

Children's Picture Book Writing

Syllabus

Classes will be held Tuesdays from 1-3:30 pm

in Room 41C, University Hall

This class is half lecture, half workshop. Each week there will be an introductory lecture, followed by in-class writing exercises and workshopping of written work. Students will receive a writing assignment each week as well as one short reading. Please read a minimum of five picture books before the first class and bring them to the first meeting for discussion along with any ideas you have for a picture book of your own.

Week 1

What is a picture book?

We will explore how picture books differ from other narrative forms, how authors work with illustrators, do some idea generating exercises, and begin discussing and workshopping your ideas for stories.

Please bring:

- 5 children's picture books that you have read and enjoyed.
- 1-3 ideas for a picture book of your own

Week 2

Plotting and Structure; Turning Ideas into Outlines

We will explore narrative structures, and examine how plot and theme interact in picture books. After some warm-up exercises, we will play with different methods for turning ideas into outlines and discuss the outlines for your books.

Week 3

Making Language Sing: Using Rhythm, Rhyme, and Repetition

Picture books are meant to be read aloud. But how do you make that read-aloud engaging? We will explore different strategies for making music with words and do some exercises to build facility.

Week 4

Beginnings, Middles, and Ends: Mastering the Narrative Elements

The hardest part of writing is the beginning. And the end. And the middle. We'll take a closer look at these three parts of the narrative and the tools you can use to get started, keep the narrative lively, and bring it all to a satisfying conclusion. We'll also workshop the beginnings of your own stories.

Week 5

Being Your Own Best Critic: Editing and Rewriting

Most picture book writers complete 15-20 drafts of their books before submitting them to their agent or editor. But revising effectively is a skill of its own. We'll break down the science of revision and put our newfound skills to work in the workshop portion of the afternoon.

Week 6

To Market, To Market: Bringing Your Book Into the World

How do you get an agent? How do you submit to an editor? What about self-publishing? We'll talk about the business end of the children's book world and then spend the rest of our time getting your manuscripts ready to see the light of day.