

Pen & Palette

The Quarterly Publication for SCBWI Carolinas Members



Winter 2010

Pen & Palette

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Jeffrey Duckworth © 2009 "Frog"

Cover Credit:



FOR THE BIRDS by Margaret James. Read an interview with the artist on page 10.

RA Letter

from Teresa Fannin

This past summer at the SCBWI LA Conference, I met up with the person who introduced me to SCBWI. Back in 1994, a master teacher of children's lit at Framingham State University in Massachusetts was putting on a four-week class at the local high school entitled "So you want to be a Children's Writer?" I didn't, but I was persuaded by my husband to attend. I'm glad I did, as I've gained so much, including a life-long friend.

The story of this chance meeting is one I've told to several people. We as writers, especially children's writers, know one of life's great pleasures is telling the stories that make up our lives. For what are we but stories? Stories dating back to the beginning of time, echoed over and over again. Stories pierced with truth, propelled by smart characters entertaining us, comforting us, jarring us into new attitudes and toward new ideas.

2010 will be our YEAR OF STORY. Submit your stories for the SCBWI-C First Annual Art and Writing Contest during February. The Spring Retreat, *Elements of Story*, is scheduled for April 16-18. The Fall Conference, *Inventing Story: Oh, The Places We'll Go*, is scheduled for September 24-26.

With this issue our editor for two plus years, Samantha Bell, who has her own SCBWI story, is stepping down. She has other challenges ahead with a lively active family. Samantha and Rebecca Petruck, our incoming Editor, have brought an amazing perspective to our newsletter making it a standout in the SCBWI organization. Thanks also to Bonnie Adamson for taking on the design job and to all contributors of articles, illustrations, and time.

Sláinte,

Teresa Fannin

the Masthead

Pen & Palette, a publication of SCBWI Carolinas

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The **Pen & Palette** welcomes submissions of articles of interest to our illustrators and writer members. We also welcome illustration submissions. No payment is made for items that appear in the **Pen & Palette**. For illustrations, we retain only

first-time rights. For articles, we take only one-time **Pen & Palette** and all SCBWI Carolinas website rights. Email submissions to the point of contact on the staff listing for consideration. Members may not reprint **Pen & Palette** articles in any form, including posting on members' websites. Requests to reprint articles in SCBWI publications may be sent to jcllbell@yahoo.com. Submission deadlines are January 15 for the spring issue, April 15 for the summer issue, July 15 for the fall issue, and October 15 for the winter issue.

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Calendar

by Maria Nolletti Ross

DECEMBER 15, 7:00 P.M.: BONNIE CHRISTENSEN PRESENTS DJANGO: WORLD'S GREATEST JAZZ GUITARIST at Quail Ridge Books and Music in Raleigh, NC. See quailridgebooks.com.

DECEMBER 15: SCBWI DEADLINES for Golden Kite Awards, Sid Fleischman Humor Award and Magazine Merit Award. See www.scbwi.org/awards.htm.

JANUARY 1-31: HIGHLIGHTS 2010 FICTION CONTEST based on a true story from your family. See www.highlights.com.

JANUARY 1-FEBRUARY 2: DON FREEMAN MEMORIAL Grant-In-Aid. See www.scbwi.org.

JANUARY 29-31: SCBWI WINTER CONFERENCE NYC. See www.scbwi.org.

JANUARY 25-FEBRUARY 7: AMAZON BREAKTHROUGH NOVEL AWARD. See www.amazon.com

FEBRUARY 1-28: SCBWI-CAROLINAS FIRST ANNUAL WRITING AND ART CONTEST. See www.scbwicarolinas.org.

FEBRUARY 13: SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE HIGHLIGHTS FOUNDATION 2010 CHILDREN'S WRITERS WORKSHOP, Chautaugua, NY, July 17-24.

FEBRUARY 7-13: WRITING FOR CHILDREN with Faye Gibbons at John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC. See www.folkschool.org.

FEBRUARY 15-MARCH 15: SCBWI WORK-IN-PROGRESS GRANT and BARBARA KARLIN GRANT open to picture book writers. See www.scbwi.org.



Brooke Lauer © 2009 "See You Tomorrow"

FEBRUARY 26-27: WRITE2IGNITE! CONFERENCE for Christian Writers of Children's Literature near Greenville, SC. See www.write2ignite.wordpress.com.

FEBRUARY 28: CHILDREN'S WRITER Science Article Contest for ages 11, to 750. See www.childrenswriter.com.

APRIL 1: SOUTHEASTERN WRITER'S ASSOCIATION JUVENILE WRITING AWARD submission deadline, offered only to attendees of the 34th Annual Writer's Workshop, June 20-25, Simons Island, GA. See www.southeasternwriters.com.

southeasternwriters.com.

APRIL 11-17: ALA NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK. See www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/pio/nationallibraryweek/nlw.cfm.

MAY 1-JUNE 10: MARTHA WESTON GRANT open to published children's authors switching children's genres. See www.scbwi.org.

JUNE 20-25: 35TH ANNUAL SOUTHEASTERN WRITER'S ASSOCIATION WRITER'S WORKSHOP, St. Simons, GA. See www.southeasternwriters.com.

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING WITH THE PEN & PALETTE? BECOME OUR NEW CALENDAR EDITOR!

MARIA WILL PASS ON HER SECRETS, AND YOU WILL HELP US ALL. EMAIL REBECCA_PETRUCK@YAHOO.COM.

Maria Nolletti Ross is a stay-at-home mom who lives in Wilmington, NC, with her husband and two children. She writes every day.

Please send your calendar items to mariaross@ec.rr.com.



Hurrahs

by **Blonnie Wyche**

Linda Andersen sold two activities, "True Gift of Christmas" and "Honor by Worshiping Poster," to ADVENTURE MAGAZINE for their December issue.

John Claude Bemis, author of THE NINE POUND HAMMER, signed a contract for another book for Random House due out in 2012.



Constance Lombardo © 2009 "Trampoline"

Clay Carmichael's book, WILD THINGS, won the 2009 North Carolina Literature Award (AAUW).

Joan Carris's sequel in the Bed and Biscuit series, WILD TIMES AT THE BED AND BISCUIT (Candlewick Press), was released early November. The third in the series comes out in 2010.

Donna Earnhardt's poem "Giving Thanks" was published in the November 2009 issue of HIGHLIGHTS MAGAZINE.

Patz Fowle illustrated the children's book, MY NAME IS BUTTONZ (written by B. Lee Schmidt). The book is available online at Barnes and Noble and on Amazon.

Jo Hackl signed with Adams Literary Agency.

Joan Holub's picture book, GROUNDHOG WEATHER SCHOOL (Putnam), releases in December.

Molly Jones had an article, "Re-writing the Script," in the October issue of LISTEN MAGAZINE. An article, "Victim? Not Me!," is scheduled for an issue of LISTEN magazine this school year. And Molly's non-fiction YA book, AIDS, will be published by Lucent Press in 2010 as part of their series on major epidemics in history.

