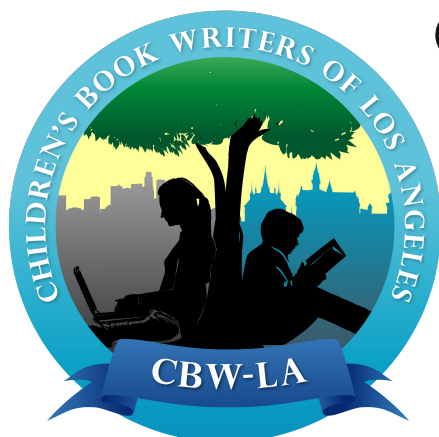


SCRIBBLERS' SCOOP

Volume III Number 2



Children's Book Writers of Los Angeles

Educating and Inspiring Writers on the Road to Publication

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Scribblers' Scoop is the non-profit CBW-LA's newsletter.

Available to the public, it is published quarterly in February, May, August, and November.

Letter from the Editor

CBW-LA Scribblers,

I hope you enjoy reading the stories in this newsletter as much as we enjoyed writing and compiling them!

This newsletter was a true team effort, with eight writers creating the content, and Secretary Lucy Ravitch handling the layout design for the second newsletter in a row. Wow! Thank you to all of you who worked so hard to research and write for our readers!

What a wealth of information they share with you, from book reviews to book mapping, author tips gleaned at the L.A. Times Festival of Books to the Top Ten writer websites, a look at diversity in children's literature, our usual quarterly questions and brain booster—and so much more.

We also highlight CBW-LA's upcoming events - our annual Story Sprouts Writing Day Anthology Workshop coming later this month, a voice lesson from YA Author Samantha Combs in June, and marketing and promotion tips from Picture Book Author Sheri Fink in July. And, we tell you where to go for writing workshops and retreats on the weekends that CBW-LA is resting!

There are so many wonderful things happening in the organization, and the breadth of talent in this group is outstanding. I am honored to serve you all as the group's Publications Editor, and support and promote you in all of your writing dreams, and look forward to celebrating our successes looking ahead.

Write on!

Alana



PS - If you haven't yet, I highly encourage you to sign up for the Writing Day Anthology Workshop—in addition to several hours of invaluable workshopping, plus breakfast and lunch, all of our attendees will have a minimum of three pieces published in our Story Sprouts Anthology this fall. It is our second annual workshop, and we again anticipate an amazing turnout and quality submissions!

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Reach more than 200 local Los Angeles writers and get a link on our website!

RATES

1/4 page ad = \$50 / year
1/2 page ad = \$75 / year
full page ad = \$100 / year
(1 year = 4 issues)

SPECIALS

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President's Letter

May 2014

Dear Scribblers,

Our busy year of education and inspiration continues! In our last issue, we talked about starting the year with our annual Kickstart Your Writing Career workshop in January, followed by Middle Grade Author Kristen Kittscher's Voice workshop in February. Read the March newsletter for more information about those great events.

March 29th marked CBW-LA's first-ever Novel Writing Boot Camp. The workshop was jam-packed with inspiring moments and novel-writing techniques. Attendees received folders filled with helpful handouts and worksheets, and I was honored when one participant told me that she learned more during my three-hour workshop than throughout her two-year MFA program.

In April, we facilitated our first critique session of the year. Participants shared excerpts from their middle grade and young adult manuscripts, and got constructive feedback from fellow writers.

Now that May has rolled around, we are in the midst of preparing for the year's biggest event: our 2014 Writing Day Anthology Workshop. It is a cornerstone of the CBW-LA programming.

This year, we selected Voice as our Story Sprouts Anthology theme. Our workshop will be filled with exercises designed to hone and highlight the attendees' unique voices as writers. By the end of the workshop, all participants will submit at least three pieces for publication in this year's Story Sprouts 2014 Anthology, expected publication September 30, 2014.

But the fun doesn't end there. We look forward to an informative summer!

Author Samantha Combs will continue with this year's Voice theme at her June 28th workshop entitled Do You Give Good Voice? How to Find and Nurture Your Writing Personality.

And on July 12th, Indie Author Sheri Fink will share marketing secrets in her workshop Establishing Your Independence: Marketing Secrets from a Best-Selling Independent Author. Currently delving into the idea of writing a novel, Sheri's picture books have won international prizes and acclaim, and several of her books have hit number one of the Amazon bestseller charts.

These amazing workshops would not be possible without your continued support of CBW-LA. We thank you for attending our workshops, spreading the word to other writers and leaving rave reviews of our events on our social media sites.

We are blessed to have you as part of our wonderful writing family.

Happy Writing,

Nutschell Anne Windsor
CBW-LA President



CBW-LA Board Notes

A few highlights from the April CBW-LA Board of Directors' Meeting:

- Confirmed final donation to Child Fund International for Philippines Disaster Relief, as a portion of Story Sprouts profits, totaled \$64.37.
- Discussed an option for a free book review in our newsletter to all published CBW-LA Authors. We will continue to review any published Picture Book, Middle Grade, Young Adult and Writing Craft books, but wish to encourage members to take advantage of a club newsletter review. One more way to support and promote our members.
- Increased Social Media presence: CBW-LA will begin live tweeting top tips from our events.
- YouTube promotional video: planned a one-minute promo, highlighting our writers and events, to upload to YouTube. We want all of our writers to help put this together! Details coming soon.
- Blog Tour: CBW-LA members who would like to host Story Sprouts on the 2014 Blog Tour this Fall are encouraged to contact Nutschell to arrange a date.
- Blurter Coming Soon: Blurter is a website for ebook sales, in which the person recommending a book earns 20% of all purchases through their link. Blurter earns 20%, and CBW-LA would earn 60%. We felt this is a great opportunity to give back to our Story Sprouts Authors, and will list Story Sprouts every year, and encourage all writers to take advantage of this offer to earn first royalties.
- CBW-LA is moving to a PayPal-free world to ease monthly fees. Writers will still be able to register for events and pay online. Details coming soon.
- Volunteers wanted! Help with Social Media, Marketing, Promotions, Newsletter—or share your talent that we didn't mention but really need!
- In the future, CBW-LA plans to publish PDFs of board member-led workshops, such as the Novel Writing Boot Camp. PDFs will be useful for educational purposes for all writers, students and writing groups outside of the L.A. area.



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You're Invited!

Story Sprouts and CBW-LA want YOU
to join us for a full-day of writing and networking
culminating in a published book with:

YOUR NAME
YOUR STORIES
YOUR BIO

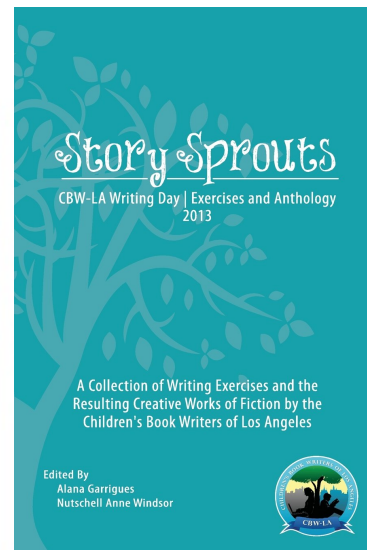
All participants will engage in a nine-hour Writing Day Workshop, complete with fun goody bags, plenty of nourishment, and non-stop writing exercises and lessons from CBW-LA Founder and President Nutschell Anne Windsor and CBW-LA Publications Editor Alana Garrigues.

When: May 31, 2014, 8 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Where: Torrance Municipal Airport

Why: Because You DESERVE a Day to Write and Get Published!

The Deets: \$95 - \$135 to Register – Includes Workshop, Swag, Food, Book, Networking, Inspiration



The work that you complete on the Writing Day will be collected, edited and published on Amazon in late September, and promoted around the world.

All authors will be invited to a party to celebrate your success in the fall, where you will receive a complimentary print copy of the Story Sprouts book!



This is our second annual event, and our first book has garnered rave reviews on Amazon and throughout the blogosphere. We're excited to offer this year's workshop with all-new exercises to even more voices!

Register TODAY at www.cbw-la.org or use your QR reader.

About CBW-LA

The Children's Book Writers of Los Angeles is a non-profit open to ALL local writers. We provide education and inspiration for published writers and writers on the road to publication. We offer a venue where writers, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, educators, librarians and other members of the community who wish to promote literature and literacy for children may share knowledge and information.

Wanted: Characters of All Cultures and Colors

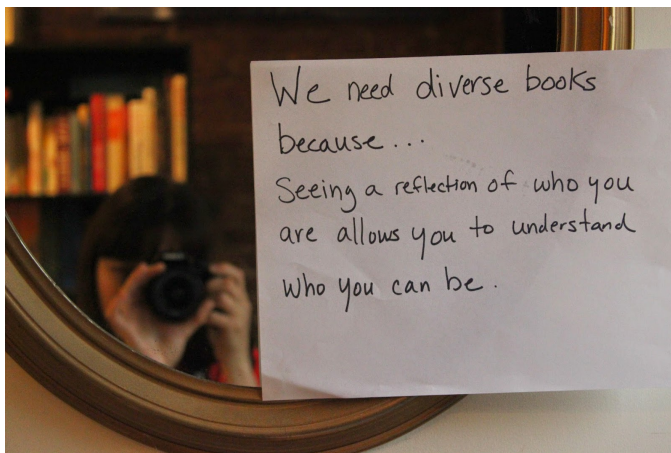
by Alana Garrigues

There's a color in children's literature. And it's overwhelmingly white.

