

From Concept to Career

The Basics of Picture Books

Presented by
the **Inland Northwest** Region

Tuesday, September 1

7:00 PM CST

(5:00 PM PST, 6:00 PM MST, 8:00 PM EST)

This series is made possible by a grant from
SCBWI and the Authors Coalition of America.

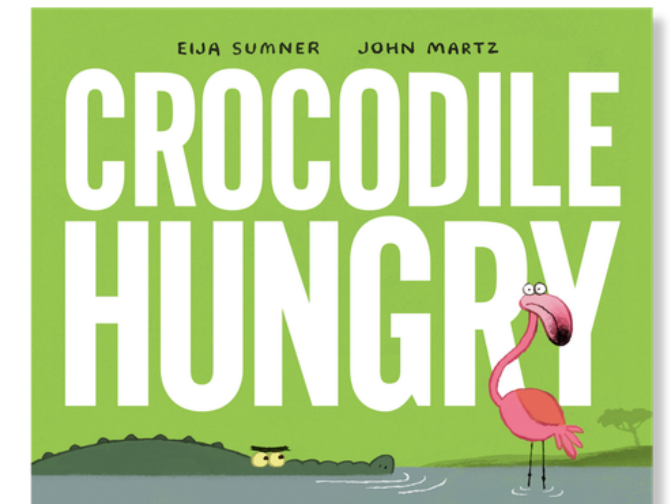
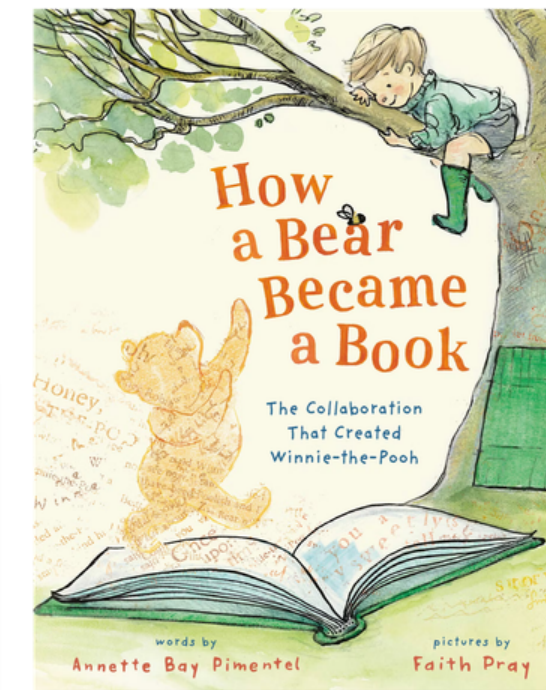


From Concept
to Career

PICTURE BOOK BASICS

Inland NW SCBWI

SCBWI



Published picture books from Inland NW SCBWI Members

**“A PICTURE BOOK IS
A BOOK FOR PEOPLE
WHO CAN’T READ.”**

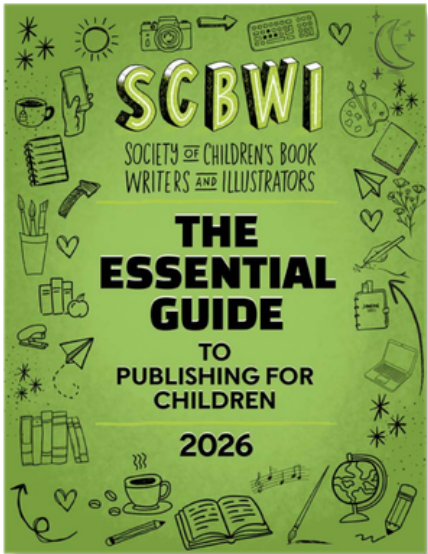
- Ann Whitford Paul

Recommended book on writing
picture books!



