



2026 ENGAGING STORIES

IN PERSON Conference & VIRTUAL webinars

Brighten the lives of your friends and loved ones by gifting them SCBWI membership. By joining this amazing community, they'll receive inspiration and support in the world of children's books. [GIFT CARD](#)

SCBWI WISCONSIN 2026 ENGAGING STORIES

Readers must have a compelling reason to start—and continue—engaging with your story. Gain creative takeaways and insights into strategies and techniques from authors, illustrators, author-illustrators, agents, and editors. Join us at the SCBWI Wisconsin 2026 Engaging Stories webinar series and in-person conference.

Reservations for conference lodging Make your reservation for lodging for the SCBWI WI conference. A room block has been reserved for the conference and available to be booked at the group rate for stays from October 08, 2026 - October 10, 2026. **A block of rooms with the conference rate will be held until July 25, 2026. Meals are included in your conference registration,** starting with dinner on Thursday and ending with breakfast on Sunday.

Click the link below to reserve a room at Green Lake Conference Center.

<https://www.scbwi.org/events/engaging-stories-webinar-series>

2026 Engaging Stories WI Webinar Series

February 17, 2026

7:00 PM Central Time (The recording is included in the Season Ticket.)



Trust Unreliable Narrators (and Characters) to Attract Readers: Tips, Techniques, and Traps

presented by **Sandy Brehl**

FEBRUARY 17, 2026
LIVE ON ZOOM & RECORDED
7 PM CENTRAL TIME

PREMIUM \$25
NONMEMBER \$35

Using Picture Books, MG, and YA mentor text, we'll explore WHY and HOW unreliable narrators engage readers deeply, as collaborators in deception, detectives seeking truth, and audiences for humor and empathy. Handout will include recommended mentor titles and sources for further craft development.

QUESTION? EMAIL JOYCE wisconsin-ra@scbwi.org
<https://www.scbwi.org/events/feb-17-wi-trust-unreliable-narrators>



SCBWI WISCONSIN

March 10, 2026 7:00 PM Central Time

Zoom [Register](#) (Is included in Season Ticket)



Panel by Panel: How to Write Comics and Graphic Novels (Even if You Can't Draw)

presented by **Marcie Colleen**

MARCH 10, 2026
LIVE ON ZOOM & RECORDED
7 PM CENTRAL TIME

PREMIUM \$25
NONMEMBER \$35

Get ready to bring your stories to life—panel by panel! In this presentation, Marcie Colleen breaks down the building blocks of comics and graphic novels—from panels and gutters to bubbles and sound effects—all through the lens of a writer. Perfect for storytellers of all kinds, this session proves you don't need to draw to create compelling stories in a comics format. Packed with fun examples and behind-the-scenes insights, participants will leave eager to turn their ideas into panel-based stories that leap off the page.

QUESTION? EMAIL JOYCE wisconsin-ra@scbwi.org
<https://www.scbwi.org/events/march-10-wi-panel-by-panel>



SCBWI WISCONSIN

April 14, 2026 7:00 PM Central On Zoom [Register](#) (Is included in Season Ticket)



Stories as Springboards: Using Picture Books for Cross-Curricular Learning

presented by Lindsay Moretti

APRIL 14, 2026
LIVE ON ZOOM & RECORDED
7 PM CENTRAL TIME

PREMIUM \$25
NONMEMBER \$35

Discover how picture books can inspire cross-curricular learning from early childhood through upper elementary. This webinar shows how themes and concepts from stories translate into play-based invitations for young learners and hands-on, inquiry-based projects for grades K-5.

QUESTION? EMAIL JOYCE wisconsin-ra@scbwi.org

<https://www.scbwi.org/events/april-14-wi-stories-as-springboards>



SCBWI WISCONSIN

May 2, 2026 10:00 AM Central Time On Zoom [Register](#) (Is included in Season Ticket)



THE HEART OF THE STORY

presented by Melissa Manlove

SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2026
LIVE ON ZOOM & RECORDED
10:00 AM CENTRAL TIME

submission opportunity

PREMIUM \$25
NONMEMBER \$35

From laughter to tears, big feelings of all kinds bring depth and staying-power to your work. We'll explore what gives a story the power to catch the eyes and hearts of readers, from agents to editors to (most importantly) children themselves, as well as our own powerful relationships with story and with childhood, and then we'll turn to how we inspire those powerful experiences in the books that we create.

