



Recorded Events

Seattle Writes And SCBWI: Writers' Tips, Resources And Children's Publishing 101

[00:00:01] [Piano]


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[00:00:36] Hello, everyone. Hi, welcome to the Seattle Public Library. My name is Linda Johns and I'm a librarian here at the Central Library.[applause]

[00:00:46] Okay, that is awesome. How often do librarians get applause? Thank you.

[00:00:54] I'm also a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. And I have been for, I just looked, for 25 years. So this is like a fantastic day of of my worlds, your worlds of libraries and writers coming together. So thank you for being here. Today kicks off our fall series of our Seattle Writes classes. And we're so pleased to be partnering with SCBWI of western Washington on this. They're kind of our bookend partner for the series. We're starting with SCBWI. And on December 2nd, we'll wrap up the series with The Inside Story, which you'll hear more about. We have writing workshops that are free, two hour workshops every weekend through November, November twenty seventh. So please check our online schedule. It's at SPL dot org slash Seattle writes, Or you can go to Seattle Public Library's website and just look for writing classes or Seattle Writes. The series is made possible by a grant from the Seattle Public Library Foundation, and we're very grateful to them. Okay, some housekeeping. If you need to use a bathroom, there's an exit there.

[00:02:09] If you're on that side, if you're on this side, come around here by the piano and there's a door that you can go in and out without disrupting the session. It's fine to go in and out. We passed out evaluations as you came in, and we would really appreciate it if you would complete these



because it helps us get funding for next year based on the feedback we get and the suggestions that you have. Also, did everyone get a note card as they came in? And if not, maybe hold up your hand. Vicky will pass out note cards. And lastly, we have a resource table up here that has information about the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. And it also has a list of our Seattle Writes classes. And it also has a typographical error on it. So we put them out today anyway, but we're about to recycle them all and we'll have new ones available early next week. And now I'd like to introduce Carol Zink, who is the membership coordinator for SCBWI of Western Washington. Thank you. [applause]


[00:03:22] Hi, welcome. Wow, it's amazing, this is such a great event. I'm so glad you're here. We are very excited to take the mystery out of the kid lit business, to share information and tips and resources with you so you can get your writing projects moving. I would like to say thank you to Seattle Public Library and Seattle Writes for working with us on this event. It is such an amazing thing to be here in this glorious space. Thank you, Linda. I'm really excited to be here. Many of you already know that SCBWI Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators is an international group that members span the globe. SCBWI is open to anyone who is interested in children's literature, from picture books to YA, young adult. Our advisory committee for SCBWI are here, and if I can have our regional advisers, Julie Artz and Holly Huckleba, stand up. That would be great. [applause]


[00:04:33] And if we have other advisory committee members, if you'd like to stand up and just wave your hand, that'd be awesome.[applause]

[00:04:41] These are a group of really awesome people who are writers, illustrators and amazing people. So they will be here later, if you have any questions and would like to learn more about SCBWI.

[00:04:55] Being a writer is a dream that many of us have. I personally dream about the day that I submit my novel for submission. I dream about the day that I sign with an agent and I dream about the day that I am at my very own book launch party. But for many of us, the dreams stop when we start asking questions, and those questions are, I have a great picture book idea but what do we do now? How do I get an agent and, what does an editor do? And is it even possible for me to write a book and get published? Well, at SCBWI, sharing information is the key to success. Asking questions and knowing where to find the answers will help you stay on track.

[00:05:51] This is why I'm especially excited. And pleased to welcome Jolie Stekly. Jolie is one of our Pacific Northwest top writer coaches and teachers. She has helped hundreds of people work on their manuscript, be it picture books, chapter books, novels, get to the finish line. I am very honored to say that I am one of those lucky people. Jolie Stekly teaches the year long [running] Children for Children program at the University of Washington. Over the past 10 years, she has worked with numerous editors, agents, authors and illustrators, developing programs for conferences, retreats and classes.





She was recognized as SCBWI's 2009 member of the year. And now welcomes hundreds of first time attendees to the international conference in Los Angeles. She helps them make the most of their experience. She holds a master's degree in education and is on the blog team for SCBWI. And she is represented by the literary agent, Rosemary Stimola. She writes young adult novels. So, get those notepads out and pens and be ready, because Jolie is going to take the mystery out of this kid lit business. Please join me in welcoming Jolie Stekly.[applause]

[00:07:35] Good morning. So, wow. I'm a little bit overwhelmed with that introduction.


[00:07:42] I've got to take the whole mystery out of the kid lit agency, everybody is going to leave just knowing all the secrets. Let's hope. Let's hope, we can get us there. So I first want to thank the Seattle Public Library and Seattle Writes for having me here today and our own local chapter of SCBWI. It's really an honor to be here. I don't know if I was more nervous to see just 10 people here or to see like a hundred and fifty people here. So this is good. But either way, they're still nervous making. But this is a nice, big room. And I'm so happy that you all made your way out today to join us. As Carol was sharing.

[00:08:27] And maybe I need to update my bio a little bit. I actually have a long history with this organization, and I can call myself out by the fact that I took my very first class with Peggie King Anderson, who some of you they may know, who has been a long-time teacher and mentor in this industry. And who, I feel like kind of passed the baton on to me in many ways. And I adore her. But she is who introduced me to this organization when my daughter was one years old.

[00:09:00] And that little girl's now going to college next week. So I've been around for a while and have a long history with the SCBWI, and the path has not been what I expected.

[00:09:14] I certainly sat in your same seats and was hoping that soon I would have the picture book I was working on, published and on a shelf and twists and turns brought me through being a regional adviser like Holly and Julie for many years, which brought me to teaching and coaching and the blog team and member of the year, which I'm just so, so proud of.

[00:09:41] This organization means so very much to me. So we all came here probably for many reasons, and you probably all are in different positions in terms of what you know and what you need to know in terms of writing for kids, whether you don't know anything, and you're just curious, anybody out there just saying, what's this all about? Cool. Or maybe you have wanted to do this, but you haven't started yet and you need that little push to know how to get started. Any of those out there? Cool. I see a lot of hands go up there. Or maybe you've written something and now you're like, now what do I do with this? I've got this. That's kind of where I started. Anybody out there like that? Cool.



[00:10:21] And then I know that there's also.. I see a lot of faces I recognize. So even though this is kind of an introduction and a 101, I still see you guys came out, which I love. How many of you have been around this world for a while? Raise your hands high. Yes. See, we always keep coming back. There's always more to learn and more people to meet. The truth is that you're in the right place. This is a place to find out. And these are the people that you want to have in your corner to get your questions answered.