Laura Renegar's interview of singer/songwriter Steve Seskin is in the 2010 SONGWRITERS MARKET.



Blonnie Bunn Wyche, author of THE ANCHOR and CECILIA'S HARVEST, loves to brag on writers and illustrators. Send announcements for future issues of the P&P to blonnie@ec.rr.com.

Tameka Brown

First Sale Insights

Tell us about your first book sale, *AROUND MY WAY* (Abrams BFYR, Fall 2010)

Q: What initial incident or idea sparked this story?

A: The original version of this story was a rhyming ABC book that came to me early one morning in that twilight state between sleep and consciousness. Before I ever opened my eyes, I had the entire rhyme scheme worked out, and had written the whole first stanza and the final line.

Q: Did you start writing the book as soon as you got the idea?

A: Yes. I sat up in bed, grabbed a notepad from my night table and started writing it down. Within a day or two, I had the whole thing drafted. Of course, it wasn't the ABC book that I ultimately sold, but I was able to obtain an agent with it.

Q: What was the most challenging part of your revision process?

A: Revising the ABC version was especially fun. When I was asked by an editor to revise without the ABC's, that was more difficult. It took me a while to be able to see any other possible format for the story, because the structure and rhythm had been ingrained in my brain for nearly a year.

After a couple of false starts, I finally came up with something I was pleased with. And despite my initial misgivings, it really did become a stronger piece.

Q: How did you know when it was ready to submit?

A: First, I had a couple of writer friends critique it. When I got the thumbs up from them, I sent it to my agent. She had a few additional suggestions for enhancing the manuscript. Once I implemented them, we got it out immediately.

Q: What key incidents led to this publishing house/this sale?

A: Well, by the time I finished the new version, the editor who had originally requested the revision had

to pass. (Something similar had just been acquired by another editor at her house.) But right away, we sent it out again and ended up selling to Tamar Brazis at Abrams.



Q: What book on the craft of writing do you like to recommend to others who write for children?

A: Almost everything I learned about writing PBs, I learned via SCBWI conferences and its discussion board. However, I believe Nancy Lamb's *THE WRITER'S GUIDE TO CRAFTING STORIES FOR CHILDREN* is a great foundational book.

As I begin my foray into novels, I am finding *WRITING THE BREAKOUT NOVEL* by Donald Maass to be most insightful.

Q: Any daily habits that keep you writing?

A: As chauffeur, hairstylist, tutor, chef, social and domestic engineer for a group of five, I find a consistent daily routine to be essential...yet impossible. So, I just make sure my stories are never far from my thoughts, and have tablets in most rooms where I can jot down ideas as they come to me. When an idea or plot fully gels in my brain, I reprioritize my to-do list and start writing ASAP.

Q: What helps you keep a kid's eye view of the world?

A: Three children ranging from ages 6-13 helps, but the real answer is that Child-Me has always remained very much alive. So, my "kid's eye view" is still 20-20. At least in my left eye.

Q: What are you reading now?

A: I just finished *PEACHES* by Jodi Lynn Anderson. It was an exceptional study in characterization.

Q: Any parting thoughts or a favorite quote to share?

A: "Anything worth doing is worth doing well. Be the labor great or small--do it well, or not at all."

Maggie Moe

Pursuing the Craft

Pursuing the Craft is dedicated to those active members of SCBWI Carolinas who make the chapter so strong—and have yet to sell a first book. To quote the great American rock band Journey, “Don’t Stop Believing.”

Q: How long have you been a member of SCBWI, and what do you feel is most valuable about your membership?

A: I became a member of SCBWI in 1995 after I spent two weeks completing the “perfect novel” for children. Oh how naive was I. But those two weeks created the drive to want to craft a wonderful story. This drove me to join SCBWI where I learned how much I needed to learn (and still do). I eventually volunteered to be Co-RA for Eastern Pennsylvania and loved every minute. That’s why I try to help out as much as I can in this wonderful Carolinas chapter

The networking, feeling a part of a larger collective, is a wonderful experience. Plus, I have learned so incredibly much which has taken my writing to levels I never thought I’d achieve.

Q: What project(s) are you working on now?

A: I write middle grade science fiction/fantasy novels. Even when I try to write short stories, I’m always told “that’s a great beginning to a novel.” I guess I’m pretty verbose. Anyway, I’m still working on my first story from 1995, *Dragon Tears*. But I’m also excited about *Haunting of Dutchman’s Creek*—about a ghost who doesn’t know he’s a ghost. I don’t want to disclose too much because my characters haven’t finished telling me how it’s all going to evolve. But it’s exciting.

Q: What helps you stay motivated in your work?

A: My characters. If I don’t write for a while, they begin yelling at me. OK, so I don’t really hear voices in my head, but they begin to worm their way into my thoughts. They really want their stories to be told.

Also, my critique group is awesome. We meet every other week so there’s always pressure (good pressure) to produce.

Do I get writer’s block? Absolutely. If I’m stuck on a plot point, I go to sleep thinking about it. Then, when

I’m in the dream-state just as I awake, I think about the problem, and let my mind wander. This can go on for days. Eventually, though, the answer pops into my head (usually around 3 a.m., so I keep a pad by my bed).

Another tool I use when I’m stuck is the “what if” scenario. I pull out a few pieces of paper and handwrite scenes. Once the more bizarre “what if” questions are answered, the more appropriate questions begin to evolve and help me create the perfect solution.

Q: Is there a book on the craft of writing that you have found to be particularly helpful?

A: *BYRD BY BYRD* and a lecture packet on *Empowering Characters’ Emotions* by Margie Lawson.

Q: What is your writing routine?

A: Twice a week I meet with my buddy, Bonnie, where we both focus on our novels. When she’s not available, it’s difficult for me to find a place where my concentration is fixed on writing, and not on bills, or work projects, or playing.

Q: What helps you keep a kid’s eye view of the world?

A: I’ve never grown up. Never want to. I love to laugh. I want to play, play, play.

Q: What are you reading?

A: *SOUL ENCHILADA* by David Gill, *THE FOREST OF HANDS AND TEETH* by Carrie Ryan, *NINE POUND HAMMER* by John Claude Bemis, and *THE UNICORN CHRONICLES* by Bruce Coville.

Q: Parting thoughts/favorite quote?

A: Never give up. Never surrender! (to quote *Galaxy Quest*). Write because you love it, not because you want to make money. Write because your story is unique and cannot be told by anyone else. Write to learn. And learn to write.

To suggest a SCBWI Carolinas member for Pursuing the Craft, please send an email to jclbell@yahoo.com. Include a few details about why this person should be featured.



Alan Gratz

Notes from the Front Lines

Alan Gratz is the author of historical young adult novel *SAMURAI SHORTSTOP* (Dial 2006), which was one of the ALA's 2007 Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults. His second book, the contemporary young adult mystery *SOMETHING ROTTEN* (Dial 2007), was named an ALA 2008 Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Readers. A sequel, *SOMETHING WICKED*, debuted in October 2008. His latest, middle grade historical adventure *THE BROOKLYN NINE*, came out in March 2009. In addition to his novels, Alan has published short fiction in *ALFRED HITCHCOCK MYSTERY MAGAZINE* and written for A&E's "City Confidential." Alan lives with his wife and daughter in Bakersville, NC.



