L.A., Bruce Hale is the award-winning author (and occasional illustrator) of over 35 books for young readers. His popular series include *Chet Gecko*, *Clark the Shark*, and *School for S.P.I.E.S.* An in-demand speaker, Bruce has visited schools, libraries, and conferences from New York to New Delhi. When not working, you'll find him hiking the hills, kickboxing, or singing with a latin jazz band called Mezcal Martini. He can be found online at

www.brucehale.com, www.brucehalewritingtips.com, and @StoryGuy1.

Critique Preferences: PB, MG



TAMAR MAYS (Senior Editor, Early Childhood Group at HarperCollins Children's Books) is an editor with a focus on early childhood--from board books to picture books and beginning readers. She also edits Let's Read and Find Out Science titles. Tamar brings a variety of experiences to editing, having been a bookseller, a buyer, and once ran a Scholastic bookclub for 2nd and 3rd graders.

Critique Preferences: Board Books (BBs), Picture Books (PBs), Chapter Books, Middle Grade (MG)



CHRISTINA MERCER (Author & Retired CPA) Once-upon-a-time, Christina Mercer worked as a CPA. Though she retired that formal hat, you can still find numbers buzzing around her head. She is also an award-winning author of fiction for children and young adults. She resides in Northern California enjoying life with her husband, sons, pack of large dogs, and about 100,000 honeybees. To learn more about her, visit: www.christinamercer.com.

Critique Preferences: YA



TIM MYERS (Writer and Santa Clara University Senior Lecturer) is a writer, storyteller, songwriter, and senior lecturer at Santa Clara University. His work has made the New York Times bestseller list for children's books, been reviewed in the Times, and been read aloud on NPR. Tim's been a teacher for 40 years in the US and abroad, and specializes in teaching writing, creative and otherwise. He's also earned enough rejections to wallpaper a small house—so he understands. Find him at www.TimMyersStorySong.com or on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/TimJMyers1>.

Critique Preferences: PB up to MG



ALEXIS O'NEILL (Author & School Visit Expert) uses small word-counts to create rich and varied worlds in her picture books including *The Kite That Bridged Two Nations*, *The Recess Queen*, *Loud Emily*, *Estela's Swap* and *The Worst Best Friend*. A veteran school visit presenter, she shares the craft and business of author visits at SchoolVisitExperts.com as well as through a column in the SCBWI Bulletin, "The Truth About School Visits." A former elementary school teacher with a PhD in Teacher Education from Syracuse University, she is a writing instructor for

the UCLA Extension Writers' Program. Visit her at www.AlexisONeill.com and www.SchoolVisitExperts.com.

Critique Preferences: PB



GAYLE PITMAN (Author) By day, Gayle E. Pitman teaches Psychology and Women/Gender Studies at Sacramento City College. By night, Gayle writes children's books and engages in other forms of subversive creativity. Her first children's book, *This Day in June*, won the 2015 ALA Stonewall Award, was a Rainbow List Top Ten pick, and won the International Reading Association's 2014 Notable Books for a Global Society Award. Her poetry (and amateur illustrations!) will be featured in an illustrated anthology to be released in 2016 by Reflection Press.

She has been interviewed on local media such as Capital Public Radio's "Insight" and "Good Day Sacramento," and she has been featured in publications ranging from School Library Journal to The Advocate.

Critique Preferences: PB



JOHN RUDOLPH (Literary Agent with Dystel & Goderich Literary Management) joined Dystel & Goderich in 2010 after twelve years as an acquiring children's book editor. He began his career at Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers as an Editorial Assistant and then moved to the G. P. Putnam's Sons imprint of the Penguin Young Readers Group, where he eventually served as Executive Editor on a wide range of young adult, middle-grade, nonfiction, and picture book titles. John is keenly interested in middle-grade and young adult fiction and

would love to find the next great picture book author/illustrator.

Critique Preferences: PB, MG, YA, NA, and art



JESSICA TAYLOR (Young Adult Author) is the young adult author of *Wandering Wild* (Sky Pony Press, 2016). After graduating from law school, she realized she'd rather write her own stories than read dusty law books. She lives in Northern California with a sweet-yet-spoiled dog and several teetering towers of books.

Critique Preferences: YA



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Critique Preferences: PB, MG