[00:10:52] So let's dive in. When talking with Seattle Writes and the SCBWI, there was some intentions for partnering together to kick this off and give you some information. First, just to give you an opportunity to connect with a really great organization and with peers in this industry, some of the people in the room or all of the people in the room, really, are your very best resources. Also, to give you some resources for our local area and even beyond. To provide some foundational information about the children's book industry, and really just to answer any questions you might have, and hopefully we can provide the answers or point you in the right direction to get those questions answered. What I do want to say is it can be a lot to take in. And truly, I want to tell you all of the things. But it would take me, honestly, more than a year. All of the things would take me so long. Carol mentioned that I teach at the UW program. It's actually changed a little. There used to be a three quarter program that no longer has a consecutive run. And so I'm now doing that privately, but still teaching a picture book class at the University of Washington, which I can share more with you about if you're interested. But yeah, we just cover the solid information that we need to over a year. So telling you all the things is really impossible, but hopefully we can unlock that information so that you can access all of those great things. What I will say, though, is that I hope that you walk away from today taking away at least one thing that will help you on your way to wherever you want this whole process to take you.

[00:12:51] So I would like to start with, you all received a note card, and for some of you, this might not matter to you, or not, but this, okay, here's where I get nervous because there are so many of you. So this was a good idea, I thought. And now I see all the questions that could potentially be in the room. What I would really though, love for you to write down, honestly in your very neatest handwriting, just so I can read it, is, you know, if there is one thing you really hope to walk away knowing today, that would really help you, could you please write that one thing down on the card, and then I'm gonna have a group of people collect all of those. And while you do something else in just a moment, I'm going to look them over to make sure I'm hitting on each of those items.

[00:13:41] And if I'm not, where I can work those into this talk, and then anything that I can't, I will try and get to for sure at the end with the Q&A. Does that sound good? All right. So let me give you a minute to write down that one burning thing you need to know and then we'll move on.

[00:14:03] If you didn't get a note card, I think so many of you came. We ran out. Just write it down on a piece of paper if you have one.

[00:14:11] A napkin. A gum wrapper. Whatever you can do. I brought my readers.

[00:14:18] So I'll let everybody take a minute to write that down, and then I can even have you pass all at once, to the ends, and we'll collect those.

[00:14:28] All right. And as you get those, just pass them in the direction of your nearest end.

[00:14:36] My gosh, look at all of these. Oh my goodness.

[00:14:40] Oh, my goodness, you guys. There's a lot of questions here. We're gonna answer all the questions. Take us all day long, but we're gonna do our best. The good news is a lot of us have the same questions. And so I should be able to hit on all of them.

[00:14:58] Are there some more lingering out there? Anybody need to hold any up? I've got some work to do.

[00:15:07] So what I'm going to do is now take you out of your comfort zone a little. I know this is, don't don't hate me already. But the truth is, I mentioned that the power of your peers is right in this room, and it's really true. There's one more right over here, I see. So I would love for you, I know this isn't the most like mingle friendly space in terms of how we're sitting, but you easily have people in front of you, behind you, around the sides of you, I would love for you to meet a minimum of three people and I'll give you something to talk about so you don't have to worry about that. I would love for you to share what brought you here. And if you have one, your favorite book for kids and teens. Either your favorite book right now or what your favorite book was when you were a child or a teen. And bonus points, if you can find someone who is already a member of the SCBWI. Who has participated in the Seattle Writes program, who has published a book for kids and who has taken a class with me. So I will let you start to visit with each other and, goal, remember, at least three I know you can make even more. And I'm going to read over your questions.[audience chatter]

[00:16:45] All right, you guys. So if you could start to make your way back to your seats.

[00:16:54] I actually love that it's super hard to get a group of writers and illustrators back into the discussion, because that means that you've connected out there with your peers, and met some like-minded people probably in your same shoes or a little bit different. So that was good. There was a lots, lots of mix and mingle happening. Did everybody meet a minimum of three people or did you just hook into? Oh, yay. Good, good. Sometimes you just meet that one person that you're, you never know.

[00:17:30] I have met, where's my Anne, where'd she go? Oh, she's feeding the meter.

[00:17:37] So and you'll see her come in late. We ,an all say "hi Anne" when she comes back in. So I've made some of my best friends in this organization, and Anne used to live in Connecticut and we met in an SCBWI conference in New York. We sat with each other at a roundtable. It was very first one of SCBWI's history and we enjoyed each other's work. And we kept running into each other at the conference and we figured out that we taught at the same elementary school and we student taught with the exact same teacher. And now she moved back to the Seattle area and I get to see her all the time, so it's great. So you just never know who you might meet at one of these events. All right. You had a lot of great questions and you had a lot of questions. The good news is you're mostly wondering about a lot of the same things. I wonder if some of you can guess what is the biggest question in the room? How do I get an agent? Yes. So we'll definitely touch on agents. But there is there's just a lot to touch on.

[00:18:42] I did like to see, though, I would say it's encouraging that people are saying, you know, how do I have the courage, the motivation to get this started, to stay with it. And the truth is, being in a place like this is how you do it. It's not isolating yourself in your own room and your own office trying to muster up the courage by yourself. A lot of times we need each other to say, keep going. Like, get out there in the classes and the community at the events. That's what keeps you rolling. So you're in the right place. So that's great news. Oh, look at I already advanced the slide, didn't I? Did I go too far ahead? Let's see. No, we're good. Let me ask you, though. So you met three people. Did anybody also meet a member of SCBWI? Cool, how many people are members of SCBWI? Awesome.

[00:19:40] And I bet the rest of you might be after you leave today. So that's exciting too. Who has already participated in one of these Seattle Writes programs. This is, I love this. I can't. It's so amazing. Oh, Linda wants to see raise them up high. And I bet more of you will continue and come back knowing that they're here. Who's in the room met somebody who's published a book.

[00:20:04] Super. And so if you've published a book for kids, will you raise your hand? Yeah, let's give them a hand.

[00:20:11] They're proof that we can do it.

[00:20:15] Who met somebody who's taken a class with me.

[00:20:19] I see some people who have taken a class with me. Yeah. I'm so glad to see some of you in the room and I hope to see some of you in one of my classes in the future. So I'm glad that you did that. Thank you for giving me that time to look over your questions. And I think that I will be able to hit on almost all of them, if not specifically, you know, because some some of the questions were very, very specific. I will be touching on the area you were asking about. The one place that I might not hit on is very specific areas of craft just because that goes a lot deeper.

[00:20:54] But I will hopefully give you some of the resources where you can find some of those answers. Sound good? So let's jump right in then to this crazy industry.

[00:21:08] I'm all out of order in my notes because I was writing answers to your questions on my notes, give me just a second. Here we go.

[00:21:16] So the children's book industry is a really, really interesting one. It seems really big and in a way it is, but it's also so really a niche industry that that can be really small. So.

[00:21:33] Most people within the industry, editors, agents, writers, illustrators really know one another throughout the industry. And it's very fascinating because this covers such a wide form of books, from board books to young adult novels.