Q: What is one thing you know now that you wish you had known before being published?

A: Lately I've been wishing that I had had a clearer picture of the direction I wanted to take my writing career from the start. After *SAMURAI SHORTSTOP*, a "tween" historical novel which proved to be a successful debut, I sold two upper-YA murder mysteries. I loved writing these, and I'm very happy with them, but they didn't really "fit." In retrospect, I think it made it harder for readers and gatekeepers to get a handle on who I was, and what I was writing. At middle school visits, for example, I rarely discussed the YA novels, because they were for older readers. My next book was *THE BROOKLYN NINE*, and that resonated with readers of *SAMURAI*. I get as many school visit requests now for that book as I do for *SAMURAI*—which is telling. Choosing one particular audience and focusing on them would have been a better career choice out of the gate. I would advise anyone who sells that first book to think carefully about their next project. The question should always be, "How can I build on my prior success?"

Q: What surprised you about the publishing process?

A: I knew going in that most authors do not get book tours or heavy promotion. What did surprise me though was the lack of effort when it came to what I would call "cheap advertising." The Penguin publicity department

sent me an extensive questionnaire, asking me for every connection I might have (professional organizations, alumni groups, clubs, etc.) as well as ideas I might have for promotion outside the usual channels. My book was about Japanese baseball, so I listed the newspapers in towns with Major League teams with Japanese players, in-flight magazines on airlines with service to Japan, baseball-only newsletters, Japanese American societies—anything and everything I could think of. I did all the leg work of finding outlets, and expected at least a press release or media kit sent to them. When the pub date approached, I learned Penguin hadn't sent anything to ANY of them. I scrambled and got things out to everyone on the list, but the lesson was learned: any pre-book promotion I was going to have to do myself.

Q: What frustrates you about the publishing process?

A: I think one of the best things a mid-list author can do to promote himself is to attend conferences like AASL, ALA, BEA, IRA, NCTE and regional conferences like AIMA, NCRA and SIBA, but getting publisher sponsorship to these things is like negotiating with a used car dealer. I have to fight tooth and claw to get invites, even though this is the best way for me to meet gatekeepers like librarians, teachers, and booksellers. I know publishers can't have all their authors show up, but when the conferences are near me, and I can attend with either a day trip or a single overnight, it frustrates me when I'm not considered. I want what they want—to sell my books! But sometimes it feels like I'm the only one trying.

Q: Comparing your first book with your most recent project, what has changed?

A: Looking back, I think my work has evolved. I dealt with themes and motifs in *SAMURAI*, but I never said, "This is what my book is about." I do that now. With my current project, *FANTASY BASEBALL*, a lot of my revision process has been asking myself, "What is this book about?" and making sure that everything that happens in the story plays some part in that overall theme.



Alan Gratz

Notes from the Front Lines (cont.)

Q: Is there anything you would do differently?

A: I had a pretty bad experience with my first agent, whom I brought on to help me with the contract on SAMURAI SHORTSTOP after I had sold it myself through the slushpile. That association led to no other sales and a lot of wasted time, career-wise, but worse, that agency will now continue to earn a percentage off every royalty check for SAMURAI from now until it goes out of print. I resent having to keep paying for my mistake. For those aspiring authors out there who hope to get an agent out of the gate, my advice is to not be so eager. Most beginning authors don't need agents. Wait until



you have a track record, something an agent can use to sell you to a publisher, and then shop for someone who matches you and the direction you want to take your career.

Q: Break down the timing of your most recent project.

A: I sold THE BROOKLYN NINE in the summer of 2006 off a pitch—the first book I had sold without writing it first. The anticipated pub date was Spring 2009—in time for baseball season. My first draft was due February 2007. I got notes back from my editor in March, and turned in a second draft in November 2007. I got notes back in January 2008. B9 is nine “innings,” or generations, of a family and its connections to baseball, making each of the innings was a separate short story. By this draft, most of them were working and just needed tweaking. Two were disasters. I spent the next few months rewriting (and rewriting!) those two until they were right. By June 2008 (a full two years after selling it!) I was working on flap copy and got my first look at the awesome cover Tony Sahara designed. In July 2008, B9 went to copyediting, and we did the last pass on the manuscript. I had galleys by September, and then I began promoting the book online and through mailings. Reviews began to come in after the first of the year, and B9 debuted in February 2009. I continued to do a bit of promotion for it after that, mostly through blogging, e-newsletters, and school events. B9 went into its second printing over the summer, and was just acquired

www.scbwicarolinas.org

by Scholastic Book Fairs—my first sale to the school fair market. The paperback of B9 is due February 2010.

Q: What craft challenges do you continue to face?

A: Character is something I've been focusing on a lot lately. For THE BROOKLYN NINE, I created nine distinct characters who could each carry his or her own story and be memorable. That taught me a lot about characterization, and I've been trying to take what I've learned from that and apply it to future projects. Looking back, I feel as though Toyo (from SAMURAI SHORTSTOP) is pretty bland. He does interesting things and makes interesting decisions, but he himself isn't a great character. He's more a functionary of the plot. I'm working now to build characters who both drive the plot and are interesting in their own right. I'm still learning about story structure, character development, and theme all the time. I hope I never stop learning.

Q: Do you hear from your readers? What do they say?

A: So far the response has been very positive—particularly from boys. I get a lot of great feedback from teachers and librarians too, who thank me for writing books that will appeal to their reluctant boy readers.

Q: What is one of the strangest things that has happened since being published?

A: I've been invited to spend six weeks at a school in Tokyo as a visiting scholar! My teachers said, “Books can take you anywhere.” Now I'm proving them right!

Q: Any advice for aspiring writers/illustrators?

A: Persevere. If you read and study what you're trying to write, practice your craft until it's sellable, and keep submitting, it will sell. When I think of the early manuscripts—the ones which didn't sell—I'm reminded of the King of the Swamp Castle from MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL: “Everyone said I was daft to build a castle on a swamp, but I built it all the same, just to show them. It sank into the swamp. So I built a second one. That sank into the swamp. So I built a third. That burned down, fell over, then sank into the swamp. But the fourth one stayed up. And that's what you're going to get, lad, the strongest castle in all of England.” That's sort of the way I feel about my writing career.

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Margaret James

Cover Story

“For the Birds” by Margaret James combines the clarity and symbolic weight of images seen in a dream. The precise, realistic draftsmanship helps to reinforce the fantastical element of the scene.

Q: This piece suggests magic at work—and maybe a little danger, too! What is the story?

A: “Sara is a wanderer who will not wait./So she flies with birds seeking her fate./Mischievous makes her feisty—/lightning makes her wail,/As she soars beyond the wind and hail.” There is a bit of Sara in all of us!

Q: Is this commissioned artwork? Just for fun?

A: Art is the universal language because it starts the stories. I love to tell stories—and this image, while created just for fun, was about my daughter Sara, who was, is, and will forever be a restless adventurer.