In a survey by the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison of 3,200 American children's books published in 2013 (out of a total of 5,000), a mere 7.9 percent of books featured a leading non-white character. It is a number that is grossly under-representative of American society, where 37 percent of residents surveyed in 2012 were not white. When broken down, 93 books, or 2.9 percent of the total surveyed, were about black or African American characters, 34 books (1 percent) were about American Indian characters, 69 books (2.1 percent) about Asian characters and 57 books (1.7 percent) about Latinos. Not all of the remaining books featured white characters; some featured animals or non-human characters.

The numbers were not further categorized to represent cultural heritage or ethnicity, language or sexual orientation, but the results are clear and dismal. The publishing world is filled with a cookie cutter character.

"What the low numbers for multicultural literature mean is that publishing for children and teens has a long way to go before reflecting the rich diversity of perspectives and experiences within and across races and culture," the CCBC writes on their website.



In fact, statistically speaking, the United States is far more diverse than the books we create. Just over 20 percent of American households speak a language other than English at home, and 12.9 percent of our residents were born outside of the United States. More than one in six people in our country are Hispanic, and almost one in eight are black or African American. We are a nation of different socioeconomic, cultural, sexual, religious, and ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, as well as different physical and mental abilities, and our society is richer when we recognize—and celebrate—our diversity.

It's a problem for many writers, editors, teachers, librarians, parents and kid lit lovers, who have taken to social media with the #WeNeedDiverseBooks hashtags to call on publishers to do better. Part of it may be a skewed preference among white Americans to follow their literary calling—for instance, speaking about the cause, some Asian writers have admitted that becoming a writer was seen as a hobby, not a career choice, in their parents' eyes, and therefore something they shied away from for many years—and writers do tend to write what they know. However, it's not an excuse.

Publishing insiders made the claim that books about white characters sell better, so they stick to profitable demographics. But that hardly seems to be the right choice for kids, parents or educators, and the numbers have actually decreased since the year 2002, when 13 percent of the books surveyed by CCBC featured non-whites. The CCBC began tracking the numbers in 1985, and they also track authors' ethnicities. In 2013, the books surveyed featured even fewer non-white authors—223, or 6.9 percent.

Only main characters are counted, so the CCBC admits that their work is somewhat subjective; there tend to be a greater number of sidekick and secondary characters of diverse cultural

backgrounds, but they say it is important for children and teens to see themselves in the main character, as the hero. Not just the loyal best friend or super villain.

Readers and kid lit fans agree.

"WeNeedDiverseBooks because it is hard to hate someone we can identify with," tweeted @JenniferBrownYA.

A photo of four young African American boys hold up a sign that reads, "We need diverse books because we are superheroes," followed by a photo of them dressed up as teenage mutant ninja turtles.

Fighting the notion that non-white students steer away from reading, a high school book club of four African American girls hold up a book by Tavabi Jones, and say, "This is my high school book club. They are NOT reluctant readers."

Aisha Saeed, a Pakistani American YA writer, holds up a sign with her son in her lap. The sign reads, "We need diverse books because I want my boys to grow up in a world where they never feel INVISIBLE."

An elementary school aged Asian girl wrote two signs. "We need diverse books because when people see heroes of different race, it can inspire them to be more open to other cultures," and, "We need diverse books because it can stop racism and sexism."

Even everyone's (second?) favorite alien, the 1980's TV character Alf, jumped in on the conversation, holding up a tablet that reads, "We need diverse books because there are more aliens/vampires/werewolves/yeti in books than people of color."

Literally thousands of people joined in the conversation on Facebook and Twitter, as well as the blogosphere, and a last minute panel was added to BookCon, entitled "The World Agrees: #WeNeedDiverseBooks." The panelists include Jacqueline Woodson, author of *Brown Girl Dreaming*, Matt de la Pena, author of *The Living*, and Grace Lin, author of *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*.

So, what's the next step?

Kyle Zimmer, the CEO of First Book, was interviewed by Lynn Neary of NPR over the weekend. She said the campaign to increase diversity has been going on subtly since 1965, but the results just aren't there.

"After all these decades, you would hope that we might have made more progress than we've made...the disconnect is profound," Zimmer said.

She has found that her network of teachers and librarians confirm what their organization has believed all along.

"They overwhelmingly report that when kids see themselves in books, they are far more likely to become enthusiastic readers," Zimmer said. "But we also know that this isn't just about kids seeing themselves in books. This is also about kids seeing other kids in books."

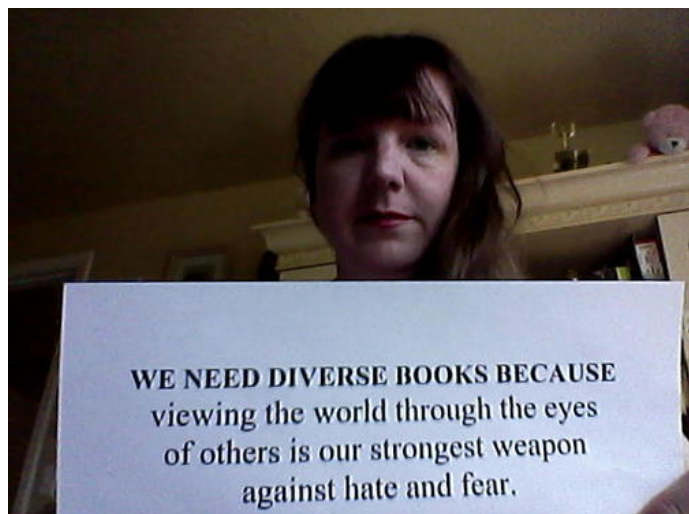
Therefore, First Book has vowed to prove to publishers that there is a market for diverse books. To that end, First Book will guarantee that they will buy 10,000 copies of the titles they select that show a great commitment to diversity. Those books will go to lower income communities, but Zimmer encouraged parents of middle and upper income families to support the mission too.

"Everyone should be buying diverse content for



their children - it's the right thing to do," she said.

For more information about the #WeNeedDiverseBooks Campaign and find out what you can do to support them, visit weneeddiversebooks.tumblr.com. First Book is at www.firstbook.org.



Read about the important of diversity in library programming and materials at www.ala.org/alsc/importance-diversity-references-and-resources.

Support publishers who choose multicultural children's books, such as Lee & Low Books (www.leeandlow.com), whose tagline is "about everyone * for everyone."

And, as a writer, be conscious about the characters you create. If you write picture books and have input on the illustrations, you might try to steer the illustrator away from the standard blue-eyed, blonde-haired child.

Books for older kids can always find a place for non-white main characters, rich in diverse cultural traditions—sometimes all it takes is looking at your manuscript in a new light. Try telling your story from a different character's point of view, and see if it makes a difference. Share stories about kids who are Latino, or gay, or blind, or obese, or ... any number of "non-traditional" book characteristics. Bring those characters to life, and give them a voice. Because you'll probably find something magical sharing more of your own background, or getting to know another culture a lot more intimately. Just like the true American melting pot.

CBW-LA UPCOMING EVENTS

Register on-line today! CBW-LA.org (or click on the links below)

Saturday, Saturday, **May 31**: 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Writing Day Workshop

Saturday, **June 28**: 1-4 p.m. Do You Give...Good Voice? How to Find (and Nurture) Your Writing Personality featuring YA Author and CBW-LA Member Samantha Combs

Saturday, **July 12**: 1-4 p.m. Establishing Your Independence: Marketing Secrets from a Best-Selling Independent Author featuring PB Author Sheri Fink

Writing Opportunities

There are many great writers in the Los Angeles area—there must be something about the land of sunshine and eternal youth that lends itself to a creative vibe. That, and the dream of movie adaptations...

We strongly believe our writers are best served through a robust community, so while we would always like to see you at our CBW-LA events, we want to share other great events and writing groups with you as well! Just be sure to spread the word about our wonderful group while you're out schmoozing and learning with other writers in the area!

Here are a few to check out:

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI): The international professional organization for ... children's book writers and illustrators! The Los Angeles chapter of SCBWI is getting ready to host their 2014 Working Writers Day Retreat from September 12-14. Details about the retreat and other SCBWI events here: <http://losangeles.scbwi.org>

UCLA: The renowned writing college, which includes an extension program open to anyone (for a fee), hosts a Writers Faire every August. Date TBD. More information: <http://writers.uclaextension.edu/writers-faire/>

Independent Writers of Southern California (IWOSC): Catering to writers across genres, including journalists, short story authors and public relations professionals, IWOSC offers seminars and panel discussions. As a public service, they also allow everyone—nonmembers included—to attend an informal satellite session for free to network, bounce ideas around, and feel supported. Satellite meetings monthly on weekdays, dates vary by location. More information: <http://www.iwosc.org>

Peninsula Center Library, Palos Verdes: Supporting local voices, PV hosts its third annual Local Author Fair on September 28, from 2 - 5 p.m. More information: <http://www.pvld.org>

Pasadena Novel, Memoir and Short Story Critique Group: A Meetup group with a similar mission to CBW-LA—provide affordable, quality writing education, and a supportive critique environment. They meet Saturday and Sundays, approximately twice per month. This organizer has several good reviews on Meetup, and is supportive of CBW-LA. More information: <http://www.meetup.com/3by3-writers/>

Your Local Library: Libraries are a mecca for local writers pawning their stories through lectures and book readings, and therefore a great place to glean some experience from published authors. Community boards are always full of flyers for readings!

There are also many events beyond our local region that are of interest to writers. For example, check out Comic-Con and its affiliates (www.comic-con.org) for some quirky creative fun! Or look up a writers retreat in the cozy drizzle of the Pacific Northwest, picturesque landscape of the Bay Area, or cultural flair at an international week abroad—vacation and writing productivity rolled into one.