[00:21:50] So the best editors in the business not only are editing picture books for young readers, but they're also editing Printz Award winning young adult novels. So they're very different forms and take very different skill sets. But they're working on them under kind of the same children's book umbrella. And that's why we gather together within that whole span of books. Books for kids are not simpler because they're for kids. I might even suggest that they're more challenging. Our audience of kids is the best audience. And also the toughest audience, right? Yeah. Yes. So they have a B.S. meter that's off the charts. Yeah. They, you know, if they don't buy it, it's out the door. If they're not engaged, it's, the book is gone.

[00:22:46] Or, you know, it just feels like work. You know, those of us who are adults will, if we're told a book is good, will go ahead and plod through 50 pages, 100 pages.

[00:22:57] And then I'm like, I'm this far. I'm going to finish the book. Kids won't do that. Yeah. So it's also really interesting because we have different purchasers of these books.

[00:23:09] Typically, it might be parent, grandparent, teachers, librarians who are buying the books until you get into the middle grade and young adult novels where kids are self-selecting. So it's a really intriguing industry in that way, too. There's a lot to learn and it's really important to do so. You're here, which shows you're ready to take those steps on. Just a couple notes about these different forms. So, board books typically for three and under. We know those hard cardboard books. And many of them are not just great best-selling children's books that have then been changed into, into board books. Oh, by the way, those books that are up there are all written by local SCBWI members.

[00:23:52] Yeah.

[00:23:55] And I think that we have a couple of those authors in the room, Laurie Thompson and Dori Butler.

[00:24:01] Yeah. Did I see Dori?

[00:24:02] No, I didn't see Dori here. Oh, no.

[00:24:07] But yes, so *Peek-A-Who* is Nina Laden, and that's a board book. Wow. That book has been been a bestseller. I don't know if bestseller is the right word for that one, but around and selling many books since my little ones were little. Picture books run the range.. and this is general, for kids, three to eight. And here's just a little nugget of information for some of you.

[00:24:33] They're typically 32 pages long and 500 words or less. 500 words or less. Typically, not always. So there will be longer ones. And actually, it's kind of been interesting when I started in the industry. It was fifteen hundred words or less. And then it kept going lower and lower until it was five hundred. And like people really. Hey, there's Anne. Hi, Anne. [laughter]

[00:25:02] Anne, I told our story. And you were gone. I know, it's okay.

[00:25:11] So 500 words or less. Yes. And so it's interesting that things kind of change over time.

[00:25:17] And lately that word count has been edging up a little bit. And now I hear more like 750 words or less. But it is an every word matters sort of book. For early readers, the early readers range in massive ways in terms of length, but they are for our newest readers and they are typically for five to eight year-olds. This edges into chapter books. And Chapter Books are a form of a middle-grade novel for a younger reader. Typically, for the seven to nine year-old group, the heart of middle-grade lies with eight to twelve year-olds and young adults are twelve and up.

[00:25:58] There was a question about language choice for all of these books. And so part of knowing the language that you want to use in each really has to do with knowing and studying each of the forms, and knowing exactly who your audience is, and what your intended purpose is for the book.

[00:26:19] And that would be something I really encourage you to learn from classes, or continuing again to go to events, or read in various craft books. So how do you write a book for kids? Oh, here is where I wish I could take the mystery out, and I'm hoping those of you who have written and published can back me up on this one. And it's a hard thing to say because I wish I could say this is how you do it. But the truth is, there isn't one right process, and everybody's path is different. And you really just have to seek out your own.

[00:26:58] But there is a lot of ways to get there. You should know that there are many rules, lots of rules. And that the rules are often broken. It's true. And that breaking the rules can get in your way. And breaking the rules can mean success. So really, what all of that means is you've got to learn the rules. So study, be active, read, participate in classes and conferences so that you can learn those rules. Because then if you know you're breaking them and you do it right, you can likely make some really big successes for yourself. But learning is part of the process. I know that's a terrible answer, isn't it? It's not what you came for, but it's true. And just taking the time to learn is important. There are a lot of resources to do that. Lots of them out there. So we've got online resources, people, books, libraries, classes, conferences, organizations. And you're already in what I think is the very best one for children's book writers and illustrators. And that's our own SCBWI. So Carol mentioned some information about the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Oh, gosh. Can I remember how many years it's been now? I think it's 47. I think it's forty seven year, the forty seventh conference, we just had in L.A? It is a massive organization that's global.

[00:28:39] There are more than 25,000 members, and there are regions all around the world. We have one of the strongest regions in the world. So we're really fortunate to have that.

[00:28:52] This region puts out more programming and more events and that the depth of the writer and illustrators in this area is just really phenomenal.

[00:29:03] And so this is the place to start.

[00:29:07] Globally with SCBWI dot org, and that's the site for this. There are so many opportunities for grants, for awards.

[00:29:21] They have podcasts. One of the best tools on here is something they call The Book. That simple, so if you're a member, you can access and download or order a printed copy of The Book, that has articles and interviews, lists of agents and publishers that's kept updated continually. There's even a section and I might be getting the title of it wrong.

[00:29:46] But it's What I Edit. Is that what it's called? Does somebody know it? What it will do is, if there is an editor who you know of that you're interested in submitting to, or you just want to read about different editors, it will list the books they have worked on. Sometimes that's the hardest thing to find is what has Jordan Brown at HarperCollins worked on. And you can go on there and find out. Okay, so he's worked on all of these books and they are not what I do, or they're exactly the kind of book I write. This is somebody I should maybe target for my own work. Regionally, we have so much available to us. Those of you who are asking about staying connected with other writers or finding critique groups, this is a way to do it. There is a critique group coordinator that can help match you up. One of the best places, though, to create critique groups is through classes. So if you're able to find a class that works for you, some of the nicest, strongest connections come from that. Within the

local region, I do want to say that the advisory committee, they're all volunteers. Can we give them a hand for that? [applause]

[00:30:57] Yes.


[00:31:00] They put on so much work. So, well, the local office, or not the local office. The organization's office in L.A. is all staffed.

[00:31:09] The regions around the world are all run by volunteers and they make the SCBWI world turn. And so we have them to thank for a lot of this. With our own region, there are so many. Some of you, you probably have the hand out of the passport series coming up with programs, webinars, and the first one kicking off is Tiffany Liao. Am I saying her last name right? She's phenomenal. She's so great and the program she's going to give on Mirrors, Windows and Doors: Writing [and Thinking] Cross-Culturally. I've actually been part of that master class, and it is worth every word she says. And so I really encourage you to be there to listen to what she has to say. It's an important topic and something we should all be tuned in to. And then she's gonna do a masterclass on what the heart wants, and that dives into character. So that might be something else you want to look at. I also want to mention that the SCBWI is really focused, too, on making sure that the programming is accessible to everybody. And so if there is a need and you're unable to afford the programming, there is a passport series scholarship that's available and you need to apply by September 30th. So do take advantage of that. Also retreats and conferences. I think we'll have a little note about that fantastic retreat that's coming up as well. So those are things that are not to be missed if you're able to attend.