Q: What is the medium here?

A: Gouache, watercolor, and colored pencil have been used to create this image. My favorite media include: pen & ink, gouache/watercolor, and dry pastel. I normally use all three in my work.

Q: Tell us a little about how you approach a new piece.

A: I am inspired by words—they are the springboard for my thinking. I love the multiple meanings, humor, and unexpected images that unfold with the written word. Whenever I start a new project I create a word bank using an old dictionary and thesaurus. Words have distinct flavor and character that combine to form fresh ideas. For me, illustration is mostly about drawing on ideas—the drawing on paper can only be as interesting as the content of the ideas that gave it birth!

Q: Do you work purely from your imagination?

A: For the figures, I love to work from live models, but that is so expensive and time consuming that I often rely on photos. This suits my realistic style more than drawing directly from my mental images.

Q: What is your background in art?

A: I have always drawn, painted, and created. After high school I earned a degree in advertising design and later a BFA in illustration and art history. I have worked professionally as a fashion illustrator, a graphic designer, an art educator, a freelance artist, and children’s’ book illustrator.

Q: Why do you illustrate for children?

A: There was a library in the small town where I grew up; it smelled of wood polish and musk. I spent a million lifetimes hidden in the stacks rummaging through books. Books became a beautiful way for me to travel in my mind—to move through time, to pretend, explore, and learn. Today, I love children’s books; they are elegant and clean in their craft and design. The messages are beautiful and relevant. Illustration is the written word with eloquent wings, and it’s the closest thing to heaven!

Q: Do you have other creative outlets?

A: I love to grow things, sew quilts, create handmade books, journals, and cards. Life is such a creative journey!

Q: What are you currently working on?

A: Henri’s story—he has been bugging me since forever, and a dragonfly can be pesky! I have always illustrated other people’s stories; now it’s time for me to give priority to a story that’s been growing inside of me.

Also, I have organized an after-school art program for teenagers at risk (which is all teenagers). It is free to students and gives them an opportunity to create art in a studio environment as they find their visual voice. My heart has been forever lost to our teenagers—they struggle so desperately to find their way and themselves. It’s a never-ending job to find funding, space, and place for them to grow, express, and address themselves... they are the priority—they are the future.

Q: Where can we see more of your work?

A: I exhibit locally and am in process of getting my website up and running. You are welcome to visit me in Indian Trail, NC, where you can sit on the front porch and watch the deer play and the hawks fly!



Opportunities

by Janelle Bitikofer

You recently went to a great writing conference. You chatted about your book's premise and got tips from other authors about your plot. The editor who critiqued your first pages said your manuscript "needs some tweaking" and your characterization "could be better..." Now you're back home, alone, wishing you had authors nearby who could help you get it right.

Well, don't fret! All you need is a good critique group.

Critique groups offer members support, honest advice, and at times a well-deserved kick in the butt. They are appropriate for all writers, whether they're working on their first picture book or typing their seventh novel with a publishing deadline at midnight.

How to find an existing group:

Members of SCBWI Carolinas can find a critique group by going to the critique group section of our regional website: www.scbwicarolinas.org.

South Carolina currently has groups looking for new members in Charleston, Beaufort County, Greenwood-Abbeville, Columbia, and Spartanburg.

North Carolina has groups looking for new members in Charlotte, Asheville, Fayetteville, Mebane, Raleigh, and Rutherford. There is also at least one online group available. Others will soon be updated on the list.

So, check out the website and email or phone the contact person who is listed for the group near you.

How to start your own group:

If there are no groups listed in your area, or if the groups in your area don't seem to be a good match for what you are writing, feel free to start your own. There are surely other writers near you who are looking for a group as well.

The SCBWI-Carolina's website carries a link to information on how to start your own group. The main things you need in order to start a group are: 1.) A regular meeting place and time 2.) Specific information about the purpose of your group that you can use to advertise for new members. (Ex: "This is a

YA writer's group meeting the second Tuesday of each month at Panera. Contact Jon.") Then send out a note to the Carolina's list-serve asking anyone looking for a YA critique group in your area to contact you off-list. You only need 2-8 people to make a group. Once the group is formed, make sure to list your group on the SCBWI Carolina's site so others looking for a group can find you.

Whether you join an old group or start a new one, keep in mind the 4 C's. Every member in the group should be:

COMMITTED: Take your craft seriously. Strive to get better together. Keep writing, critiquing, and submitting regularly to each other and to publishers when ready.

CONSISTENT: Each member should commit to being at every meeting possible, prepared, on time, and ready to give and receive helpful, supportive feedback.

CONSTRUCTIVE: Give feedback about both the good and the "this needs work" sections of the manuscript you are critiquing. Be supportive, tactful, and honest. "I love the way your teen main character is so sarcastic. His characterization and verbage are great, and he sounds just like my teenaged son. However, I did notice that you use a lot of commas, and I've circled the ones I don't think you need, based on EATS, SHOOT, AND LEAVES."

CREATIVE: Sometimes members of your group may get stuck on a plot issue, a characterization point, or get bad news and lose inspiration altogether. A brainstorming session with ideas thrown out by all members of the group can jump-start that project again and provide new inspiration. Cookies and Christmas parties keep the inspiration flowing too.

A critique group is a valuable addition to any writer's arsenal. Check out the SCBWI site, and join or create one today.

Janelle Bitikofer works and writes in Raleigh and travels whenever she can. Please send suggestions for future Opportunities columns to jbiti@yahoo.com.



Collective Wisdom

by Niki Schoenfeldt

This column focuses on different elements of writing for children. We invite all our members, both published and unpublished, to share their thoughts. For this issue, we asked: "What are your best tips for landing an agent?"

I signed with my agent after querying him—we'd never met before and he had no idea who I was until he opened my query. I spent a lot of time researching agents and creating profiles on who I thought would not only like my work, but also who I thought I'd work well with. And then I spent even more time working on my query—which I revised just as diligently as I'd revised my book for submission. My critique partners helped me with that stage, and then I had a few people who knew nothing about my book read the query so I could see how it would be read by agents (sometimes it's so easy to miss how confusing a query pitch can sound to someone who hasn't read the book). Finally, I strictly followed submission guidelines for agents and tried, whenever possible, to include the first few pages because I thought those were strong. Then, when I was waiting to hear back, I started on the next project—because there was no way I was giving up!

Carrie Ryan, www.carrieryan.com

THE FOREST OF HANDS AND TEETH ~ Delacorte Press, available now

THE DEAD-TOSSED WAVES ~ Delacorte Press, March 9, 2010

Do your research! Each agent is looking for something different. Some children's book agents are only looking for picture books, some only YA. And just because they're looking for YA novels, doesn't mean your YA novel is the right fit. Maybe they don't like urban fantasy or romance or historical fiction. Do your research!

If the agent has a website, thoroughly check it out. Who does he or she represent? Read their submission guidelines. Agents often explicitly say what they do or don't want, so save yourself some time (and their time) and weed out agents who aren't looking for your sort of story.