We encourage you to share your photos and stories of being Out and About at writing conferences, panels, workshops and book fairs! What did you learn? Please e-mail alana@cbw-la.org for newsletter consideration! We also welcome your knowledge of other great organizations and events that our CBW-LA members would appreciate.

The more, the merrier!

Oh, and in case you're wondering why we didn't include the West Hollywood Book Fair? Due to diminished attendance, the city council voted to forgo the event this year. Write to the organizers and city council to let them know you'd still be interested next year!

In the meantime, keep on writing and inspiring.

Out and About: Lessons at the L.A. Times Festival of Books by Lucy Ravitch

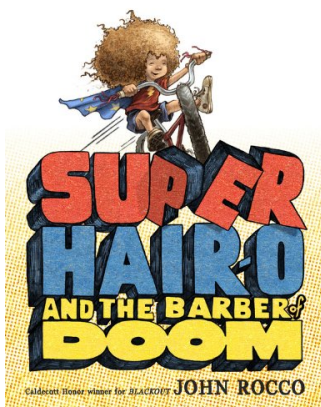
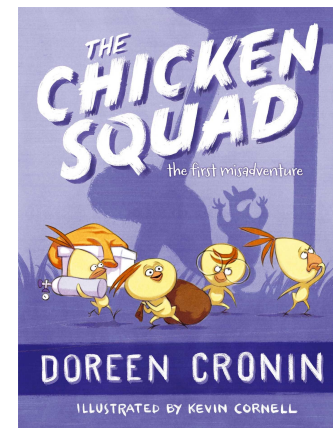
This was the second year I was able to attend the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books (<http://events.latimes.com/festivalofbooks>) and it was well worth my time. There were many vendors, panels and shows to watch, and booths to explore. This year, I didn't have much time to explore, but I went to two back-to-back children's book conversations on Saturday afternoon.

The first was Children's Books: Drawing the Imagination, featuring Illustrators and Author/Illustrators Joe Cepeda, Gianna Marino, Jon J. Muth and Salina Yoon, with Lee Wind as the moderator. It was enjoyable and thought-provoking. Listening to how these illustrators worked on their books was inspirational. I thought it was interesting that many of them had a picture that inspired their book idea. It made me wish I was a better artist, but also gave me the feeling that my words would be in good hands if any of these illustrators were handed my manuscript. I didn't attend the book signing following that session because I wanted to be in the front of the line for the following conversation.

Next up was Children's Books: Inspiring Young Minds, featuring Mac Barnett, Doreen Cronin, Jennifer Fosberry and John Rocco, moderated by Kelly Sonnack from Andrea Brown Literary Agency. I was excited to attend this session since I adore Click, Clack, Moo by Doreen Cronin. Also, going in, I knew Mac Barnett was a funny guy who was sure to keep things lively (and he certainly did).

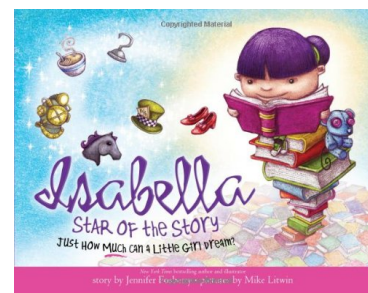
Each author was full of great insights.

Doreen opined that kids don't get into as much trouble as they used to when kids were allowed to go out and explore with other kids. Now children are watched like hawks and they can't get into much trouble, she said. Her newest early chapter book, *Chicken Squad*, was loosely based on her childhood friends and their shenanigans around Long Island.

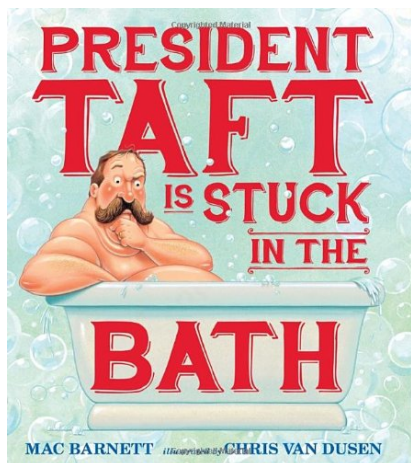


John Rocco discussed his past working in animation, and talked about his newest book, *Super Hair-o and the Barber of Doom*. As a kid, he said he had big hair, so naturally the main character in the book gets his powers from his hair. John struggled with the publisher on the title but finally got his way. I found it interesting how many of the authors drew from childhood memories to harvest their stories.

Jennifer Fosberry has a series of books with a spunky character named Isabella. Her newest book, *Isabella: Star of the Story*, reflects on Jennifer's love of classic fairy tales and stories, as well as her love of libraries. She noticed with her own children that they were familiar with plenty of TV characters but not many of the heroes, heroines, sidekicks and villains from classic literature, and wanted to bring back that wonder.



Mac Barnett was delightful and hilarious. He talked about some of his past books, as well as his newest book, *President Taft is Stuck in the Bath*. Mac said that while he could not confirm the rumored event was even true, it was a funny enough story inspire a book anyway. During his research, he thought he found one of the Past President's bathtubs but nobody seemed to believe him or care. When asked what his writing routine was, Mac said he spends many of his days "thinking." It sometimes takes a long time to think of what to write. Eventually, he bought a dog so that at least he could have somebody with whom to spend his hours thinking. Mac said he loves to write for kids and has enjoyed doing it for some time; he hopes kids will continue to enjoy his books and families keep buying them so that he can keep on creating stories, a job he utterly loves.



After the session, I went to the book signing and picked up five books (one for each of my kids). Each author was kind enough to personalize their book. While they all had a few selections available, I chose *Chicken Squad*, *Super Hair-o*, *Isabella: Star of the Story*, *Battle Bunny*, and *Count the Monkeys* — and I had my picture taken with some of the authors. They were happy to hear that I was writing children's books too and were very encouraging.



The Los Angeles Times Festival of Books is a two-day event held each Spring with something for every reader and writer. Even if you only have a couple hours, you are sure to have a good time and find some great books. There was a wealth of entertainment live on the Cooking Stage, the Children's Stage and the Main Center Stage. There are some great recap videos on <http://events.latimes.com/festivalofbooks/fob-videos/> to inspire each of us. Follow the L.A. Times Festival of Books on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/latimesfob> Next year it is already planned for April 18th and 19th.

A Book Map: A Writer's Best Friend

by Stephanie Dreyer

Until this past March, I had never heard of book mapping, let alone used it as a tool for my craft. But after attending Editor Heidi Fiedler's "Book Mapping Like An Editor" presentation at SCBWI's (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators) Writers Days, I was intrigued - and eager to give it a try.

A book map is a way to literally create a map of your story - an overview of a book, chapter-by-chapter, scene-by-scene, even line-by-line, to organize and analyze the elements of your story. You can book map any element of your story, such as structure, characters, or themes.

A map is a tool to visualize your story all in one place, the way a reader will see it. As an author, you've spent months, even years, with your story. A book map will allow you to look at it with fresh eyes again.

When I applied it to my story, I quickly discovered that my chronology theme was jumpy in a few places, and that I needed to enhance a couple of my page turns. I also got a closer look at my pacing and decided to move a couple of things around, as well as add a couple of pages. Most importantly, I reviewed a theme line I used recurrently throughout the book and decided to change it to strengthen its overall impact and affect in the book.

Book mapping helped me enhance a picture book that I thought was submission ready. After creating a map, I realized the manuscript needed work, and I had a specific list of items to address and revise before sending it out.

An effective map can help bring focus your book, and discover parts that may not be working. It can help you figure out how to move things along and get you unstuck from pesky trouble spots. A really good book map gives the writer a targeted to-do list of what needs to be revised in the story.

Here are just a few things you can do with a book map:

1. Look at the coherence of your plot.
2. Evaluate the pacing and page turns of the book.
3. Assess if the emotional and action plots align
4. Determine where to edit: the best scenes or passages to delete from the book and where add to or change the story.
5. Track themes.
6. Track the story lines for each of your characters.
7. Examine character dynamics in detail.

What Book Maps Look Like

Book maps can take many shapes and sizes. Each one is unique to the writer and the project. There are complex software programs you can use, or you can write on the back of a napkin. Consider any of these forms for your map:

- A dry erase board
- A white wall plastered with color-coded post-it notes (so you can move scenes/characters/etc. around)
- A computer spreadsheet on Excel or other software program (also efficient for moving columns/rows to a different place in your story)

How To Create A Book Map

Once your first draft is complete, create a map using columns for anything you want to analyze in the book. The goal is to track the elements in your map to see if they are all moving the story forward. Some ideas for elements to include:

- Main and secondary characters
- Primary and secondary story lines
- Themes
- Conflict
- The passing of time (hours, days, months)
- Spreads (for picture books)
- Mood
- Other details specific to your book, such as inside jokes, slang, etc.

I was giddy after applying the book map to my project. Using an Excel spreadsheet, I created a column for each of my pages and page spreads, as well as a chronology theme I was tracking in my book. I included each line of my manuscript into my map in order to track my page turns.

I loved the list of action items my map revealed, and as I crossed each item off my list, I saw book grow stronger. I felt more productive, able to look at a checklist of things I had “fixed.”

But don’t take my word for it. Create your own book map and discover for yourself all it has to offer!

Book Map Resources (current May 2014):

<http://www.mindjet.com/uk/mindmanager/platforms/>

<http://ideamappingsuccess.com>

<http://www.thebookdesigner.com/2011/10/roger-c-parker-mind-mapping/>

<http://www.laterhorse.com/mindo/>

CBW-LA Member Spotlight on: Cassie Gustafson

Interview by Alana Garrigues

Please welcome Cassie Gustafson, a CBW-LA Member and (double!) Masters Degree Candidate who utterly oozes literary prowess. She will join us at the Story Sprouts 2014 Anthology Workshop, and we cannot wait to see what she writes.