[00:32:49] So other than SCBWI there are many other ways to find classes, conferences and events.

[00:32:58] SCBWI is key. There's also the Pacific Northwest Writers Association and they have an upcoming conference that's coming up soon. And so that might be something that you want to take a look at. They also offer classes. The thing that's a little bit different about the other organizations, writing organizations, is they're not solely focused on children's book writing. So there will be everything happening at this conference, but there will certainly be a section for those who are interested in children's books. We're also lucky in Seattle to have Hugo House, which offers a great deal of writing courses.

[00:33:37] And from what I know of what they're offering right now, there are opportunities for classes for middle-grade and young adult, although I think that the middle-grade young adult with Karen Finneyfrock has already sold out, but they also have great classes ongoing there. The University of Washington Professional and Continuing Education is the program that I actually teach for. So, they used to offer certificates in very specific areas of writing, and they have made that more general now. So, you can earn a certificate in writing and take many types of writing classes. You can take a class in writing for kids. You can take a memoir or nonfiction, screenwriting. And three courses over two



years will earn you a certificate in writing. I will be teaching in spring, just a focus on picture books. It will be on Wednesday nights and you can check that out online. We did that for the first time last year and that was really fun to just dissect the picture book page by page, really character by character, element by element. And the ongoing series that was Fall, Winter, Spring, that is no longer a part of the continuing education series, I'm now offering privately, and I have a new class starting in October. So if you're interested in that, I'll have my information up and you can find me and seek it out.


[00:35:12] Libraries. Okay, so we gave the big round of applause to Linda Johns because, right? We've got libraries to access and there's so many resources. And you've got Linda right here, who knows so much about kids books, the SCBWI, could probably even guide you towards many craft books for this particular industry, your local library and the kids book librarian is somebody to make friends with. So do check them out. The King County Library System and Woodinville has been doing, I think it's first Saturdays, Stasia Kehoe, a local SCBWI member offering free classes as well for writers. Take advantage of that. That's gold.

[00:36:01] And then in bookstores were so rich, especially in independent bookstores in this area. The University of Washington's UBS bookstore. The staff there, secret garden books. I could keep naming them. Get to know them. They will tell you what to read. So if you're not sure about what's the latest thing that you should have in your hands. Check this out.

[00:36:23] I'm telling you, I think the last time I went to UBS, Melanie, there was like, she's like, you got to see this one. You got to look at this picture book. And I sat down with a pile, this high, that she would not let me leave without reading.

[00:36:36] And, you know, worth every page. So check those out as well. Then don't discount your own local arts community. So I actually don't live in Seattle. I live over in Port Townsend. And you just, if you tap into the arts community, the bookstores in your local area, the libraries, you might not be aware of all that they have to offer. So in my own little town, The Imprint Bookstore also has a writer's workshop and they offer classes ongoing. Bainbridge Island has The Barn. They'll be having a picture book workshop with Jen Mann. And I know they're working on a middle-grade class. So lots of opportunities that you might have locally, that I might not know about because I'm not in your tiny little area that you live. Adding on to that, there are many books that you can access and online resources, almost to the point where it could be overwhelming. And I want to thank Carol for putting together a resource worksheet that gives you some to touch on. And I'm going to give you two that I think are a great place to start.

[00:37:47] So the first is our own Chinook Update. So if you're not receiving the Chinook Update, that is the blog that our own region does, this is a must add and you might subscribe to it so that it ends up in your inbox.



[00:38:03] You will find out classes that are happening in the area. Book events. Different Q&A, things that are happening within the region. So if you want to be informed about what's happening locally, this is a place to get that information and you won't miss out.

[00:38:22] Also, in a bigger sense, one of my favorites is Publisher's Weekly. Specifically Children's Bookshelf. So if you just go to the Publisher's Weekly website, there's a link to Bookshelf. And you can click and subscribe and receive those e-mails, so it's typically every Tuesday, sometimes Tuesday and Thursday, I'll get that in my inbox and it links to articles about what's happening in the industry right now. There will be Q&A with authors and illustrators, book reviews, and my favorite, so all of those of you who asked about publishers and agents, they always publish a section of the Rights Report. And so what it does is it tells you what has been announced as sold. It tells you who the writer and illustrators were, who's the publisher and the editor who bought the book, and who are the agents who sold those books. So that is it. Plus, you get a blurb, you get a little, it's like getting a little bit of a pitch lesson right within a Rights Report. There's just so much meatiness right there. That gives you a sense of who are the agents that are, If you see a specific agent's name over and over again, you can be like, wow, that Rosemary Stimola is on fire. You know, those books are selling.

[00:39:50] And it can give you a sense of who you could start to look at in terms of agents and even editors.

[00:39:57] All right.

[00:39:59] Let's get into a little bit of the 101 of children's book writing, and I think that this is a key piece. Myths and misconceptions. So when I came in there are some books here I know that are going to be part of the raffle. And actually, if you're missing your ticket, somebody did turn in.. I have a little blue ticket here that somebody, if you're missing yours, might be yours. This book was right on top. *You Can Write Children's Books* by Tracy E. Dils.

[00:40:29] And this is actually the book that I'm giving you a handful of the myths and misconceptions from. And these have not changed from the first edition to the second edition. And there are a few more in here, but these are important ones. Writing books for kids is easier than writing for adults. I think I've already shared a little bit about that with you. Stories for kids need to teach a moral lesson. So this is where we grown ups really get in trouble. Kids don't want to read a moral lesson. Can you teach kids through books? Yes. But if it's preachy and didactic, they're like, not for me. So you.. that's the sure way to receive an.. a rejection is to fill it with some teaching preachiness in there. Because my kids, I'm going to slash this, because my kids, grandkids, students, neighbors' kids, dogs, cats love my stories. They should be published. The truth is that they may love them and they may be great stories, but they may not be ready for publication or they might not be right for publication. So this gets back to the learning the rules and putting in the work.

[00:41:49] This is a big one. I need to illustrate my book or find an illustrator. This is a no. No. So we don't want to find illustrators for our books. Actually, if you seek out an illustrator on your own, you're more likely to be rejected. What a publisher wants to do, if you're a writer is get your manuscript and pair it with the perfect illustrator. Vice versa for you as illustrators and less, you know, it's different if you are the writer and the illustrator, in which case you might want to be willing to give up one thing or the other. If they said, you know what, I love the story, but I don't think you should illustrate it. If you're willing to say I'm cool with that, you're more likely to get published. Often times a publisher does something really helpful. If you're a debut author, they a lot of times will pair you with a superstar illustrator. Right? So then, you know, when you've written a book and Caldecott Winner Dan Santat's your illustrator.

[00:42:54] The librarians are gonna be like, I gotta have Dan Santat's book, which is your book. So you don't want to do that. So that just hopefully just took a lot of pressure off of you. You don't have to illustrate your book. You don't want to illustrate your book unless you know what you're doing, and you don't have to find that illustrator.