Or go about it the other way. Who are some authors who write in a similar vein to your novel? Try to find out who their agents are. If Google doesn't answer that for you, look on the acknowledgements page of the author's book or on his or her website.

So submit only to a targeted group of agents who are looking for stories like yours. By doing some research, you'll have a much better chance of finding an agent who is a good fit for you.

John Claude Bemis, www.johnclaudebemis.com

THE NINE POUND HAMMER Random House, available now

THE WOLF TREE Random House, 2010

Next Topic: What makes for a good critique group?



Holly McGee © 2009 "Teammates"

Niki Schoenfeldt's first picture book, *NATURE'S LULLABY*, was recently released by Little Blue Works/Windstorm Creative. Email nikiofware@carolinas.rr.com.



Fall Conference 2009

Trade Books and School Visits: Jan Broadfoot & Carole Boston Weatherford

By Pamela Kosorok

Jan Broadfoot of Broadfoot's of Wendell works at meeting the needs of students by assisting teachers, media coordinators, and librarians. Carole Boston Weatherford is the author of many books, including: *BECOMING BILLIE HOLIDAY* and *TOUGH BOY SONATAS*, and has a great deal of experience making school visits.

Writing books that fit with school curriculum is an important way to connect. Your books are your ticket to school visits. Having books and materials that span age groups increases your chances to meet people.

Your books will help you build your reputation. Other ways to build your reputation are joining the Arts Council Directory, attending school library conferences, email solicitation, and word of mouth. An author web site is essential. Carole has materials on her website, such as curriculum that goes along with her books. She also lists her rates and the types of programs she offers.

When you visit schools, it's important to have

a gimmick, such as puppets or musical instruments. Song, dance, DVDs, and poetry can also add to the visit. The children need to read your books in order for the visit to be successful and the interaction to go well.

School visits can be lucrative, but never rely on book sales to pay for the visit. Discuss with the school if there will be an honorarium or if expenses will be paid. It's important to have a contract and decide if your books will be sold at the school. The way you start promoting yourself is how you'll end up; don't undervalue yourself.

Carole has an author visit packet she sends to schools which contains a contract, helpful hints, programs available, suggested assembly times, book sale plans, press release bio, and a book order form.

Funding can be found through local arts councils, 21st Century Fund, Title One Funds-Federal Funds, or funds for at-risk children.

Promoting yourself can eclipse writing. But, as Carole said, "You need to promote yourself. No one else will."

STEPS to writing Historical Fiction: Joyce Moyer Hostetter

By Debbie Allmand

Joyce Hostetter described five important steps to writing historical fiction. First, you must find the **STORY**. It must have strong elements of conflict, fear, ignorance, or death. A main character that goes through the conflict and other complications solidifies your book to the plot.

Second, define the **TIME**. Using description and details to communicate with creative language the era in which your writing takes place keeps the reader engaged.

Third, find **EXPERTS** that can answer the questions you have that are unanswered. Finding one expert and asking the right questions can lead you to other experts. This may be a way to find the next story or enrich the novel you're writing.

Fourth, show the **PLACE** by using accurate descriptions of plants, foods, and local landmarks to set the tone and pace, helping the reader get the feel of the surroundings your character lives in.

Last, you must cite reliable **SOURCES** correctly by using great record keeping. Searching the Internet for sources is a great way to get started, but it is only a start. You need to search museums, diaries, scrapbooks, photographs, magazines, newspapers, and artwork of the period. Hostetter gave several sites to get started:

- <http://lib.washington.edu/subject/History/RUSA/> (Links sites with primary sources)
- <http://www.loc.gov/loc/infopub/> (Library of Congress)
- <http://www.si.edu/> (Smithsonian Institute)
- <http://ipr.ues.gseis.ucla.edu/info/definition.html> (UCLA Institute on Primary Resources)

Hostetter suggested using the bibliographies to help you find an endless trail of information. They tell where other authors got their information. They can lead you to trails you may not have thought to go down.

By combining **STORY**, **TIME**, **EXPERTS**, **PLACE**, and **SOURCES** into a PB, MG or YA novel with an engaging character kids can relate to, you just may have a book published also.

Fall Conference 2009

Q & A: Namrata Tripathi

By Sheri Levy

Saturday morning's workshop with Namrata Tripathi, Executive Editor at Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster's Children's Publishing division, was titled, "What Else Do You Need to Know About Picture Books?"

Ms. Tripathi works on picture books through young adult fiction and non-fiction with funny, quirky, truthful, and heart-breaking appeal. She describes her style as eclectic/literary. She has many varied interests in what she reads since she has lived all over the world and speaks many languages. Some of her favorite reads are books about words.

She shared that she enjoys living in New York, singing, and playing the guitar in a band that performs all around the city. After graduating from Columbia, she planned on going back to school for her Ph.D. to teach college level English and Literature. She was detoured after taking a short publishing course and became hooked on children's literature and ventured into the publishing

world.

Her workshop dealt with picture books, how they were formatted and made ready for publishing. Before she hands her new discovery over to an illustrator, she has a dialogue with the author about what they want for their story. Then she chooses the illustrator that she thinks will bring out the feel of the book inspired by the author.

She referred to her handout about terms an editor or art director will use, explaining the layout, the use of four colors to hold down expenses, and the technologies of printing. A picture book consists of thirty-two pages plus ends. If the book is for a younger child, it needs to be bolder with less text.

Many of her favorite books were passed around the auditorium, and the audience explored the details of production. She told the writers attending that she was interested in finding young, bold picture books with a unique voice and diverse characters.

How to Build an Illustration Portfolio: Helen Robinson

By Bonnie Adamson

Helen Robinson offered a glimpse of what can be achieved through patient nurturing of an illustrator's vision. Selecting projects developed while she was art director at Front Street, a former imprint of Boyds Mills Press, Helen discussed the case histories of five PBs.

FOUR IN ALL, by Nina Payne, illustrated by Adam S. Payne, is an extreme example of perseverance by a publisher. The spare text (a series of nouns, arranged in rhyming groups of four words) remained unpublished until the author's artist son proposed a way to provide a visual arc for the illustrations. The book finally came out in 2001, thirty years after the manuscript was first acquired. Helen pointed out how even the trim size (an eight-inch square) reinforces the theme.

JACK AND THE NIGHT VISITORS is a wordless PB, the third in a series from Pat Schories. The challenge for this book was to find a creative way to communicate the setup; cover art and endpapers provide visual back-story so that the true action can begin on the "first" page.

HONEY BADGERS, by Jamison Odone, features text that needed special handling to preserve its quirky flavor and required a format suited to equally quirky illustrations.

The challenge for Donna Diamond's first solo project, THE SHADOW, another wordless PB, was to encourage an established talent to try a new direction.

For the final example, Helen passed out copies of the text for A CHILD'S GUIDE TO COMMON HOUSEHOLD MONSTERS by James Otis Thach. Attendees had ten minutes to brainstorm. Some began by structuring the flow of the text; others by conceptualizing the characters or the setting; one considered point-of-view angles to establish mood. Helen stressed that all were valid approaches. She then revealed illustrator David Udovic's solutions in the finished book.