Without further ado, meet Cassie!

First off, what are you working on right now?

My current WIP is a middle-grade paranormal mystery novel. It's about a young boy named James who just recently lost his father. In his father's will, both James and his mother discover the father owned property in the small town where he grew up, though he never mentioned anything about it. Trying to reconnect with her deceased husband, James's mother moves them to the town, though James is anything but thrilled, especially considering any mention of James's father is met with glares and whispering. While out exploring, James stumbles on an abandoned graveyard where all the tombstones bear the same date of death. Realizing he needs to know what happened, especially because it somehow involves his father, he gets himself into one heck of a mystery! I'm currently about halfway through my draft, though I have a detailed outline for the entire novel.



Wow! Fascinating storyline.

What is your preferred genre? Choosing one can be a real challenge for some authors, and as natural as breathing for others. How did you choose yours?

What I read tends to flip-flop between realistic YA fiction and magical realism or fantastic narratives—both short stories and novels. Basically, I love to read about our world but with intrusions of the fantastic or the supernatural. My writing reflects this eclectic mix. I try to vary what I write between my novel, short stories, and some occasional poetry that I've been writing for my class. Basically, I allow myself to write what I need to in that given moment.

What steps are you currently taking towards publication?

First and foremost, finishing my manuscript calls to me like a siren's song!! I'm also sending out my short stories and poetry, and one of my poems was recently accepted for publication in an anthology. I recently joined SCBWI with the intention of becoming much more active in the writing community, and I continue to write critical essays on trauma in Children's and Young Adult literature that I submit to literary journals.

When, how and where do you tend to write?

Luckily, my writing desk has plenty of surface area because I fill every inch of it with (mostly) organized stacks of current WIPs. I write best with a cup of coffee and Tootsie Pop at hand. If I put off my writing till later in the day, it doesn't get done, so I have to start first thing after breakfast. Not to mention, it makes my day feel far more accomplished when I've already written a few pages by noon.

Do you have a favorite writing exercise? Or way to overcome writer's block?

I play this game with myself where I pretend like my butt is glued to my chair for a set amount of pages. Especially if you have to pee, it's amazing how quickly one can get words on the page! Also, I recently purchased a giant whiteboard that I take out when inspiration eludes me. Especially because you can feel free to scribble and erase as needed, some of my best brainstorming has come out of it. I highly recommend getting one.

Many writers struggle moving past the first draft. Do you have any advice on revision?

As this is something I struggle with, the only advice I can give is the old writer's adage: finish first, revise later! Not only does this build confidence that you are a writer and that you can write a novel, it saves a lot of hassle. I have agonized over sentences and scenes before allowing myself to move on to the next one and, as inevitably happens, those "perfect" little writing nuggets never even made it into the final drafts. First, plant the ideas on the page then come back to water them, and watch how they grow!

Thinking back on CBW-LA events that you've attended, what is one of the best pieces of advice you picked up from being part of the group?

This group has given me the confidence to continue my writing endeavors, and I love attending the workshops. I cannot put into words how much knowledge I've acquired, whether from the incredible Nutschell, the talented and generous authors that come to speak, or my fellow writing enthusiasts. I guess if I had to sum it up in one word, I'd say that CBW-LA has taught me the challenging, though ultimately rewarding, lesson of perseverance.

More About Cassie:

Cassie Gustafson lives to create, whether via writing, painting, or doodling. Her interests center around paranormal fiction and trauma narratives, both of which she explores in her dual graduate program of an MA in English Literature and an MFA in Writing for Children. Her favorite color has always been red (though blue's a good one too), and penguins, pandas, Heffalumps and Woozles make her smile. Her eccentric obsessions include red telephone booths, libraries and built-in bookshelves with sliding ladders, the sound and smell of rain, and avocado toast. She soaks up the sun in Long Beach with her pilot husband, Carl, and princess kitty, Maui, and hopes to acquire a hermit crab in the near future (she will name him Spike). Her motto is live-laugh-love-repeat.

Thank you Cassie for sharing your story! We wish you the best of luck in all your writing endeavors, and look forward to celebrating your future successes!

Advice



Who is Charlie Bast?

CBW-LA's Own MYSTERY Advice Columnist,

Debuting this Quarter

If you have a writing question for Charlie, e-mail thecharliebast@gmail.com, and you might see your question tackled here in a future newsletter!

Dear Charlie,

I sat down to write a novel, just a little everyday, until I finished. Now I have a mess of scenes that are a story in my head, but not on the page. How do I wrangle these 150 pages into a manuscript an audience can follow?

Sincerely,
Hot Mess

Dear Hot Mess,

First of all, congratulations! You completed a novel draft. That's a HUGE accomplishment! I know you might feel overwhelmed, but please remember to take some time and appreciate that you made it to the end! The most important step is to keep writing--and you did just that.

Next step?

EDIT.

But, you knew that. That's good too! How, you ask?

There are a few techniques you could try to tackle your scenes. Now, I realize you want to make the pages look as nice as the ideas in your head. Believe me, we all struggle with this.

Here's the deal: outlining doesn't have to be just for starting a manuscript. Breaking down your work after you write it can be helpful too.

I'd suggest writing out your storyline in brief snippets, in whatever form suits you, so that you have a reference when you're in the trenches with your scenes.

You might want to take a page from the screenwriters' handbook: get index cards or notecards, and on each one write a brief (one sentence, if possible) summary of one of your scenes. It doesn't have to be in the order of your current storyline. Don't pressure yourself at this point. Just go through your pages and jot down a description of each scene.

After that, find a large, flat space. Flip through each card. With your storyline in mind, separate the cards according to: beginning, middle, end.

Next, tackle the cards for each section, laying out the chronology of the scenes using your book as a guide. It doesn't have to be perfect, but you want to see the story laid out in the cards before you.

Once you think you've got the scenes in some semblance of order, you have a foundation upon which to determine what should be moved or adjusted in the manuscript and what you need to cut.

Hopefully, that'll take a little "whelm" out of the revision process. 😊

Why do screenwriters use this method? Think about the drama. A screenwriter can't afford to have pointless scenes mucking up narrative tension. Plus, tension builds when a story is told in the right order—whatever that order is. It's up to you to figure it out.

Happy writing, Hot Mess. Follow your story's heart! Hang in there!

Sincerely,
Charlie Bast

CBW-LA Upcoming Event Details

Writing Day Anthology

Saturday, May 31, 2014

8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Torrance Airport

Zamperini Field Meeting Room

3301 Airport Dr

Torrance, CA 90505

* Registration & Socialization begins at 8:00 a.m.

* Workshop will start at exactly 9:00 a.m.

Cost:

\$125 Members, \$135 Non-Members, \$95 Students

Included:

Full day writing workshop

Lunch, snacks and beverages throughout the day

1 print copy of the finished anthology

1 digital copy of the finished anthology

Professional editing, formatting & book design

Handouts, Workshop Materials & Swag

FREE door prizes

Inspiration and publication!

YOUR name and work in print!



Do you want to see your name - and story - in print THIS fall? Are you looking for that extra inspiration to take your writing to the next level? Do you feel ready to dedicate a full day to the craft?

Register for the Writing Day Anthology Workshop now and do all three! Join us for our second annual Story Sprouts CBW-LA Writing Day.

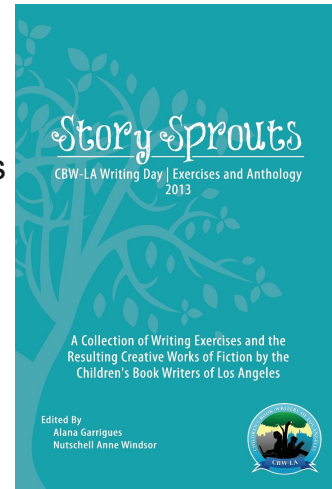
You and your fellow writers will embark on the road to publication during an intensive day of creative writing, and see your work published together in the Story Sprouts Anthology this fall.

CBW-LA Founder and President Nutschell Windsor and Publications Editor Alana Garrigues will lead attendees on a whirlwind adventure through the writing process, complete with prompts, tips, games, time for reflection and revision ... along with food and socializing along the way! Nutschell's positive, organized and inspirational approach to working with writers has resulted in 60 glowing reviews on meetup.com.

This year's theme is VOICE! So get ready to learn techniques and writing exercises designed to help you find your writing voice and style and hone your writing skills.

By the end of the workshop, you will have a minimum of three pieces ready for publication in this year's CBW-LA Story Sprouts Anthology.

All writers will receive one complimentary print copy and one complimentary digital copy of the finished product - and additional print and digital copies will be available through Amazon and at future CBW-LA events! It will make a great stocking stuffer for your biggest writing fans on your holiday shopping list. Anticipated publication date Sept. 30, 2014.**



Visit www.cbw-la.org NOW to complete your online registration.

Writing Day refund policy: We understand things come up, but we really hope to see you at the event.

After all, we're saving a space for you! However, please note - if you must cancel, we offer a 50% refund until 30 days prior to event. No refund after May 1, but we will send a complimentary copy of Story Sprouts. Thank you for understanding.