[00:43:14] If I send my work to publishers, they might steal my idea. They won't. You know what the truth is? There are a thousand of us right now thinking about writing a story about dragons. And if you send your story about dragons to a publisher and the next year, a book comes out about the same thing. The truth is, they were probably working on that book five years before. They're too busy. They don't need to steal your ideas. Just don't even worry about it. And this kind of pairs with I need to copyright my work. Don't worry about copyrighting. As a matter of fact, if you copyright your work. You then, when you sell your work, will create a complication for your publisher because they will have to work with that and get that fixed. So no need there. You know what? When I peeked in here to see if these were the same, there was one more and I loved it.

[00:44:09] Got to put on the readers. I know it's terrible.

[00:44:13] If my story or book idea is rejected, the manuscript just wasn't good enough. And I don't have what it takes. That's a myth and misconception. It's not true. The truth is, you are going to get rejected even if your work is good, and the best sellers.. Harry Potter was rejected many, many times. Most books are, even if they turn out to be a bestseller. The truth is, it's subjective and it's got to end up in the right hands of the right person at the right time. So just because you get a "No", doesn't mean it's not good.

[00:44:52] So we keep moving. That's what we use each other for. So what does it take to get published?

[00:45:04] Several steps. Step one. We have to write.

[00:45:08] Yes, it's true. And we have to start illustrating and actually I should out myself right now because I have no illustration, potential, talent, know how whatsoever. But I do have friends in the room who do and who teach classes on illustration. And so I will, I can introduce you even to Dana Sullivan. Can you give yourself a wave? And I will have him, if there's some illustrating questions that pop up, I might point him, you, in the direction of Dana for some answers.

[00:45:45] But the truth is, we have to start writing and drawing. We start, we need to start working and first deciding on form, like, what are we writing? What is the story we're trying to tell? And so I gave you many forms in the beginning, board book to YA, and learning what each of those are. As a teacher, what I find over the course of time is, most of us walk into the room writing or thinking we're writing a picture book when we're writing something else. So part of it is knowing who are you writing for? And are you writing it in the right way?

[00:46:23] Craft. And here is where we sink a huge bit of our time. What is the best way for us to write what we're writing? And craft comes with time and learning, and practice and more practice. And this is where you turn to the SCBWI and other organizations, classes and conferences to grow your craft and learn.


[00:46:45] Also books, reading and reading and reading until.. You don't stop, actually. The reading never stops. Read, and read to learn.

[00:46:57] And then once you're working, crafting and you have something, revision is essential. So there were several questions about when can I send my work in to agents or publishers? And the truth is it's when it's the best it can be, and not a second before that. So revision is critical, and revision is not editing. It's revisioning the work and making sure you have done everything in the best possible way, to tell your story in the best possible way.

[00:47:28] And seeking out support, finding the who and the what, that can make you a better writer.

[00:47:35] And this step can take a long time. One of the things that I should have said, and myths and misconceptions, actually I missed two things. One, that this will make you rich.

[00:47:46] The truth is there are a handful of really rich people in the children's book industry. But you know their names and think about how many people's names that you don't, that aren't household names. And, this is not the reason to get into this business. The second truth is that it's not a quick thing and that it takes a lot of time. And one of our most iconic writers in this world who's written picture books to young adult novels, Laurie Halse Anderson, said she gave herself five years to publish and she did it within that five years. But she says she should have given herself ten. And I will be honest with you, ten's pretty average. That's a little overwhelming to hear, I'm sure. But that is really the truth of it when you're thinking about learning, the time it takes to write, getting through one



manuscript, to being rejected, moving on to the next. Because the truth is you're probably going to write several things before you hit on the perfect one.

[00:48:51] Here's the big one for everybody. Step two, marketing. This is when we get in to agents and editors. But first, it takes the research.


[00:49:07] I think I also saw a question about trends and how to know, like what, what to write and when and what's hot now. And the truth is, if you're writing what's hot now, it won't be when you're trying to sell it. So you just write the thing that you want to write. And the research has to come from knowing who to send to. And that's a daunting task. And one of the places to start, or two of the places to start are two things I already mentioned. Publishers Weekly with looking at those Rights Reports, and starting to pay attention to whose names show up there, and SCBWI's The Book, which will have lists of agents and editors, and there are a lot of online resources as well. The nice thing about The Book is it's focused solely on children's book publishers and agents. Another favorite place of mine, especially for novels, is to read the acknowledgments page in those books. Does anybody love the acknowledgments page?

[00:50:07] Me too. They're like, I often times read the acknowledgments page before and after. And have you ever read them and been like, they're thanking all of their friends and they're like, you're like, wow, look at who their friends are that have been reading their books. Yes. See, I see your heads nodding.

[00:50:24] The truth is, there's probably a group of you who are pre-published now and down the road, we'll be reading your book and we'll be like, wow, look at who she or he has in their acknowledgments. So you kind of grow up together, and that's why all those names end up together in those books, and it's exciting. So those are a few places to look for those names. Networking again, this is, I keep kind of pushing this, but classes, conferences, events, you just never know who you will meet that will send you in the right direction, that you share your story with, and they will say, you know who was just talking about wanting to see a book like that? And I know people that's happened to. So that's a place to go.

[00:51:07] So when we talk about agents and publishers. Let's just start with what's the difference between the two. So agents versus editors. Agents work for you. Right? So they've got your back. They're getting, they're looking out for your rights. Where an editor is working for the publisher.

[00:51:28] So do you need an agent to sell your book to that editor? No. You can do it on your own. The truth is, that answer of "no" has become slightly more challenging as time has gone on. So when I started, less people felt like they needed to have an agent. More publishing houses were open to submissions. And that's no longer the case. A lot of them are closed to submissions. And so having



the agent in your corner gives you far more opportunities to submit to anybody your agent wants to submit to.

[00:52:04] The truth about agents, though, is not all agents are the same. Just like, you know, if you're choosing a spouse, not all people, even though great people are right match for you. We all work, have different working patterns. I have heard that that is the closest kind of match to what it's like to work with an agent is the same with a spouse.

[00:52:30] And the truth is, a lot of people will start with one agent and have a second or third because they don't work. And that's not necessarily because an agent is bad. It's just the working relationship. But not all agents are equal, and they have different reputations within the industry. There are certain agents that have really great relationships with editors, and that agent can send on your manuscript and it will get be read in a weekend and another Agent X sends to that same editor. And it might take a month, but that will be faster, that month probably, than it would be read if it was sent in unsolicited to that editor.

[00:53:16] And then it sits in what's called a slush pile, which actually used to be a physical pile when I started when we used the snail mail these in, now almost all submissions are done electronically, but I've seen physical slush piles, and they are manuscripts that are piled like waist deep along walls in publishing houses.