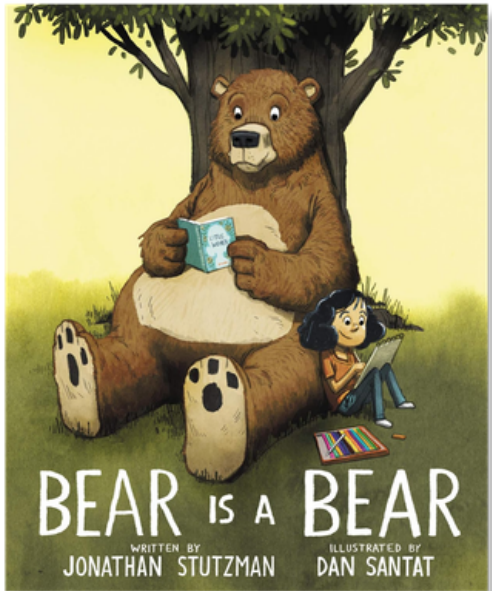
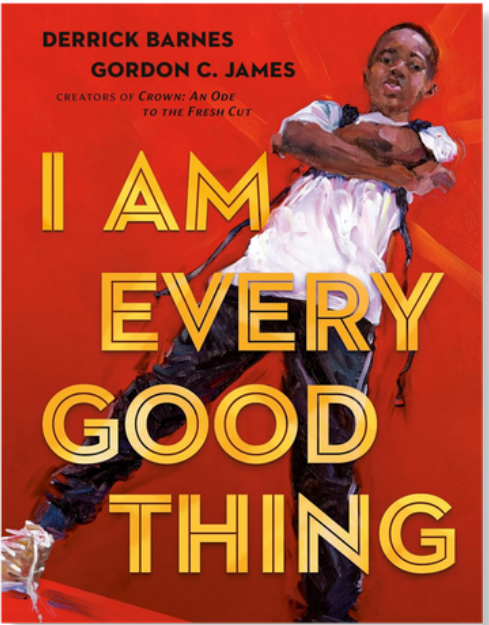
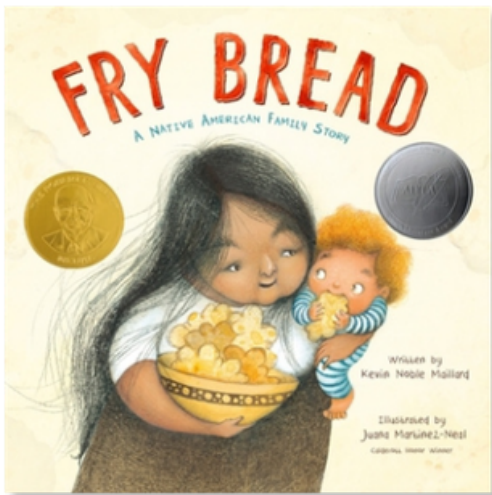
WHAT'S A PICTURE BOOK?

A picture book usually has a combination of words and illustrations that work together to tell a story for children—usually shared by an adult reader.



CATEGORY	# OF TYPED PAGES	TYPICAL AGE	SAMPLE TITLES
PICTURE BOOKS	2-3	3-8	<i>All Are Welcome, Fry Bread, I Am Every Good Thing, Bear is A Bear</i>

From the SCBWI Essential Guide to Publishing for Children



HOW LONG SHOULD A PB BE?

The word count for a picture book manuscript is a fuzzy number, but 300-550 is a good word count goal. Fairy tales and fables can be longer, as well as nonfiction and informational titles can be longer and will include backmatter.

When picture books are published, they are usually 32 or 40 pages. Sometimes they can be even longer, but the page numbers are always a multiple of eight.

A good go-to for word
count answers and more!