Illustrators left the workshop inspired, and determined to heed Helen's advice not to submit work merely to please an art director, but to remain passionate about their own unique styles.

Fall Conference 2009

Writers' Workbench: Maureen Wartski

By Jenny Murray

Lessons learned from more than 50 years of writing experience in one hour! Maureen Wartski opened her desk and allowed attendees to peruse the tools she uses in her writing today. She shared practical tips for creating character dossiers; writing outlines; showing characters through setting and action; writing effective dialogue; and penning effective beginnings.

A true teacher, Wartski divided attendees into working groups to brainstorm characteristics of people in magazine pictures. One character created was a 15 year-old boy from Massachusetts who speaks Russian, plays the drums, and fears spiders.

Wartski advised attendees that it is most important to know where characters go when they are troubled. If authors know their characters that well, before they begin to write, she said, they will have no problems.

Wartski demonstrated the importance of showing those characters. She asked workshop participants to

practice showing characters through their surroundings, individual actions, and the actions of others. Who could forget the pregnant ballerina zipping her costume over her tight belly, or the cancer survivor relishing the breeze and life after a brutal climb to the top of a mountain? Wartski reminded all writers that action comes alive in its details.

Wartski asked attendees to practice writing effective and unique dialogue by competing as a group of misfit characters for the only taxi cab on a rainy evening. The session ended with an explanation of effective beginnings created with exciting paragraphs, description, and explanations to set the stage.

Yes, Wartski helped attendees with all of these techniques over the course of one short hour. The time was packed with useful tips and writerly advice. I look forward to seeing some of the characters and story beginnings in future works from fellow SCBWIers!

Serious About Series: Bonnie Bader

By Susan Chapek

Bonnie Bader's workshop zeroed in on a favorite area of her work—series like CLONE WARS, KATIE KAZOO and HANK ZIPZER. Penguin is hot for MG paperback chapter book series; kids read them, trade them, compete over them, and—best of all—can afford to buy lots of them.

A series must capture attention with a unique hook and a main character kids will really care about. Bader's personal wish list: more boy-centered series, and a mystery series. Once a series hits, new books come out frequently. Bader's series authors must write fast, meet deadlines, and accept editorial changes without fuss.

To succeed with a series, you must know: your genre ("Go with your gut, not with trends; trends change like lightning."); your age group; and how many books will be in the series (at least 4). Write each book to stand alone, incorporating one or two series paragraphs that provide any necessary back-story. For your own sanity, Bader warns you to create a detailed series bible (tracking characters' looks and quirks, place

descriptions, etc.) as soon as you start writing.

Bader receives thousands of proposals for series, and recommends approaching her through an agent. But Penguin does have an open-door policy, so to pitch your series directly to Bonnie Bader, submit via snail mail:

- 1) a letter with a log line (the series hook)
 - 2) a one-page overview of the whole series
 - 3) a one-page synopsis of the first book
 - 4) 2-3 sentences about each succeeding book
 - 5) the first three chapters of the first book
- (Optional) a cast list, one sentence per character

Do not submit until your first book is complete and in good shape. If Bader likes your query, she will expect a complete manuscript, and more manuscripts in short order. (Remember—series publishing is on a fast track.)

Bader also uses work-for-hire authors for All-Aboard non-fiction books, biographies, and certain fiction series. To apply, mail Baden a query that pitches a story specific to an existing series and attach a sample of your writing.

Fall Conference 2009

Building an Illustration Career: Elana Roth

By Karen Lee

Elana Roth, of Caryn Johnson Literary Agency, needs to love both the writing and the art in author-illustrated PB submissions and feels that most of them fail in honing the craft of the illustration. "Ninety percent of picture books sell less than 5,000 copies and go out of print," said Roth. "In order to beat those odds, you must create something that is both fresh and timeless."

When Darren Farrell sent her the dummy for DOUG-DENNIS AND THE FLY AWAY FIB (Dial, 2010), she saw an intriguing spark. The book was not commercially viable, but it had a good story, lots of humor, and a fresh look. Roth showed the revisions it took to make it marketable.

Character: Farrell's main character, Doug-Dennis, didn't have kid-appeal. He began as a stick man but evolved into an endearing sneaker-wearing sheep.

Color: The dummy had no color but was revised to include flat color in a limited palette. Although humorous, Farrell's use of Alpha-Bits cereal for Doug-

Dennis' fibs made the text difficult to read. Now his fibs are in blue speech balloons, adding much needed color.

Background Environment: In his first dummy, all of Farrell's characters were the same size on every page with no background environment. The sameness in size put no value on any particular element. Bringing important characters forward and putting them in an environment added depth and detail to the storytelling.

Vignettes: Farrell's use of vignettes contributes to the pacing, rhythm, and sense of elapsed time. Doug-Dennis breaks out of the frame to create dramatic perspective and depth as his fibs carry him into outer space.

A Story: By adding richness to the story through color, backgrounds, and depth of field, Farrell was able to add a very personal level of humor to the story. After three revisions, Doug-Dennis sold in just two days.

Elana's final advice for author-illustrators: have a website, write a great query, and include a link to online samples of your art.

What's the Worst That Can Happen: Carrie Ryan

By Tracy Davis

The classic ingredient of a great story: a character we identify with in pursuit of a desire or goal despite insurmountable obstacles. Author Carrie Ryan focused on using obstacles to build tension and engage the reader in your character's efforts to achieve the goal. Make the goal tangible so the reader knows how and when the character succeeds, and create conflict between internal and external goals. Conflicting goals give rise to hard and interesting choices. She cited Suzanne Collins' THE HUNGER GAMES as a beautiful example, and Donald Maass's WRITING THE BREAKOUT NOVEL as a great resource.

Obstacles are the meat of the story. Make them deep, credible, complex, and universal enough for the reader to relate. Obstacles prompt action and a response from your character. It's that reaction, not the event, that moves your plot and engages us in a character's growth.

Carrie advises asking, "What's the worst that can happen?" Just when things couldn't possibly get worse,

they SHOULD. Does your character need a weapon to defend against sudden attack? Weapon, gone. What if the character's best friend lost the weapon? But not her own. Will she share? Never. Are they enemies now? Perfect. Think up the worst that can happen, make it so, and then make it worse. Impossible deadlines make the action matter even more.

If the tension level stays high, your credibility must keep pace. Assume that you have 100 credibility points. To keep mounting tension grounded and make your world real, spend them wisely! Carrie's YA novel THE FOREST OF HANDS AND TEETH features a post-apocalyptic world overrun with zombies—a high-dollar purchase. The rest of that fictional world—how people interact and go through their day—must ring absolutely true. Touchpoints that a reader understands, like family, grief, or joy, boosts authenticity while careless mistakes cost points.

Bottom line: Spend credibility points wisely and, if you really love your characters, ruin their day.