[00:53:38] And so those now, you can imagine virtually, are a stack of email files in editor's folders. So doing the work, doing the research, trying to find that right match for you.

[00:53:56] Honestly, I think the truth is that getting out to when, for instance, our local region will have Tiffany, and while she's an editor and not an agent, you will see her speak and you'll be like, I really like what she has to say. She's doing the kind of thing that I'm doing, that is somebody I'm gonna put on my list to watch and to submit to in the future. Conferences are a great place to just kind of see and interact with agents and editors. You guys, get on Twitter. It's okay to be a Twitter stalker. You can learn a lot about agents and editors on Twitter. Most of them are on Twitter and you get a sense of their personality and what they're looking for and what they're wanting, just by how they interact. You don't have to say anything. You can chime into the conversation or not.

[00:54:48] How are we doing? We're doing okay on time? Cool. This good so far, everybody? All right. Everybody's good. They had their coffee and we still got you awake.

[00:54:59] Ok, a couple of more things here, I thought I would share with you. I don't want you to try and write these down, because there's a lot here. This is just more like absorb. So those of you who have started to write, this is a knowing when you're ready.

[00:55:16] And this was shared with me by Jordan Brown, who is an editor, an amazing editor at HarperCollins. He works both with Walden Pond Press and Balzer and Bray, publishing middle-grade novels and young adult novels. And he has some really good tips here. And I just want to share them with you. If you haven't undertaken any revision on your own, your manuscript isn't ready to submit. If you haven't yet read your entire manuscript out loud to yourself, your manuscript isn't ready to submit. Now, this is critical for picture books. You should be reading your picture books out loud because they're meant to be read out loud. And you should have other people read them out loud so that you can hear them. But this is also true of your novels. So when you have a novel, you should sit down, print it out, with it in your lap and read that whole thing aloud to yourself. You will hear it in a whole different way. Number three, if you can conceive of another event that happens and your characters young life that might be more important than the one you've chosen to write about, your manuscript isn't ready to submit.

[00:56:21] So you have to consider why am I choosing this one and not that more important one to write about?

[00:56:29] If your character hasn't done one thing yet that has genuinely surprised you, your manuscript isn't ready to submit. We want surprise, yeah? If you would hand, this is key, I think this might be the best one on here. If you would hand your manuscript to someone and say it starts out kind of slow, but stick with it because it picks up later. Or, let me just add to this, if you have to give any note, if you have to say what you should know about this or let me tell you this before you read it, you're not ready. It's not ready to submit.

[00:57:04] If you haven't explored your opportunities to work on your manuscript with a writing group or a writing partner, I'll add writing class, your manuscript isn't ready to submit. And if you can't name two recently published books that compare well to your manuscript, and one key way in which yours is unlike anything else out there, your manuscript isn't ready to submit.

[00:57:33] How do you find those books? You talk to your peers. You come in and you talk to Linda. You go to your bookstores. You Google picture books on octopuses, you find, you know, themes, topics, you find everything that you can out there. Sometimes that's scary because you think, what if I find somebody else who's already done what I'm doing? You need to know. Because if it's out there already, and yours doesn't stand out in some unique way, it's not ready. You want to find its special thing.

[00:58:06] But then what? Okay, so let's say you finished your book. You've done all the things, you've learned all the things, you've found the agent, the editor you want to target. What do you do? So, you submit. So, here's another whole bit of, how do I submit a picture book? Well, we could spend a whole two hours just talking about preparation of, how do you format, what's standard manuscript formatting? So, if that's a new term for you, write that one down. Google it. Also, go look


in The Book. The SCBWI book will show you how to format a manuscript. It also has an article on how to write a query letter. So once you have targeted somebody, you know, you're done. You've got a perfectly formatted manuscript. You're ready to submit. You send it off.

[00:59:00] And you wait. And then you wait, and you wait some more.

[00:59:05] And then what's going to happen is you're likely going to get a rejection. And you know what you do? You celebrate, because that is. How many people have gotten rejections in this room? Oh, good. Me too. We should all raise them. If you've gotten a rejection, that means you've put yourself out there and tried. If you haven't gotten a rejection back, then you probably haven't submitted. I don't know a writer and illustrator who hasn't received a rejection. So you might get a form rejection where you can tell, oh, these are you know, this is the thing they send to everybody who they're saying no to. You can usually tell when you get those. So that time when you get the form rejection that also has a little added note to it, that you can tell is personal to your work. Oh my goodness. Then you have a celebration with your writing friends or even with your family, even if they don't get it. But that just tells you you took a step closer, like that person just took a time, even just took time to write me something personal. And then maybe you get personal rejection. Okay? That just that says something even like, maybe I'd love to see what else you have. Then you really celebrate. That's again, one more step forward.

[01:00:16] Even better. Maybe you have an agent or an editor who says, I would love to see this again if you're willing to revise. Actually, this is really common. A lot of times they will want to see if you're able to take revision notes, and what you're able to do with them. If you're willing to put in the work to make the changes, because some people dig in their heels. And the truth is, if you're going to work with an agent and especially an editor, it's a collaborative process. It becomes more, it's your book, but there's a lot of input coming in because they're putting the big money behind putting it on the shelves. If you do that, then you have a party, right? That's super exciting and fun. If you get past that, there's still lots more hurdles. If that editor wants to give you a contract, that has to go through an acquisitions team and acquisitions meeting that involves, depending on the publishing house, a lot of different people, including marketing, who look at your book and a whole different way than how the editor is looking. And if you get past that and actually get the contract in your hands, guess what? You get to do more revision. Yeah, you've probably already done it with the agent that you got, and then maybe you're getting more revision notes before you even get the contract.

[01:01:32] And then you revise again, and you wait on the contract. Remember, I told you this process can take a long time. The whole actual publication of the book can take a long time. Often times, it can take, from that point of having a contract offered, like a year would be quick. And with a picture book, because it involves illustration, like I've seen them take even up to five years before they're actually on a bookshelf. There's a lot of art that's involved that goes into that. But if you get that contract, then you have a really big party. And like I said, more revisions. And then you wait for



that publication, and then you do celebration. Well, like we'll do with Carroll's launch party. Can I just back up a minute and say launch parties are so much fun? Yes, right? So the Chinook update often says book events, when they're doing book events around our community. And I have known so many people who are like, I don't know anybody there, or I don't know the author or the illustrator. So I don't think I should go. Can you imagine if your book was coming out and somebody said that, if you didn't know them? You'd be like, come to my party. I wrote a book.


[01:02:49] I want you to see it. Right? Don't be shy to go to those parties. Get with some of your writer friends, and go listen to them talk about, read from, show the illustrations of their work. They're a lot of fun to go to. And then the publicity kicks in, because the truth is that the publishers don't do all the work. It's mostly you, you're still putting in that work.