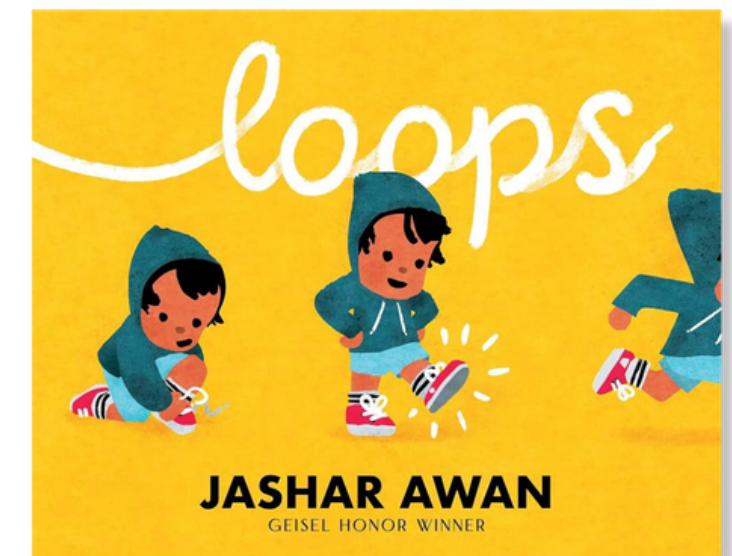
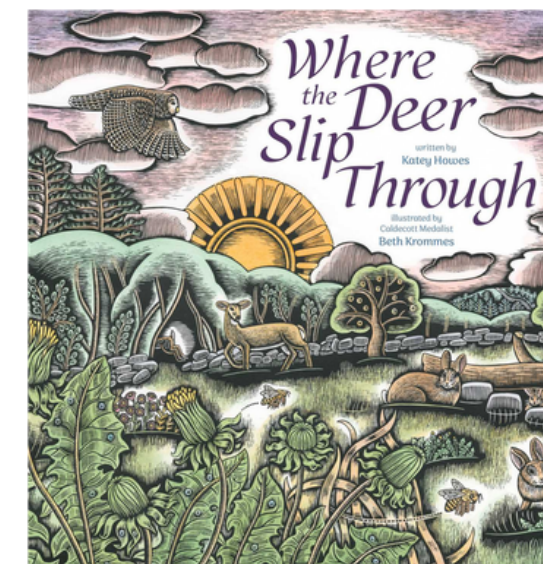
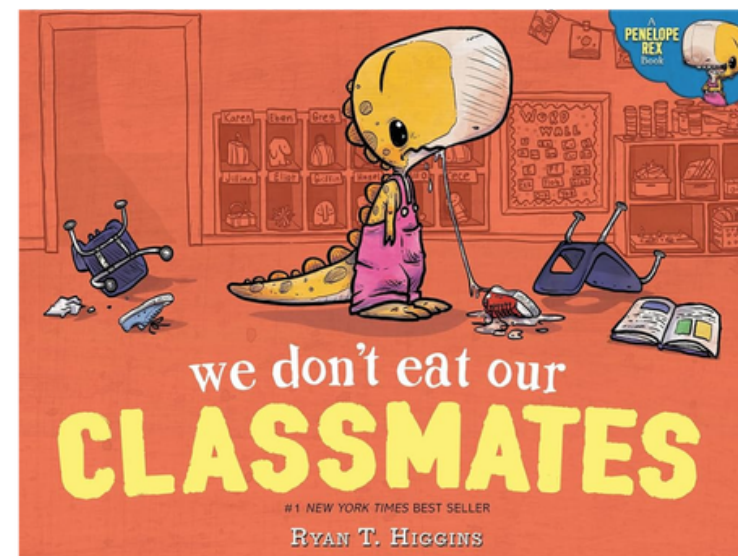
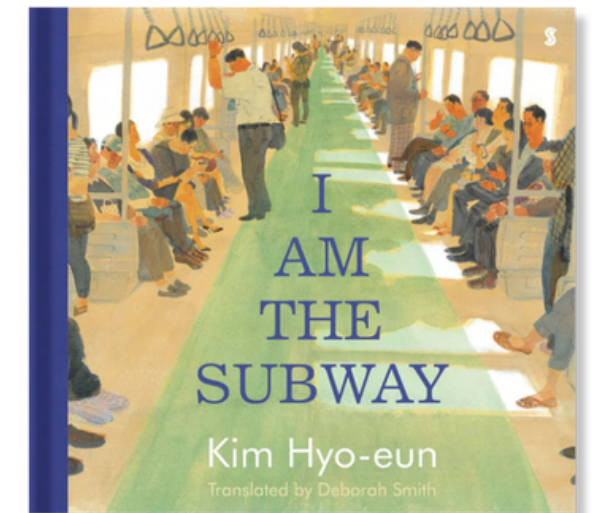
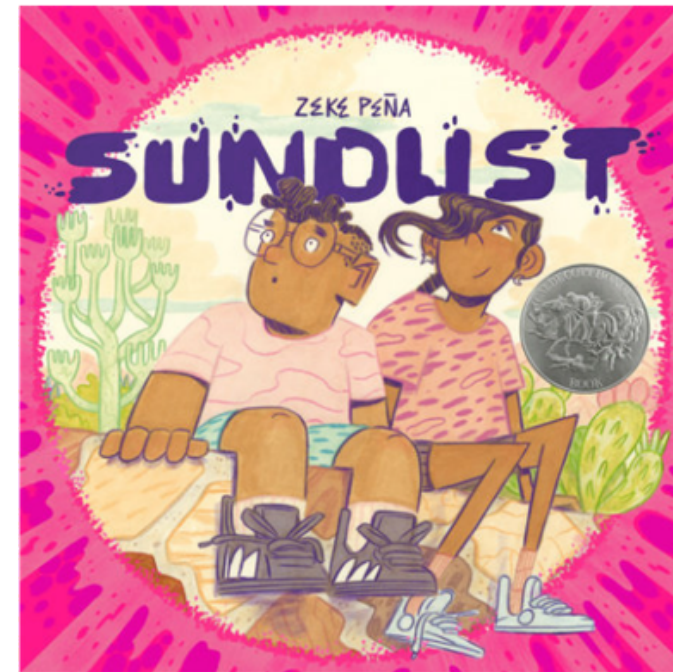