Fall Conference 2009

When Your Character Isn't Stepping Up to the Plate: Edie Hemingway

By Anne Schmitt

Edie Hemingway is a SCBWI conference success story. She submitted her first ten pages for review. The editor invited her to send the complete manuscript. Nearly a year later, she sent ROAD TO TATER HILL.

Edie's editor sent typed revision notes which she found very helpful. However, she was horrified to be asked to eliminate a major character in the story. 81 of 154 pages contained references to the heroine's brother. If Edie removed him, she would need to create another character to take over important plot points. She would have to re-sequence several scenes.

Ultimately, Edie discovered the editor was right. The heroine was a stronger character without her brother. So, after layers of revisions, he no longer existed.

"Revisions can reveal new problems that will need to be revised," Edie explained as she shared her first two submitted manuscripts with her editor's notes. The manuscripts were littered with various colored pens and

miniature post-it notes sticking out every few pages. Edie treasures these original edited copies.

Edie believes that revision is the true meat of writing; she loves it more than actually writing the first draft. Edie offered pointers and questions to use in revisions. Is your main character's self-concept developed before major actions and plot gets going? What is the character's primary struggle? Are you telling your story from the best POV? Are you showing rather than telling? Follow each character throughout the story to check for consistency, growth, or change. Does your plot make sense and does each scene move the plot along?

Edie warns the writer to be aware that most editors will expect even more revisions before or after they offer you a contract. She also advises that you communicate with your editor early and often on a system of managing revisions. Miscommunication over revisions can kill a project.

For more information and ideas from Edie, visit www.ediehemingway.com or www.classofY2k.com.

Publishing Picture Books: Fatimah Khan

By Vonnie Fry

Fatimah Khan, Associate Editor at Little Brown, proudly displayed her newest publication, WABI SABI, written by Mark Reibstein. She was pleased with not only the illustrations by Ed Young, but also the simple storyline. The book is on the NY Times bestseller list.

WABI SABI's design is intense, the spare text written in haiku style. The page format is unusual in that it opens top to bottom and not side to side.

Sending artwork along with an idea for text and using a ghostwriter works sometimes. The picture book, MARTHA DOESN'T SAY SORRY by Samantha Berger, is an example. This is not the norm, though. Usually, the text for a picture book is selected, and then an illustrator is found. Khan is looking for stories about other cultures, or themes such as Black History Month.

She encouraged artists to send postcards of their artwork. If one strikes her as a future possibility, she will tack it on her bulletin board. She receives a variety

of media. All dimensions are accepted. Send your best work. Be true to your style.

She cautioned to not send original artwork. The best format to send is 8 ½ x 11 inches. She likes different styles. Send a roughed-in dummy and at least one finished illustration. Cover designs are not accepted.

Khan discouraged husband/wife teams of writer/illustrator to submit, but team writers are accepted. If the storyline submitted is not her style, she will pass it to another editor if the work is good.

Little Brown is a small publisher with only 11 or 12 people and only 3 imprints. They usually publish 110 books a year. A good picture book sale is 20,000.

The 1980s were the boom time for picture books. Now MG and YA are booming. Little Brown picture book publications have been scaled down, but the market is picking up. Picture book word count is 400 words or less. Khan prefers the 200 word range. The flow of the story is most important.

Fall Conference 2009

Confessions of an Online MG Critique Group: Bonk, Kline, Woodworth

By Rebecca Petruck

Chris Woodworth, John J. Bonk, and Lisa Williams Kline have known each other ten years. However, their time at the conference represented only their 2nd in-person visit. The secret to their longevity? Online chat.

The three MG novelists, with ten published books between them, cited weekly online chats as one of the most important aspects of maintaining their group's health. "Online chatting keeps contact real," Woodworth noted, "about a person."

They each have one week a month to submit work for review. If they miss it, they miss it. Also, they may not submit unless they are caught up on their critiques. All critiques and all emails are sent to everyone in the group so lines of communication are kept wide open.

Woodworth and Bonk became friends during an online writing class held by Gotham City Writers. They met Kline online and invited her to join their group. Later, they discovered Kline already had published two novels.

Having a published author in their group was intimidating, particularly for Woodworth. Her critiques of Kline's work were unsubstantial until she truly appreciated two things: one, an experienced author was a tremendous boon for their group's learning potential, and two, they were going to lose Kline if she didn't step up and give critiques as good as she got.

All three work as hard on their critiques as they do on their own work. Ten years' familiarity has not loosened their rules or their professionalism. Each critique is carefully written and is respectful, positive, and about the writing. "It's easy for something harmless to be read as really bad," Kline acknowledged. "So we're all really careful about our emails, and the chatting helps us keep attuned to each others' feelings, moods, and situations."

Bonk created a list of DOs and DON'Ts which he has posted to his blog at johnjbonk.wordpress.com. Additionally, attendees who want to form an online group submitted their email. Contact rebecca_petruck@yahoo.com for a compiled list of names by genre.

When YA is not YA: David Macinnis Gill

By Joan Edwards

Author David Macinnis Gill explained that YA is a marketing category under the umbrella of Children's Literature. It is not a separate genre. A YA novel has a teen main character with an inherently teenage problem told in the here and now for a teen audience. Not a flashback in time. Historical fiction can be YA, if it's written in the here and now.

MG is also a marketing category under the umbrella of Children's Literature. MG and YA books share overlapping targeted ages: a 12 year old protagonist could be either MG or YA; intensity tells which category it falls under. MGs might be about sneaking kisses, bullying with words or hitting, and approximately 200 pages or less. YA books consist of more than 200 pages and might include sex or bullying by beating someone physically, perhaps to the extent of murder.

Five good YA examples are: *OUTSIDERS* by S.E. Hinton, *THE CHOCOLATE WAR* by Robert Cormier, *CATCHER IN THE RYE* by J. D. Salinger, *JACOB*, *HAVE I LOVED* by

Katherine Patterson, and *SOUL ENCHILADA* by Gill.

Four good examples of books that are not YA are: *ANGELS AND DEMONS* by Dan Brown, *WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE* by Maurice Sendak, *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* by Harper Lee, and *BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA* by Katherine Patterson.

On rare occasions, the author decides if a book will be promoted as YA, MG, or Adult. Editors may ask you to take out parts to change your novel from YA to MG or to add something more intense to change from MG to YA. Gill suggested that you, the writer, make sure you know to which category your book belongs before querying an editor or agent.

Here are four lists of outstanding books for YA: The Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature; New York Times Young Adult Best Sellers; ALA Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults (BBYA); and ALA quick pick lists for reluctant readers.

Fall Conference 2009

First Impressions: Helen Robinson & Elana Roth

By Brooke Lauer

Agent Elana Roth and art director Helen Robinson led the anonymous critiques of illustrations submitted by attendees. The illustrations were projected on a screen and given two to five minutes of discussion.

When it comes to opinions, you can agree or disagree. Roth and Robinson aired a few disagreeing comments. The main point was to hear some constructive criticism and apply it to own work so we can continue to improve. Some of the comments included: "The scale is off." "It's too busy." "The main character cannot be discerned." "Character is posed oddly." "Can't tell what the action is." "Orientation is disorienting." "Looks a bit static." "Needs more contrast." "Color is a bit weak."