[01:03:14] I'm just noting that I didn't touch on self-publishing, and I know that came up in a couple of places. And self-publishing is certainly an option. And it really just depends on what you want to do, and what you want for your book. Self-publishing's hard. You still want to have a really solid, well-crafted book to put in the hands of readers. And if you're just publishing because you want something to share and have for your family, that's great. But if it's something you really want to sell, the honest truth is most self-published books sell less than one hundred and fifty copies. It's not a lot. And that's not something you can make a career out of. It's a drop in the bucket on those ones who really break out.

[01:04:02] And there are a handful, and there are a needle in a haystack, that then find success and are usually picked up by publishers and then published in a bigger way, in that way. So it just depends on what you want. It's certainly an option. Know that you're going to have to put the marketing behind it to sell the books, and you've got to deliver, on your own, the quality needed to sell those books.

[01:04:30] All right. And so I want to finish with.

[01:04:37] [Sigh] In sharing with you, you know, the efforts that it does take to make it in this industry, "Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience." And if there is anything I can tell you that you need in this industry, it's passion, perseverance and patience. And I haven't ever heard of anybody who has stuck with it, whether it took five years, ten or twenty, that they didn't get there. So the ones that don't get there are the ones who stop. So if you stop, it's not going to happen. If you keep pushing for it, you will eventually get there. It just might take some time. And this world can really often feel competitive. And we can look in this room. There are probably one hundred and fifty of you out in the crowd and that can feel like a lot of people wanting the same thing. And how can, with all of these people, how can I make my own mark? The truth is that you can only bring to the table what you have, and the person sitting next to you cannot. So there is room for all of us. And the world wants



your stories, and you should share them with us. And I know, I'm sure I did not answer one hundred and fifty questions just now, and there are a few more.

[01:05:59] And I'm going to look at a couple of them. And then we also have some microphones so that some of you can come around the room and ask some of those questions that I didn't touch on. And some of the illustrator questions, I'm going to pull Dana and Dalton, if I can, to answer any that might be out there, that can be answered. But you guys, I thank you for joining Seattle Writes and the Seattle Public Library, SCBWI, and me. And I hope we took a little bit of mystery out of it all. And I will, after Q&A, be sticking around to answer more questions and say hello. And I'd love for you to find me, if you're interested in the classes that I offer, you can Google UW for that picture book class that I mentioned that happens in the spring. And you can find all of that information from my private and my UW classes on my website, as well as my coaching information. And if you're at all interested in that, I do have a wait list there, so do reach out to me soon. Yeah. So let's go ahead and jump in with questions.

[01:07:21] I was wondering. Typically with like a form rejection, you wouldn't respond and like, clutter up the agent's email. But I was wondering if you got a personal rejection, if it would be okay to, like, respond and thank them, and try to keep that connection?

[01:07:37] I'm kind of having a hard time. Is it just me? Or maybe just how?

[01:07:40] Should I have it closer? Can you hear me?

[01:07:44] There, yes.

[01:07:45] Oh, I'm sorry.

[01:07:45] That's okay.

[01:07:46] Okay. I was wondering if you get, so if you get like a form rejection to an agent's e-mail you probably wouldn't respond and like clutter up the inbox. But if you get a personal rejection, is it okay to, like, respond and thank them or like try to keep that connection?

[01:08:01] Yes, so if you receive from an agent just a form rejection. Just take that as a rejection. So I wouldn't then just jump right in with a revision and send that right back to them. They're probably not interested in that particular story.

[01:08:18] But if you get a personal rejection, it's totally fine to write back and thank them for their time. Yeah, that's great. And perhaps that might lead to something more. But yeah, thank you's are always good. Yeah. So there are people coming around with microphones. Hi.

[01:08:41] Mine was about the Amazon.

[01:08:43] Okay, I couldn't quite hear you again. Sorry.

[01:08:45] Sorry, I'm kind of bashful too. If you want to do Amazon, publish on Amazon? Is that a good idea for your first time?

[01:08:55] Is it a good idea to use Amazon for your first time publishing? So that just depends. So that goes back to what I was just saying about self publishing. It depends on what your goals are. So if you just want to get your book out there, it's certainly a fine option. But if you want it to be seen widely, it might not be the easiest option. I don't know if, is that kind of what you're looking for. Okay. And actually, there was a question about how to get your self-published books in front of librarians. And Linda, since you have the mic, can I just have you say a note about that?

[01:09:39] Yes. So, you can get your self-published book in a library. It's probably easiest to start with your local library, wherever you have a library card. It works the same almost everywhere. At Seattle Public, come talk to a librarian. There's information on our website also, about how to submit it so that it's purchased. Our purchaser for children's and teen books loves to hear from local writers, and especially if your books are set in Seattle, she wants to have them. And actually, she has said many times, she just wants to support local writers and illustrators.

[01:10:19] And the SCBWI, if you are a member, also has resources about self-publishing on their website, and they even give a yearly award to the best self-published book. So that is an option. You just have more kind of on your shoulders in terms of publication and marketing. Okay.

[01:10:38] I guess I should look at what you just said. But I wanted to know, do you have advice for exactly how to publicize yourself if you're self-publishing? Like, how do you get your book in front of people? And I had one other, just if there's a different standard manuscript format for kids books or M.G. books, specifically.

[01:11:02] What was the last? So, for kids books and what books specifically?

[01:11:06] For M.G.?

[01:11:07] Oh, middle-grade.

[01:11:08] Yeah. Is there a specific standard manuscript format?

[01:11:09] Formatting is the same regardless. Okay.



[01:11:11] Okay, but for the self publishing, do you have advice on how to?

[01:11:16] How to publicize. I would say it's very much the same probably as a published writer would publicize. I know oftentimes, I mean, to have a presence online is one thing. You would probably want to try and hold your book events, just like a launch party, if you have your own local independent bookstore, that would be willing to host you. You know, then there's money that you can put behind it, in terms of advertising, that a lot of us don't particularly necessarily have the funding to do that with. A lot of self-published authors hook into something, you know, let's say it has a farm-based theme, and so maybe they hook into farmer's markets, and are at fairs and local events where they can sell their book. Yeah.

[01:12:11] Hi. Thanks for coming, and my question is around your thoughts on.. Can you hear me?

[01:12:18] A little bit.

[01:12:19] How about now?.

[01:12:20] It kind of gets echo-y in here. Is it just me? It might just be my.. okay.

[01:12:26] How about now?

[01:12:27] Yeah.

[01:12:29] Okay. So in terms of maybe self-publishing and, as a strategy to get noticed by publishers? I want to hear your thoughts around that.


[01:12:41] Honestly, I don't think self-publishing is the way to get noticed by a publisher or an agent. I think you can, if you are a strong writer, there are people who have been noticed online for simple things like Facebook posts or strong blog posts. Mike Jung, I know that Arthur Levine, who is the editor of the Harry Potter books, enjoyed Mike Jung as a person so much and the way he presented himself on Facebook, he connected with him there, and became very interested in his work. And now he's published several books with him. So blogs are a possible way, and then honestly just creating the best work you can and submitting to who you want to work with. That's how to get noticed. Yeah.