Jennifer Laughran's Ask the Agent Tumblr:
<https://www.tumblr.com/literaticat>
& her Literaticast Podcast available
wherever you listen!

ESSENTIAL WRITING ELEMENTS

- Setting
- Character
- Plot / Structure / Form
- Voice / Language
- Point of View
- Theme

Don't forget page turns!



LEAVE ROOM FOR THE ART!

*“ Maybe you’ve got something
good that goes with my
something good?*

*Maybe you’ve got something
I ain’t got? ”*

And I think it does benefit artists, and thinkers,
and community-makers to ask themselves if they
have relied too much on self-indulgence in places
where surrender might better serve them. Or
where curiosity might better serve them. Or where
asking someone *maybe you've got something
good that goes with my something good? maybe
you've got something I ain't got? maybe we put
our time together, for a little while, and see what
happens from there?*

From Hanif Abdurraqib’s instagram tribute to Dolly Parton, August 2026
[instagram.com/nifmuhammad](https://www.instagram.com/nifmuhammad) | @nifmuhammad

ON ILLUSTRATOR NOTES

Proceed with caution!

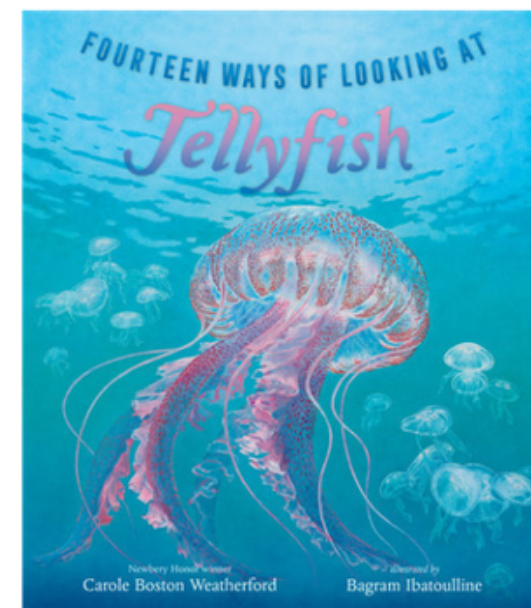
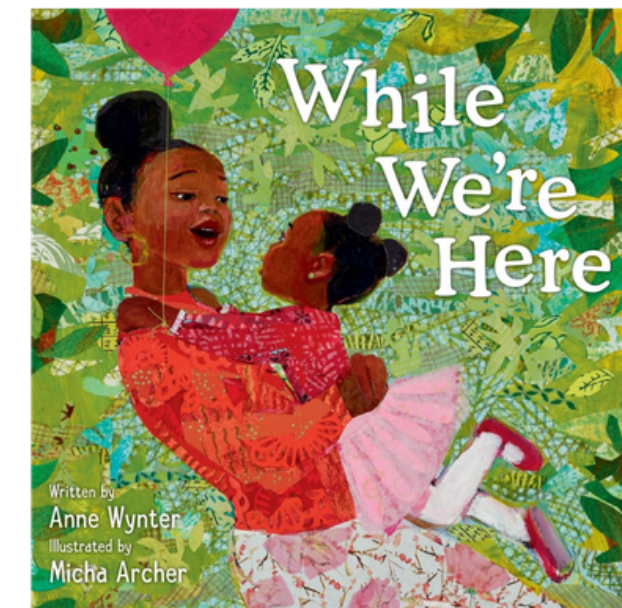
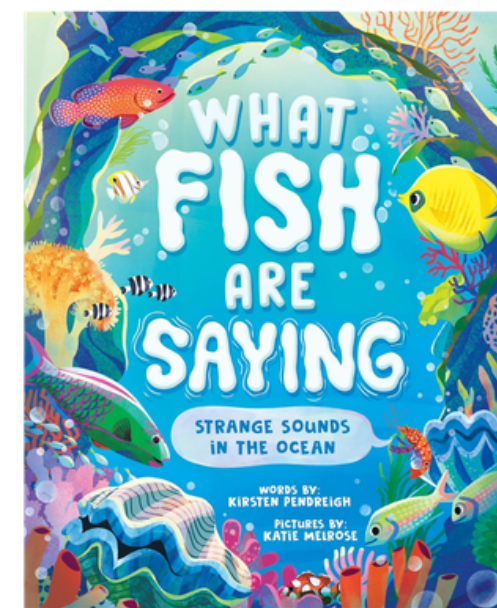
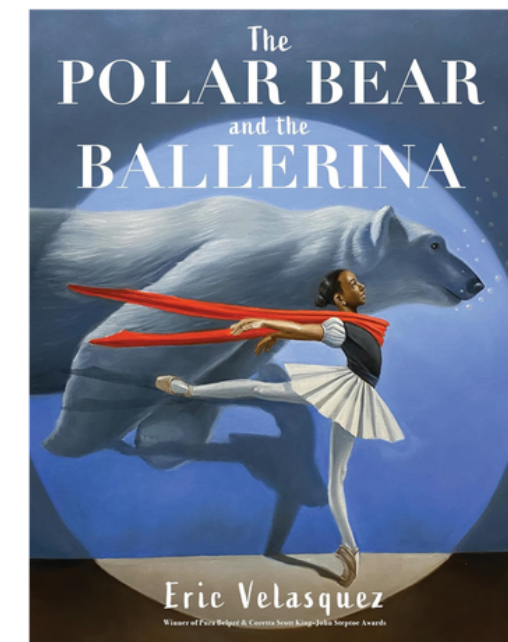
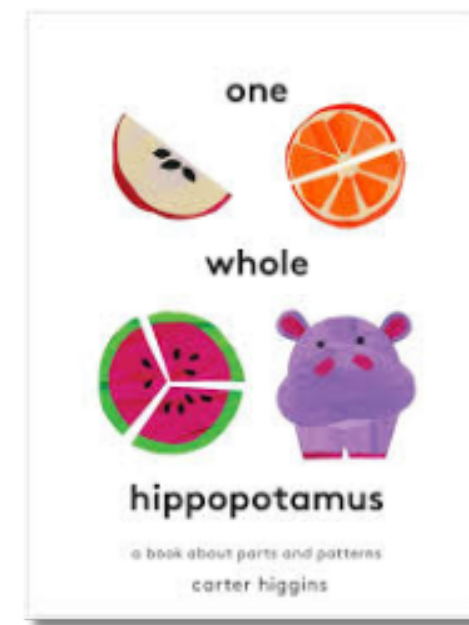
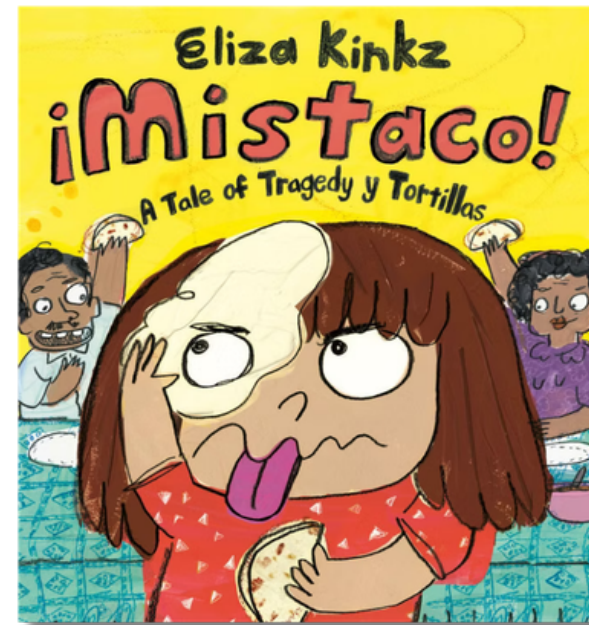
Illustrator notes can be helpful for the author when drafting in figuring out what needs to be in the text vs. when to let the illustrations drive.