Do You Give...Good Voice? How to Find (and Nurture) Your Writing Personality

Guest Speaker: YA Author Samantha Combs

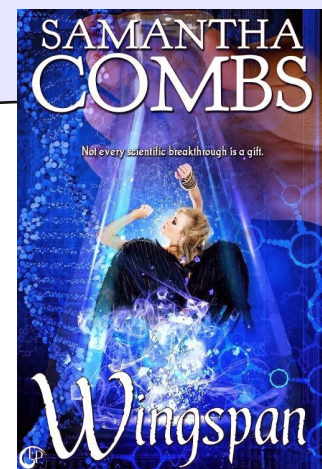
Saturday, June 28, 2014

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

El Segundo Library

111 W. Mariposa Ave

El Segundo, CA 90245



Fee: \$30

*\$10 Discount for CBW-LA Members when you pay online

*\$5 Discount for CBW-LA Members when you pay at the door

Included:

Workshop materials: handouts and worksheets

Signed copy of Wingspan, by Samantha Combs

Voice is one of the hardest things to master in the writing process. And the easiest.

Whether you write fiction or non-fiction, children's or young adult, it's important to have a unique voice in writing, or in style.

This is what sets you apart.

This is what gets you discovered.

In today's congested literary world stuffed to capacity with a writhing, teeming mass of writers, how do you make yourself memorable? How do you make sure to be noticed, to be read, and to have readers become fans?

By having your own voice. Your own recognizable stamp confirming that story is YOURS as surely as that first twang of a Led Zeppelin tune confirms the night will be great.

As writers, your goal is to take your reader away from their world and put them into yours.

This is what you do with voice.

Join Author Samantha Combs at the El Segundo Public Library June 28th and find yours!

Samantha Combs' Bio:

I am a Southern California author with six published books; the Global Ebook Award-winning debut title: SPELLBOUND, EVERSPELL, and GHOSTLY, all YA paranormals. My Middle Grade horror, THE DETENTION DEMON is out, along with two adult horror collections, TEETH AND TALONS and WAY PAST MIDNIGHT.

WATERDANCER, a new YA fantasy, comes out in Sept. I enjoy writing YA paranormal romance and supernatural fantasy, but I also dabble in the horror and sci-fi genres as well, and writing for the Middle Grade audience.

When I'm not writing, I enjoy spending time with my husband and two children, and my guilty pleasures include reality television, the Food Network channel and shoes. I truly believe I can accomplish anything if I have the right pair of shoes.

I love writing and I am in awe of the technological advances of our lives. Ereaders and similar gadgets are bringing the written word to a generation that might never have discovered books otherwise and every time I see a kid pick one up to read something it fills me with joy to be a small part of that process. If a child can connect with literature because he or she did so electronically, a connection still was made. I am excited to see what our world has in store for literature and excited to be along for that ride.

Come hang out online: samanthacombswrites.blogspot.com/

About Wingspan:

Chessa Dawning never thought she'd be on the run. Yet, she was, having left the only home she's ever known, staying two steps ahead of the men chasing her and falling for a resourceful ex-criminal with colorful friends.

Most of the time, Charlotte Lake can't believe her life. The reluctant leader of a rebel faction called the Ginger Nation, Charlie's days are filled with planning surveillance, rescuing detainees, and exposing government conspiracy. Surrounded by loyal friends and soldiers, she knows she can never reveal the true nature of her quest: finding her real father.

When a sudden twist brings the two girls together, revelations about the past will make them rethink where they came from and define the future in ways they never could have imagined.

Not every scientific breakthrough is a gift.

Establishing Your Independence: Marketing Secrets from a Best-Selling Independent Author

Guest Speaker: Sheri Fink

Saturday, July 12, 2014

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

El Segundo Library

111 W. Mariposa Ave.

El Segundo, CA 90245



Fee: \$45

*\$10 Discount for CBW-LA Members when you pay online

*\$5 Discount for CBW-LA Members when you pay at the door

Included:

Workshop materials,; handouts, worksheets

Signed copy of The Little Seahorse, by Sheri Fink

Sheri Fink, local author of the #1 international best-selling children's books, The Little Rose, The Little Gnome, The Little Firefly, The Little Seahorse, and Exploring the Garden with the Little Rose, will share her inspirational journey to becoming an independent author as well as her marketing and social media strategies for maximum success. Learn how to cultivate and grow your fan base, how to leverage word-of-mouth marketing to spread the word about your book, and how to use social media for fun and profit. Whether you're independently published, traditionally published, or hoping to one day be published, you'll receive valuable insights from this session.

Sheri Fink's Bio:

Sheri Fink is a #1 best-selling, award-winning children's author, creator of "The Whimsical World of Sheri Fink" children's brand, and an international speaker. Sheri writes books that inspire and delight children while planting seeds of self-esteem. Her first children's book, The Little Rose, was a #1 best-seller on Amazon for over 60 weeks, became the #1 top-rated e-book on Amazon, and received a gold medal in the 2012 Readers Favorite International Book Awards. Her subsequent books have all been #1 best-sellers. Her children's book series received the Gold Mom's Choice Award for excellence in family friendly entertainment. In 2013, Sheri was selected by CBS Los Angeles as one of the top 3 authors in her local area, a distinction she shares with Dean Koontz.

About The Little Seahorse:

The bashful Little Seahorse discovers a mysterious object during his adventures and has to learn to speak up for himself and ask for help in order to bring his mother this amazing gift. In the process, he increases his self-confidence and makes wonderful new friends.

Themes: Shyness, Giving, Friendship, Tolerance, Generosity

Written by Sheri Fink and Illustrated by Mary Erikson Washam

ISBN: 978-0983408987

Sprouting a Story at the CBW-LA Novel Writing Boot Camp

Originally Published Online at The Writing Nut, by Nutschell Anne Windsor

The Novel Writing Boot Camp was an information-packed three hour afternoon, complete with ten handouts and a wealth of tried and true techniques. There were many gems at the workshop, which will be published as a PDF and available for sale at a future date for all of our members and friends who missed the conversation.

As usual, Nutschell was rewarded with glowing reviews on Meetup, and from attendees after the workshop.

Here's how she broke it down on her blog after the event:

On March 29, I facilitated CBW-LA's Novel Writing Bootcamp.

In our three hour workshop, I covered the following topics:

- I. Introduction
- II. Preparing to Write your Novel
- III. Introduction to the Elements of Fiction
- IV. Elements of Fiction: Character
- V. Elements of Fiction: Setting
- VI. Elements of Fiction: Plot

For the lecture, I developed my own way of classifying the Elements of Fiction. I divided each element of Fiction into three levels according their function within a story.

Nutschell's 3 Levels of the Elements of Fiction (or How a Story Sprouts)

Abstract concepts are best explained through the use of concrete images, so in the case of story, I'll be using the analogy of a tree.

Just as a tree needs three major things for it to grow, so too does a story need three major levels to develop.

LEVEL 1: THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF FICTION (SEED)

Most life forms begin from a seed. A seed contains all the ingredients for creating life. But, it needs a place and opportunity for it to develop.

The seeds of fiction are contained in its three basic elements:

1. Character
2. Plot
3. Setting

Whether you're writing a novel or a newspaper article, there are 6 basic questions you need to answer:

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

The three basic elements answer those questions:

1. CHARACTER = WHO AND WHY

Who is the main character of the story?

Why does the protagonist respond to the event in a certain way? (character motivation)

2. PLOT = WHAT AND HOW

What is the story about?

How does the story unfold?

3. SETTING = WHERE AND WHEN

Where does the story take place?

When does the story take place?

Once you have your Character, Plot and Setting figured out, you've answered the six most basic questions.

The next thing you have to do is to clarify or expound on these basic elements, and you do that using the following elements of fiction:

LEVEL 2: ELEMENTS OF FICTION THAT EXPOUND THE STORY (SOIL)

Your seed may contain the DNA to propagate life, but without soil, it will remain a seed forever. Soil gives your seed a safe place to thrive in, it provides the proper nutrients and energy for it to grow.

In the same regard, your story ideas cannot grow without certain elements of fiction to expound or clarify them.

These elements of fiction move your story forward by clarifying the basic



elements you already have.

1. Dialogue – stems from character
2. Point of View (POV)– stems from character
3. Conflict – stems from Plot
4. Mood– stems from setting
5. Tone – stems from character

LEVEL 3: ELEMENTS OF FICTION THAT ADD A LAYER OF MEANING TO THE STORY (WATER)

Soil may supply your seed with nutrients, but without water to transport those nutrients, the seed will simply shrivel up and die.

In the same way, without a layer of meaning, your story will be dry and dull. Meaning adds life to your story, and so do the following elements of fiction:

1. Theme
2. Style
3. Literary Devices (Metaphor, Simile, Hyperbole, etc)



Each element of fiction contributes to the growth of your story. Knowing how each element works, and what role they play within your story, can help you cultivate your novel to its fullest potential.

For additional information, keep your eyes peeled for the full PDF version of the event, coming this year! The workshop went into much more depth about

different ways to plot a story, how to organize it, character development, the elements that go into setting, and much, much more.

Follow Nutschell on Twitter: @nutschell

BUY STORY SPROUTS 2013 TODAY!

See what it's all about...

Book Info:

ISBN 978-0-9898787-9-1

\$14.95 Paperback, \$4.99 Kindle

ePub coming soon

CBW-LA Publications

Edited by: Alana Garrigues and Nutschell Anne Winsdor

Anthology Authors: Stacy Yamaoka Anderson, Tiffani Barth, Cacy Duncan, Abi Estrin, Diane H. Fisk, Angie Flores, Alana Garrigues, Glenn Jason Hanna, Kristina F. Jordan, M.A., Lucy Ravitch, Donna Marie Robb, Diane Sepulveda Robinson, Nora Rodriguez, Lissa Ross, Lynne Southerland, Christal Terry, Kathryn Thornton, Cameron S. Ulyate, Nutschell Anne Windsor



Story Sprouts

CBW-LA Writing Day | Exercises and Anthology
2013

A Collection of Writing Exercises and the
Resulting Creative Works of Fiction by the
Children's Book Writers of Los Angeles

Edited By
Alana Garrigues
Nutschell Anne Windsor



Book Blurb:

A Day in the Life of the Writer

What happens when linguistic lovers and tale tellers workshop together? Inspiration. Wonder. Discovery. Growth. Magic.