Our guest critiquers had plenty of nice things to say about our members' works, too. "The texture details are nicely defined." "I want to know what this girl is going to do." "It looks fun." "I like the movement." "I admire the creativity of trying to combine disparate things." "It feels humorous and sweet and engaging."

Ms. Robinson recommends that people put art they really love in their portfolios. "Never pick things at random from the portfolio to send. You are going to pay to have it printed and mailed, so make sure it is 100% intentional." She also warns about over-using the computer as a shortcut in your illustrations. "Kids see the exact same thing that has been flopped, digitized, and repeated, and they feel cheated."

Ms. Roth said she likes to see a certain amount of range in a portfolio. Show your skill and depth through things you've used for different projects. Consider your audience. "You need to know who is going to be looking at it." She likes to see sketches as well because she needs to see how your story unfolds. By seeing the art and text interacting, an agent can see how you think.

When asked, "Do you prefer a storyboard or dummy?" the answer was both. A dummy should be well fleshed out with at least two fully developed pieces of artwork. Three is even better, but finishing the whole book is unnecessary. Robinson says, "Follow your instincts."

First Annual Contest

Open Only to SCBWI Members in the SCBWI Carolinas Region

SCBWI-C First Annual Writing and Art Contest

Entries due between February 1- 28, 2010

Winners announced in Summer PEN & PALETTE

Contest Judges:

- Kay Olson, Capstone Press (Non-Fiction)
- Andrea Welch, Beach Lane Press (PBs & Easy Readers)

• Sarah Shumway, Senior Editor, Katherine Tegan Books (Novels, MG/YA)

• Tim Gillner of Boyds Mill Press (Art)

Submissions MUST BE received between FEBRUARY 1-28, 2010!

For a complete list of rules, go to www.scbwicarolinas.org and click on the link for PEN AND PALETTE.

The Contributors

Fall Conference 2009 Special Issue



Pamela Kosorok lives and writes in Chapel Hill.



Jenny Murray, of Durham, spends her days with 500 middle school children and nights with her husband, son, dogs and cats.



Anne Schmitt lives with her husband and twin girls in Charlotte, where she writes PBs, chapter books, and novels for children.



Living on a lake near Taylorsville, NC, Debbie Allmand writes middle grade and young adult novels.

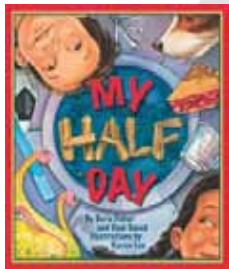
Susan Chapek



Vonnie Fry writes PBs from her home in Wilmington. She loves to garden and is a master gardener.



Sheri Levy, a retired special ed teacher, writes a MG series and will have a story, "Heaven Scent," in Clubhouse Jr. in 2010.



Karen Lee illustrated the ONE ODD DAY series and ABC SAFARI. www.leeillo.com



Rebecca Petruck writes MG and YA novels. She received an MFA in Creative Writing from UNC Wilmington.



Bonnie Adamson is a children's book writer and illustrator from Greenville, SC.



Tracy Davis is an attorney and aspiring author in Raleigh, NC. She writes PBs and is working on a YA novel.



Joan Edwards is the creator of FLIP, FLAP, FLOODLE, skits, devotions, and puzzles. www.joanedwards.com



Jennifer Rolles © 2009 "Aviator"



Brooke Lauer is currently writing a story about chickens. Follow her progress at www.brookelauer.blogspot.com.

Caption Contest

On Hold In Lieu of 1st Annual Writing/Illustrating Contests

Previous issue art with winning caption:



**“Mom! Johnny knocked down this
Helianthus annuus.”**

Congratulations to Melissa Villegas, winner of a \$10 B&N gift card! Melissa submitted the winning caption for the previous issue art submitted by Anne Runyon.

The caption contest is temporarily on hold. We want all members to focus their energies on the 1st Annual Writing and Illustrating Contests being held during the month of February. Good luck Carolinas members!

Reminders

Update Your SCBWI Listing on the National Website

Don't forget to visit www.scbwi.org to update your personal information. This is especially important for those of you who have published in the children's market. Several future events are geared toward Published and Listed (PAL) members. Sign in at www.scbwi.org and select "Manage My Profile."

Prepare Your Entry for the 1st Annual Writing/Illustrating Contests

The details are printed on page 19 as well as available at www.scbwicarolinas.org. The two contests are for Carolinas chapter members only. Take advantage of this wonderful opportunity!

Volunteer with PEN & PALETTE: Become Our Calendar Editor

Please help us to help you. The PEN & PALETTE seeks a new calendar editor to step in for our lovely Maria Ross. She has several resources, tips, and tricks to pass on to the next lucky person who joins our staff. To volunteer, email rebecca_petruck@yahoo.com

The Artists

Submit art for future issues to bonnieadamson@att.net



Jeffrey Duckworth is an illustrator/writer, designer, stay-at-home dad and Duck of All Trades. www.jeffduckworth.com.



Constance Lombardo received her BFA in illustration in 1986 and is now putting it to use. conlombardo@hotmail.com



Jennifer Rolles lives, draws, paints, and writes in Denver, NC. rollesj@bellsouth.net



Margaret James is an illustrator, artist, and educator, bringing life to art and art to life. cre8good@gmail.com



Holly McGee lives in Asheville, NC. See more of her work at www.hollymcgee.com.



Laura Lagomarsino has been an artist most of her life, drawing and painting from an early age. www.ljlago.com



Anne Runyon's artwork reflects her love of the natural world. www.annerunyon.com



When Brooke Lauer isn't playing the banjo or fiddle, she writes and illustrates picture books. www.brookelauer.com.



Laura Lagomarsino © 2009 "Hot Chocky"

The Editor's Desk

A Note from Samantha Bell

Let me begin by saying what an honor and a privilege it has been to serve as your newsletter editor these past couple of years. I have enjoyed working with so many wonderful writers and illustrators from the Carolinas chapter.

Being a part of SCBWI has made such a difference in my writing/illustrating journey. I first decided I wanted to write children's books after taking a children's literature course at a local university. I studied the market guides, read books about writing for children, and even took the ICL course. I spent the next few years subbing and receiving rejections. Children came along, and I put everything away until a friend talked me into joining an online critique group. Everyone else was members of SCBWI, so after about a year, I joined too.

I didn't know what to expect when I joined, but what I found was a community of people who are so generous with their time and expertise. I started attending conferences and came away not only with knowledge about the craft but with good friendships as well. Today my credits include magazine publications and illustration contracts, and I know they are due to the help and encouragement I've received from other members.

A huge "Thank You!" to all who have contributed their time, energy, efforts, articles, and illustrations to PEN & PALETTE. It would not be the same great publication without you, and I can't wait to see where Rebecca and Bonnie go from here!

Samantha



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First Sale Insights with Caroline McAlister

Pursuing the Craft with Sheri Levy

Notes from the Front Lines with Clay Carmichael

Issue Deadline: January 15