[01:13:31] Hello.

[01:13:31] Hi.

[01:13:32] Thank you.





[01:13:32] You're welcome.

[01:13:35] So I have a question for your illustration folks.

[01:13:37] Yes. My illustration friends.

[01:13:40] How can illustrator's kind of go through this process to, where do we submit work? How do we submit work? Are there support groups for the creation of our illustrations in a portfolio?

[01:13:54] Here comes one. Dana.

[01:13:57] I'd say the number one thing, whether you're an illustrator or a, I want to just find out, first of all, how many of you are just scared shitless about this whole process?

[01:14:06] Yeah. Yeah. So I want you to know it is a process, the marketing yourself. All that stuff, if you're not comfortable with it, don't do it. It's a process, and you don't have to do it all today. Okay?

[01:14:06] Yeah. That's true.

[01:14:20] So the number one thing that I think you've already said is community. So you've already started that, but you need to join a critique group or form one or something but you need a community, because you're all a bunch of weirdos, and you need to be with other weirdos. So that's really going to help. It's you know, we call it, you know, our tribe, so, good.

[01:14:41] You're doing the first step, but you need a smaller group that you can hold yourself accountable to, and show, and all that stuff. So for getting your work in front of publishers. You know, a lot of really good way is is online posting stuff on Instagram, whatever that is. And Twitter and things like that, Facebook, I guess only old people read Facebook, so, but that's a really good way. A lot of editors and art directors are looking online for your work, and they might actually approach you. There was a question here about, should I put a synopsis with my work? Hell, no. No. If your work doesn't speak for itself, then it's not speaking for itself. They don't want portraits. They want a picture that tells a story. You might think, oh my God. I'm not as good as so-and-so, Well, I'm not either. I mean, so-and-so's really, really good. But we we all have our own stories. So they're looking more for your voice, not your technique. So, and I really want to echo, self-publishing is a bitch. It just is. And once you go through your family and friends then what? You know, what are you gonna do? At least it's on demand and you don't have a whole garage full of books. But.

[01:16:07] Dana, can I have you answer one more thing?



[01:16:09] Sure.

[01:16:10] If your book references or uses an illustrated likeness of a celebrity, what or how do you deal with permissions?

[01:16:18] Hah. Well, I hope you don't have to, because I have two in my last book, and only one of them gave me permission. So actually, I don't think that's a problem. You know, if they're celebrity, it's like a photo. But, that's why you go with the publisher, you can ask them.

[01:16:37] Cool. [unintelligible]

[01:16:40] I have one that's on this card, too, that I think it's an important one. And there's one word I can't read here. As a person of color with an I'm missing the word there, I'm wanting to work with other people of color, so curious about editors, publishers and agents of color out there. The truth is, we need diverse books dot org. [<https://diversebooks.org/>] Check that out. And diversity within this kid lit community is so needed and sought after right now.

[01:17:08] And there are publishers and a new publishing under Penguin. And I'm forgetting the name of it. Namrata Tripathi. Does somebody remember the name of the imprint? I know I'm forgetting, too. It's a penguin imprint and its focus is on publishing diverse books. And when I say that, I'm saying that in terms of diversity, cross-culturally, whether it be race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, whatever it is we need that represented in kids' books. And it's being very sought after. It's not a trend. It is what is needed because it's a reflection of who we are as a community. And the kid lit community is really standing behind that. Oh, we need diverse books, dot org. Yeah.

[01:18:05] So I'm going to add one more publisher to that list, too, and it's a local publisher, Lee and Low Books, which is now headed up by Cheryl Klein, who used to be with Arthur A. Levine Books and is now their senior editor.

[01:18:19] Yes. Lee and Low Books. Lee and Low, L e e and Low, L o w. And then I think I've got a microphone up here. Yes, hi.

[01:18:35] Hi, I'm a young artist and writer, and I was wondering if you guys had any tips about how to kind of get yourself out there? Maybe if you're doing it at an earlier age?

[01:18:47] Ok. So I think I missed the very last part. You're thinking like, how do you get yourself out there? Because you're younger?

[01:18:53] Yeah.

[01:18:54] You know what? It doesn't matter how old you are. Just keep, yep. Just do what you're doing and get your work out there. Study, take classes yourself. There are many published authors who are teens, and that can be you, too. Can I give you one book recommendation, that's my favorite, and actually it's a recommended text I use for my fall class, and it's called *Spilling Ink*. And it is intended for young writers, but it is worth gold for all writers. So that is one I definitely tune into, and they have a great website for young writers, and probably can even give you more resources, as a young writer, of places to turn. Yeah, great.

[01:19:42] Ok. And one other, the African-American Writers Alliance, that is local, is another place that you can turn to.

[01:19:51] Hi, I just have a quick question, you mentioned with picture books that you, if you've written something, do not get an illustrator, but are you to give some sort of suggestions about what you think [inaudible]?

[01:20:11] Ok. So Illustrator notes, this is what you're asking about. So Illustrator notes are a tricky thing. So really, the only time you should need to add illustration notes on your manuscript is when something is intended to happen on the page that could not be like discerned from what is written. And a lot of times it's because something very opposite is happening in the illustrations than is happening on the page. So you would not be like, Gretta is wearing yellow boots. Unless for some reason, those yellow boots are key to the story and would need to be explained why they're yellow. So we've got to let go of that piece of it. The book is meant to be a marriage of illustration and text, and they each need each other to tell the full story. And what's amazing is that you can give your manuscript and have it be in the hands of an illustrator who will bring a whole other element to your story, to life that wasn't even necessarily there to begin with.

[01:21:14] Yeah. So as little as possible. Maybe one more. Does somebody have a mike? I see a hand right here.


[01:21:22] Oh, yell it out. The yell actually might be better than the microphone.

[01:21:29] This is just for the person who was wondering about diversity, publishers, another one is Just Us Books. So I would check them out.

[01:21:36] Cool. Thank you. Just Us Books. Yes. And and maybe just one more.

[01:21:43] How do you go about making doing character? Building characters?

[01:21:50] How do you go about building characters? Okay, well, this is probably, I could spend an hour on this and then some. So, the truth is our characters have to come to life on the page. And if



character building is something you need help with. First of all, you've got a great opportunity in the master class that's being offered by Tiffany Liao, that's coming up in October, because that's going to be her focus. And building character is something you would likely do in any class that you're taking on writing or illustrating for kids, because it is the key to story.

[01:22:27] Yeah, I'm sorry not to be able to give a more specific answer.

[01:22:32] All right. Well, thank you all. I am going to stick around. And so I'm going to turn the microphone back over, but I hope to meet many of you soon.

[01:22:42] Thank you.

[01:22:49] Thank you, Jolie. That was wonderful. Great information.

[piano]

[01:22:55] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation, and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.