Brave and talented, the writers featured in this anthology took on the challenge of dedicating one day to the raw and creative process of writing.

A rare view into the building blocks of composition, Story Sprouts is made up of nearly 40 works of poetry and prose from 19 published and aspiring children's book authors.

This compilation includes all of the anthology writing exercises and prompts, along with tips, techniques and free online writing resources to help writers improve their craft.

Reviews: Five Stars on Amazon

"With tips, techniques, and exercises to inspire, I'm glad I read this collection... If you're curious about the writing process and the beginning of an idea or project, this book is for you."

-Medeia Sharif, Author: Vitamins and Death; Snip, Snip, Revenge; Bestest. Ramadan. Ever.

"Produced by the Children's Book Writers of Los Angeles, STORY SPROUTS is a "how to" book about writing that includes exercises and resources to generate ideas and flesh them out and organize them into either a poem or story with a character, conflict and beginning, middle and end...

So, if you're not the type of writer who gets an idea and puts fingertips to keycaps and begins typing away then I highly recommend STORY SPROUTS to you. You'll find the information about writing and the exercises and resources very helpful. Even if you have no problem generating ideas and getting them out I urge you to buy the book. CBW-LA is a group worth supporting." -Dave Gioia

"There's plenty to read in this nifty little volume--flash fiction, poetry, essays, and more. Non-writers can find a lot to keep them happy in these pages. But this is essentially a book for writers of all levels. Not only is the reader presented with interesting examples of writing, but there are story prompts, writing suggestions and how-to's. Whether you're looking for writing inspiration or help, this book has plenty to offer in order to get your creative juices flowing." -Arlee Bird, Founder: The A to Z Blogging Challenge

Book Reviews

Writing Craft Book

Hooked: Write Fiction that Grabs Readers at Page One and Never Lets Them Go

by Les Edgerton

© 2007 by Writer's Digest Books

Reviewed by Nutschell Anne Windsor

Review Originally Published September 1, 2010 on Nutschell's blog, The Writing Nut

I never realized just how important beginnings are, until I attended the Big Sur Writing Workshop last March (editor's note: March 2010, note original date of publication). All the agents and editors I met emphasized one very important thing: the key to a rejection or acceptance often hinges on the first line of a manuscript.

Literary agents have the difficult task of finding a diamond in the rough. They wade through a sea of submissions (also known as the slushpile) and try to find manuscripts that they can sell. In order to accomplish this enormous task (and also in order to keep their sanity), they have devised systems for finding these "diamonds" in the least amount of time.

I asked one of the editors present how she gets interested in a manuscript. She answered: "I read the first line. If that interests me, then I read the first paragraph. If the first paragraph is good, I read on until I get to the end of the first page. If the first page has kept my interest, I read the first chapter. If the first chapter works, then maybe I ask for the full manuscript."

My stomach knitted itself into a sweater when I heard those words. My dreams of getting a book published, which awhile ago seemed so near, was now a galaxy away. I realized with horror just how much work I had to do, and I almost fainted.

Luckily, alcoholic beverages were within reach, and I took a sip (okay, maybe several sips) to calm my nerves.

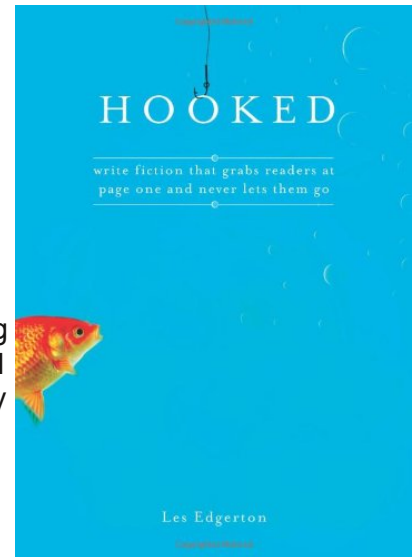
I had already churned thousands of words into a story. Unwilling to let them go to waste, I immediately got to work finding a writing book that would help me create a strong beginning.

I found the help I was looking for—and more when I discovered Les Edgerton's *Hooked: Write Fiction That Grabs Readers at Page One & Never Lets Them Go*.

About the Book (from Amazon.com book description)

*The first pages are the #1 key to acceptance or rejection of manuscripts—most agents and editors claim to make their decision on a manuscript after the very first page, which means that no writer can afford to have a weak story beginning

*The first and only fiction-writing book that focuses exclusively on beginnings—no other book on the market addresses story beginnings in a comprehensive manner



Agents and editors agree: Improper story beginnings are the single biggest barrier to publication. Why? If a novel or short story has a bad beginning, then no one will keep reading. It's just that simple. Hooked provides readers with a detailed understanding of what a beginning must include (setup, backstory, the inciting incident, etc.); instruction on how to successfully develop the story problem; tips on how to correct common beginning mistakes; exclusive insider advice from agents, acquiring book editors, and literary journal editors; and much more.

My Review

I read the entire book in one sitting, and re-read it again just to make notes. I have also recommended this book to several of my writing friends, as well as writing group members.

Les Edgerton has written numerous short stories, articles, essays, and screenplays. He has also written several books including Monday's Meal, Managing Your Business, The Death of Tarpons, Finding Your Voice, and of course, Hooked.

In Hooked, Les Edgerton defines beginnings in terms of a novel, and explains why beginnings are very important. he also defines and expounds on story structure, scenes, as well as story elements which need to be included in the beginning of a novel such as the inciting incident, initial surface-problem and the story-worthy problem. He gives us helpful instructions and tips on how to develop these story elements, and warns us of red flag opening lines we need to avoid writing.

Mr. Edgerton also analyzes twenty great opening lines from various novels and short stories, and explains to the reader what makes these lines work. As an added bonus, he has collected insider advice from agents and editors on what they look for in a strong opening.

I've found that Mr. Edgerton's tips not only apply to the very beginning of the book, but also to the beginning of every chapter. I consult it every now and then, when I find my chapter's opening lines less of a hook and more of a drag.

This book is a valuable source of information in creating strong beginnings in works of fiction. It is a book every writer must have on his shelf.

Picture Books

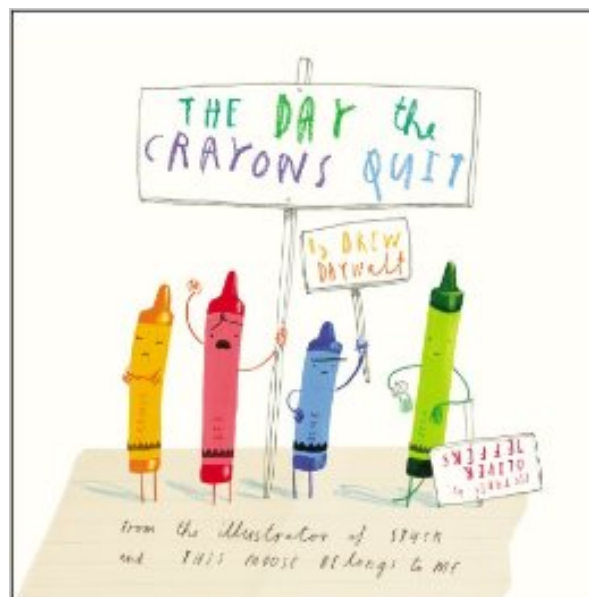
The Day the Crayons Quit

Written by Drew Daywalt; Illustrated by Oliver Jeffers

© 2013 by Philomel Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group

Reviewed by Stephanie Dreyer

Children will never look at their crayons the same after reading this original, imaginative story that brings to life one of their favorite pastimes. Duncan is surprised in class one day when he goes to open his box of crayons and finds a stack of letters addressed to him – from each of his crayons. The reader follows along with Duncan as he reads complaint after complaint, culminating in one big idea to make his crayons happy again.



The text's witty tone and fun-loving personality come to life through New York Times bestselling illustrator Oliver Jeffers' pictures that literally tell the story of the text by personifying the characters through the images of the letters themselves. The text is imaginative, fresh, and inspired. The drawings are whimsical and fun. Debut author, Drew Daywalt has a surefire hit with this inventive read-aloud. Kids will be begging to read this story again and again.

I Want My Hat Back

Written and Illustrated by Jon Klassen

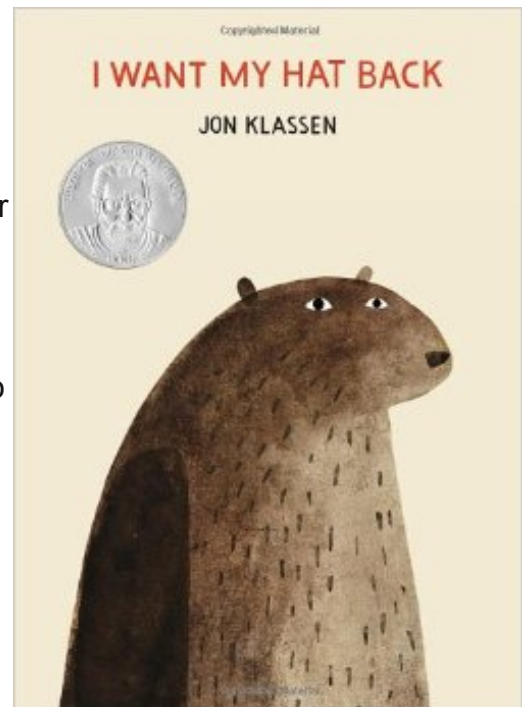
© 2012 by Candlewick Press

Reviewed by Clara Asuncion

Summary:

The protagonist of this brief, yet intelligent, story is a bear who's lost his hat. He queries his fellow woodland creatures one by one if they know where to find it, and takes some time to offer his help along the way to solve their problems. Once the bear has asked everyone, to no avail, he loses his resolve and sinks into sadness.