There are different camps for illustrator notes-- but if there is something pertinent that only happens in the art, that the reader would not know through text only, then that's a good use of an illustrator note.

It's a note not necessarily a detailed description and art direction.

TYPES OF PICTURE BOOKS

- Lyrical
- Humorous
- Character Driven
- Rhyming
- Concept
- Wordless
- Fairytale/Folktale
- Poetry
- Social Emotional Learning
- Informative & Non-Fiction



FINDING AN ILLUSTRATOR

- **For traditional publishing**, the author (or author-illustrator) will sign a contract with the publisher granting them some rights to publish the book in exchange for an advance and royalties if certain parameters are met. The editor will manage the project, and the publishing company will do all production, printing, and marketing and sales through traditional publishing ecosystem.
- The editor (with the help of the art director) will usually choose the illustrator. The author does not need to find an illustrator, and may or may not have a say in who will illustrate the story.

FINDING AN ILLUSTRATOR

- **For independent publishing**, the author usually manages the project of creating a book from writing, revising, production, printing, and marketing.
- This includes finding an illustrator. Browsing SCBWI member portfolio's can be a good place to look for illustrators who are open to and available for work.

READ PICTURE BOOKS!

One of the best ways to learn about the picture book form is to read a wide variety of recently published picture books.

Become friends with your local librarian and use your library card. If you have local bookstores, go check them out! See what books are on the shelves, ask book sellers what books they enjoy.

Keep a reading journal of your picture book reads!



From Concept to Career

A **Free** 8-Course Menu for all members and nonmembers.

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The Basics of Picture Books

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Consider Your Reader

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The PB Dummy

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What to Include in Your Portfolio

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The Query Letter

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How to Find an Agent

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Independent Publishing

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The Process and Pacing of Promotion

**This series is made possible by a grant from
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SCBWI SOCIETY OF CHILDREN'S BOOK
WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS

Recordings of all the presentations will be available until October 31st. You can register at anytime.
To view recordings: Go to SCBWI.org. Click Member Home in the top right corner. Click My Events from across the top.
Scroll to find the correct event. Click the green Meeting Info button.