Thanks to the help of another woodland passerby, the bear learns that he should have been using eyes rather than his words, as a trickster had been leading him astray. Finally the bear learns to be as mischievous as the animal who'd been preventing him from finding his hat.



Review:

Readers are forced to question whether they would be as complacent and trusting as the bear throughout the book; for the answer to the bear's question lies in being observant—a great skill and practice to instill in any reader. Even better is the culprit's dialogue, which would raise a red flag for an attentive audience. The lesson is simple: pay attention! (And, possibly, don't trick others.)

Klassen, as Author/Illustrator, uses concise dialogue effectively in this book. The sparse question-and-answer on each page expertly exercises the art of inferred narrative. Klassen also uses the format to show bare (pun possibly intended) character development—the bear offering help, the turning point of the story—the bear's "dark moment" of giving up, and, most importantly, the bear's victory by way of the same words used to trick him.

The illustrations are simple, yet bear a visual heft. The way Klassen shades shapes brings a sense of body to his animals and other small, though very telling, objects.

This book would be great for reading aloud, fun to see the reactions of the audience as they fill in the blanks.

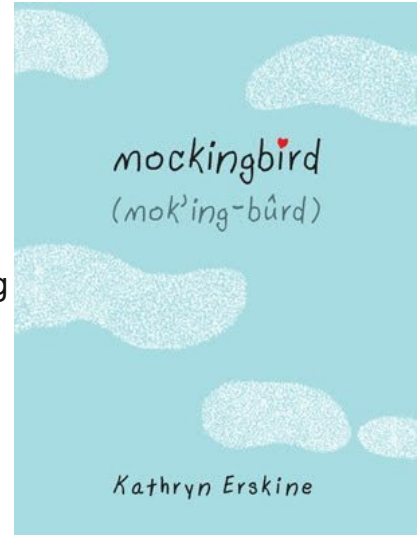
Middle Grade

Mockingbird

By Kathryn Erskine

© 2010 by Philomel Books

Reviewed by Anjali Amit



A tale of heartbreak and triumph. A lovely, quiet book, celebrating life.

The title reminds us of *To Kill A Mockingbird*—Atticus telling his son, “...remember it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.”

Who is the mockingbird?

There is not one answer, because this is a complex story that can be read on many levels.

There are the three victims of the shooting at Virginia Dare Middle School—a teacher and two students, one of them the protagonist’s brother, Devon. Each leading their own quiet lives. But are they the only mockingbirds in this tale? There is Caitlin, the protagonist, who has Asperger’s Syndrome. She walks to the beat of a different drummer, and as we walk along with her, we see how our scorn of the different can mute their song.

Then there is Josh, the fifth grader whose cousin was the drive-by shooter. Josh is innocent of the crime, but his classmates tar him with the same brush. Mockingbirds all, some felled, others ridiculed and disdained.

Caitlin’s voice carries the story. Strong, honest Caitlin, who is learning the social skills necessary to be accepted in the world. To her, language should be simple; words have a fixed meaning. When her father asks her what she wants for her birthday, she replies she would like Devon to take her to the mall. Mrs. Brooks, her councilor, explains that is not possible.

“Yes,” replies Caitlin. “But he asked what I want. That’s what I want. I know I can’t have it.”

Later, with a friend—

She explains to her new friend Michael, “Everyone has to learn Your Manners.”

“That’s silly,” he giggles some more. “They’re EVERYONE’S Manners! MY manners are when I say please and thank you. YOUR Manners are when YOU say please and thank you.”

“I think it will be easier to learn YOUR Manners I mean MY Manners—now that I know they belong to me and I’m not trying to learn someone else’s.”

Words defeat Caitlin, as she grapples with understanding “closure,” and bringing it to the loss of her brother.

And yet, we celebrate with her.

“Mockingbirds sing their hearts out for us.”

Caitlin’s understanding that she must finish her brother’s unfinished projects brings closure not only to her family but to the grief-stricken community as well.

Sing, mockingbird, sing. Your song enriches us all.

Young Adult

Audiobook Reviews

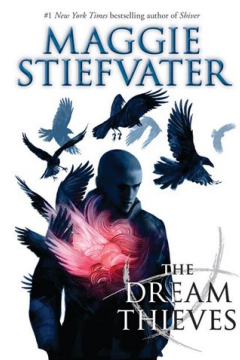
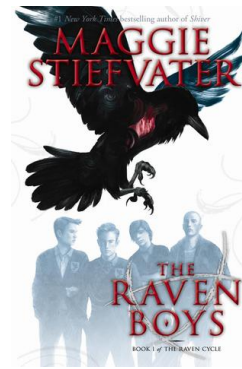
The Raven Boys (Book #1 of the Raven Cycle)

The Dream Thieves (Book #2 of the Raven Cycle)

by Maggie Stiefvater, Will Patton (narrator)

©2013 by Scholastic Audio

Reviewed by Clara Asuncion



Summary:

In the first two audiobooks of the Raven Cycle series, voice actor Will Patton flawlessly narrates a cast of characters mired in their own secrets, dreams, and fears. The stories are set against the backdrop of the magical, dark search for the ancient Welsh king thought to be buried somewhere near Henrietta, VA.

Book One, *The Raven Boys*, focuses on Blue Sargent, the only non-psychic in a family of psychics, a waitress at a pizza parlor, when the Raven Boys stumble into her life, students at Aglionby, an all-boys school. The boys become her friends: brash Ronan, subdued Noah, hard-working Adam—with whom she feels a connection—and Gansey, the privileged, proud boy on a years-long quest to track down ancient Welsh King Owen Glendower. With Blue's developing friendship, the boys discover that bits and pieces of their lives, and themselves, fit just right in of their search. It becomes apparent that they are not the only ones looking for King Glendower, and the task is not without its villains or its victims.

Book Two, *The Dream Thieves*, shifts the focus to Ronan, who has discovered a peculiar connection with his dreams. New character Kavinsky will tease out aspects of Ronan that take the character by surprise, and lead to acceptance. Adam, whose personal life was irrevocably changed in Book One, finds his inner self threatened, troubling his relationships with both Blue and Gansey. Lethal newcomers arrive in Henrietta as the search for King Glendower becomes more harrowing for both the area's native humans and its magic.

Review:

Patton's narrative voice envelops the listener like the pleasant heat of a summer day. He is a master at varying his accents, and his interpretations of the characters' voices help the reader track the story and breathe the characters and plot to life. Patton's delivery of Stiefvater's lyrical prose is spot-on in its subtlety and quiet awe.

Stiefvater's prose is a poetic. She has an exquisite ability to keep her finger on the pulse of a scene's arc, contemporaneously with its place in the overarching chapter and novel. While the younger characters are well-spoken and unique, Stiefvater never lets the reader forget that they are teenagers. Refreshingly, the adults in the story have their own lives and plot contributions. The Raven Cycle novels are almost a study in subtle writing. Gut-chilling discoveries and daubs of world-building enrich the story over the course of each novel, always culminating in a greater, satisfactory conclusion. (Along with, of course, the burning desire to get into the next book!)

My Top Ten: Websites for Writers

by Tiffani Barth

1: Writer's Digest

www.writersdigest.com

Best for: Everyone—24/7 Writing Help

This is my top writer's resource. With everything from contests and prompts to a guide to literary agents—plus helpful articles—this site is one of the best references for writers out there. You can even find links to editors' blogs and writing events, as well as educational resources. Sign up for their free newsletter and get the motivation you need to meet your writing goals.



2: Query Tracker

www.querytracker.net

Best for: Authors with Completed Manuscripts Seeking Representation

If you have a finished manuscript, this is the site for you. With their extensive database, you can search for agents and publishers by genre, and find info on individual submission requirements. The site also allows you to keep a detailed record of your submissions and the responses you've received. You can share your experiences with the writing community, and read reports about other writers' past queries. Best of all, it's free to join.

3: Literary Rambles

www.literaryrambles.com

Best for: Authors with Completed Manuscripts Seeking Representation

If you're searching for your perfect agent, this is a great resource. With an easy to navigate sidebar, you can search through dozens of agent spotlights containing the most current info on their agency. There are also frequent agent and author interviews if you're looking for material to add a personal touch to your query letter or the inside scoop on the literary business.

4: Pro Writing Aid

www.prowritingaid.com

Best for: Editing and Revision

Ready to polish your work but can't afford to fork over hundreds of dollars for an editor? This site is a great substitute—and it's free. Simply copy and paste your text into their online editing tool and get an in depth report on problem areas.



5: The Write Practice

www.thewritepractice.com

Best for: Inspiration and Practice

The Write Practice is a blog dedicated to daily writing prompts that encourage you to practice your writing. Like successful athletes, artists, and musicians, consistent practice is the key to writing like a pro and this site will help you.

6: Your Writer Platform

www.yourwriterplatform.com

Best for: Building Business Acumen

In today's world, writers must do more than just hone their craft—they are expected to help with market and promotion. This site answers the 'hows,' 'whats,' and 'whys' of building your author platform from scratch. It takes the intimidation and guesswork out of social media so you can create lasting relationships with your readers both on- and offline.

7: Nathan Bransford

blog.nathanbransford.com

Best for: The Inside Scoop—Getting in an Agent's Mind

Nathan Bransford dishes some of the best advice on how to query, write a synopsis, obtain an agent, and publish your work. Brimming with examples and step-by-step directions, this ex literary agent's blog is a navigable reference tool for anyone seeking to dive into the world of publishing.

8: Write to Done

www.writetodone.com

Best for: Practical Writing Advice

Write to Done features stellar articles on writing and blogging. Loaded with tips and inspiration, this is the place to learn and apply new skills on your journey to becoming a better writer.

9: Helping Writers Become Authors

www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com

Best for: Understanding how to use Literary Elements

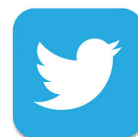
For top-notch advice on how to create compelling characters, structure your novel, edit, and lead the writing life, this is a great site. It will help you boost your writing to the next level.

10: Twitter

www.twitter.com

Best for: Networking, Social Media and Promotions

Twitter is probably the most widely used social network by writers. It's a great place to promote books, network, build relationships with readers, and generate fans. If you don't have a Twitter account, sign up now!



100 Twitter Hashtags Every Writer Should Know

Originally Published March 12, 2013 online by

Aerogramme Writers' Studio (www.aerogrammestudio.com)

Hashtags are one of the most important elements to successfully using Twitter to enhance your writing practice and profile. In fact, the importance of hashtags generally was recently demonstrated when the American Dialect Society recently named hashtag as the word of the year for 2012.

Hashtags allow you to find new readers, connect with other writers who share your interests and to find out about new opportunities such as writing competitions. They can also help to raise your writing profile to attract interest from publishers and editors.

You need to be smart when using hashtags – don't over use them (never use more than 3 hashtags per tweet), be natural and never spam people. But when used selectively and cleverly, hashtags can be of great benefit to your writing career.

Below are 100 #hashtags that every writer should know:

Books and Reading Hashtags

#Books
#BookWorm
#GreatReads
#IndieThursday
#MustRead
#Novel
#Paperbacks
#Storytelling
#WhatToRead

Book Industry News and Publishing Tips Hashtags

#AskAgent
#AskAuthor
#AskEditor
#BookMarket
#BookMarketing
#GetPublished
#IAN1 (Independent Author Network)
#IndiePub
#PromoTip
#Publishing
#SelfPublishing
#WriteTip
#WritingTip

Hashtags to Connect With Other Writers

#1K1H (write one thousand words in one hour)
#AmWriting
#AmEditing

#AmRevising
#CopyWriting
#EditGoal
#Editing
#IndieAuthor
#MyWANA (writer's community created by Kirsten Lamb)
#NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month is held every November)
#RomanceWriter
#ScriptChat
#WIP
#WordCount
#WriteChat
#WriteGoal
#WriteMotivation
#WritersLife
#WriterWednesday
#Writing
#WritingBlitz
#WritingPrompt
#WritersBlock
#WroteToday
#WW

ePublishing and eBooks

#Amazon
#eBook
#BookBuzzr
#eReaders
#ePubChat

#iPad
#Kindle
#KindleBargain
#Kobo
#KPD (Kindle Publishing Direct)
#Nook
#Pubit
#SmashWords
#Sony
#Webfic

Genre and Specialty Hashtags

Find readers and other writers who share your interests

#140Poem
#Crime
#Comedy
#DarkFantasy
#Dystopian
#Erotica
#HistFic
#Historical
#FaithLitChat
#KidLitChat
#Literature
#LitFic
#MemoirChat
#MGLit (middle grades literature)
#Mystery

#NonFiction
#Paranormal
#Poetry
#PoetryMonth (Each April in the USA)
#Romantic
#RomanticSuspence
#TrueStories
#ScienceFiction
#SciFiChat
#ShortStory
#SteamPunk
#Suspense
#UrbanFantasy
#WomensFiction
#YA
#YALit

Promotion, Networking and Marketing Hashtags

#99c (to offer or pick up an eBook bargain)
#AuthorRT
#BookGiveaway
#BookMarketing
#FollowFriday
#FreebieFriday
#FreeReads
#Novelines (to quote your own work)

Brain Booster

Exercise your mind with our quarterly brain booster writing prompt!

In this issue, we continue our quest to highlight the vast array of stories born out of the same words. Every writer has their own voice - uniquely personal.

Exercise: Pick a book off your shelf, preferably one you haven't read in quite some time. Flip the book open to any page in the narrative. Close your eyes, and point at a sentence.

Open your eyes, read the sentence, and write your own "next sentence."

We want to see the result! Please send your story to: alana@cbw-la.org with the subject: "Next Sentence Brain Booster" no later than Wednesday, April 16, to share in the next issue of Scribblers' Scoop. Give us the title of the book, the author, the original sentence, and your follow-up.

We would love to see all your different voices and stories shine through on the pages of our newsletter!

If you have an idea for a future Brain Booster, please email alana@cbw-la.org.

Quarterly Questions

An opportunity to get to know your fellow CBW-LA members a little bit better, and to share your best tips and techniques from the writing life.

Thanks to all of our Scribblers' who've shared their answers to Quarterly Questions in our last Scribblers Scoop! Since we don't have anything to share with you this newsletter, we're going to throw the last two questions back at you! Please email your thoughts to alana@cbw-la.org, and look out for an email requesting feedback. This is one way to get to know one another, support others, reflect, and share a bit of your writing life!

* **HOW DO YOU BRAINSTORM STORY IDEAS?** (P.S. Check out our Member Spotlight on Cassie Gustafson in this month's newsletter for two outstanding techniques she's shared!)

* **WHAT DO YOU WISH NON-WRITERS UNDERSTOOD BETTER ABOUT WRITERS?**

Submit your answers to alana@cbw-la.org by Wednesday, July 16, to be included in our August Scribblers' Scoop!

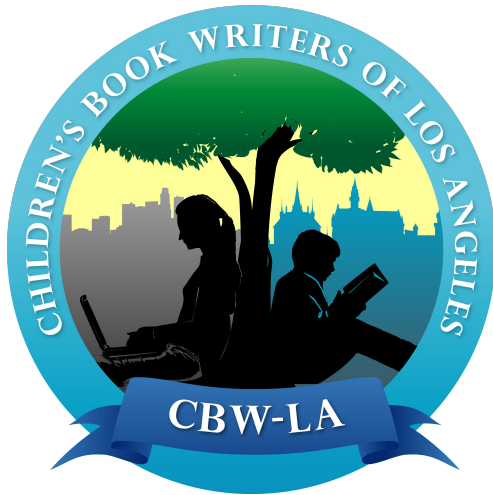
WE WANT TO TALK ABOUT YOU!

We are also looking for CBW-LA Members and Industry Professionals to interview for our Spotlight Series. If you're interested in being highlighted - or your agenda or editor would like to be interviewed - please contact alana@cbw-la.org with your contact information and a little bit about where you are along your writing journey.

Deadline: Tuesday, April 1, for May newsletter consideration. Contact information received after that date will be kept on file for future newsletters.

About CBW-LA

Children's Book Writers of Los Angeles, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, provides education and inspiration for published writers and writers on the road to publication. We offer a venue to share knowledge and information between writers, illustrators, members of the publishing industry, booksellers, educators, librarians and other members of the community who wish to be involved in promoting children's literature and literacy for children.



Group Reviews

"CBW-LA is an incredibly helpful organization that addresses the many issues that are critical to writers. Meetings, speakers and workshops offer amazing information!" – D.A. Anton

"Ms. Windsor impressed me highly. She is without a doubt one of the most professional persons I have have had the pleasure of meeting. An obvious expert in her area, she has domain of literary jargon, and an editor's eye for detail and improvement on her delivery of a critique. She makes the uncomfortable heat, inconvenient distance, and traffic battle very worth one's while." – L. Donovan

"An excellent resource for writers of all kind." – A. Flores

"Very professional and friendly people! Well put together!" – Lisa

CBW-LA Membership

Becoming a member is easy!

Fill out a membership form:

<http://www.cbw-la.org/Resources/Documents/CBWLAMembershipFormNew.pdf>

Sign Up Today! Mail the membership form and payment to: P.O. Box 4376
Torrance, CA 90510 or sign up online at cbw-la.org.

Already a member? Don't let your membership lapse! Check your membership records at cbw-la.org to see if your membership is up for renewal!

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nutschell@cbw-la.org

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MARKETING MANAGER

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ADDRESS

CBW-LA
P.O. Box 4376
Torrance, CA 90510

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Do you have a story that you think our CBW-LA Members would appreciate? Are you a cartoonist, illustrator or photographer with a flair for covering kid lit and writing topics? Pitch us! Unfortunately, we cannot pay our writers, but your name will be listed on our website and your story will reach hundreds of local writers just like you. We would also be happy to provide a testimonial or reference for a job well done!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our club runs on volunteers, and we need your help!

Please contact cbwla2012@gmail.com if you are interested in any of the following volunteer positions, and we'll put you in touch with the right board member!

- Event Set-Up / Clean-Up
- Fundraising
- Graphic Design
- Newsletter Ad Sales
- Photography
- Social Media Team
- Videography

SOCIAL MEDIA

Get online with CBW-LA!

Become our fan or follower, and engage in a social media driven dialogue.

Blog: <http://www.cbw-la.org/blog>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CBWLA

Twitter: www.twitter.com/CBWLA

Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/cbwla0613

Plus, members can use the forums in our members-only section on www.cbw-la.org to chat about anything that interests you!

Use #CBWLA to follow the conversation across social media at Tagboard: www.tagboard/CBWLA

Coming soon to Goodreads!