QUESTION? EMAIL JOYCE wisconsin-ra@scbwi.org



SCBWI WISCONSIN

June 16, 2026 7 PM Central Time on Zoom [Register](#) (Is included in Season Ticket)



Writing Tough Topics: What You Need to Know

presented by Liza Wiemer

JUNE 16, 2026
LIVE ON ZOOM & RECORDED
7 PM CENTRAL TIME

PREMIUM \$25
NONMEMBER \$35

This workshop will not only help you decide if you want to delve into tough topics, but how to go about doing so once you answer yes. Liza Wiemer will discuss research, how to apply the material to fiction, share dos and don'ts, and answer questions. This will be an interactive experience with writing tips, practical applications, and writing exercises.



Engaging Stories
in-person conference
October 8 - 10, 2026
Green Lake Conference Center
and a monthly webinar
Engaging Stories series

scbwi.org/regions/wisconsin/events

QUESTION? EMAIL JOYCE wisconsin-ra@scbwi.org

July 20, 2026 7 PM Central Time Zoom [Register](#) (Is included in Season Ticket)



Get Real! Writing Realistic Fiction that Resonates

presented by Adam Blackman

JULY 20, 2026
LIVE ON ZOOM & RECORDED
7 PM CENTRAL TIME

PREMIUM \$25
NONMEMBER \$35
submission opp!

In surreal times, realistic fiction can ground us in the complexity, beauty, tragedy, and even absurdity of our world. While the rules of the form restrict us to characters, settings, and natural laws of the known universe, creative opportunities abound. In this presentation, we will look at examples of different types of realistic fiction, with a focus on picture books and an eye to what we can bring into our own work.



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QUESTION? EMAIL JOYCE
wisconsin-ra@scbwi.org

<https://www.scbwi.org/events/july-20-2026-get-real-writing-realistic-fiction-that-resonates>

August 9, 2026 **10:00 AM** Central Time Zoom. [Register](#) (Is included in Season Ticket)



CRITIQUE GROUP RENAISSANCE

presented by **Melissa Manlove**

SUNDAY AUGUST 9, 2026
LIVE ON ZOOM & RECORDED
10:00 CENTRAL TIME

PREMIUM \$25
NONMEMBER \$35



submission opportunity

Climb inside an editor’s brain and learn the 10 most powerful questions to ask yourself as you critique others’ work—or your own! Then we will practice the exponential power of phrasing your critique as questions (again, to others and to yourself). Bring four copies of a WIP for impromptu critique groups, and learn to supercharge your crit groups at home and your own revision practice!



QUESTION? EMAIL JOYCE wisconsin-ra@scbwi.org

2026 ENGAGING STORIES

IN PERSON CONFERENCE

October 8-10, 2026
Green Lake Conference Center
W2511 State Road 23
Green Lake, WI 54941

| Meals included with registration fees | Premium | Nonmember | Student member | Student nonmember |
|---------------------------------------|---------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|
| Early Bird March 1- July 1 | \$250 | \$300 | \$80 | \$100 |
| Standard July 2-Sept. 23 | \$300 | \$350 | \$100 | \$125 |
| Deep Dive Intensives | \$90 | \$90 | \$90 | \$90 |
| Manuscript contest | \$30 | \$30 | \$30 | \$30 |
| Portfolio Showcase | \$30 | \$30 | \$30 | \$30 |
| Portfolio Review | \$55 | \$55 | \$55 | \$55 |
| First Pages Feedback | \$55 | \$55 | \$55 | \$55 |

Thursday Opening Keynote *Engagement Is a Promise* **Teresa Ho Robeson**

Friday Deep Dive Intensives

The letter indicates the label on the registration form.

A *Telling It True: Writing True Stories for Today's Kids* **Kirsten W. Larson**

B *Writing a Graphic Novel for the First Time* **Teresa Ho Robeson**

C *Wake Up Your Writing with Poetic Elements* **Irene Latham**

D *PUBLISH: Earn Enough to Pay Yourself a Salary* **Darcy Pattison**

E *Story Within Story: Using Nested Narrative to Dance with the Manuscript* **Marie-Laure Couët**

Friday Sessions The # and letter **indicate the label on the registration form.**

1A *Irresistible Submissions, from Craft to Pitch and Back Again* **Melissa Manlove**

1B *From Print to Page: Picture Book Pagination* **Kait Feldmann**

1C *Research* **Liza Wiemer, Erin Minch, Jeanne Styzcinski, Cindy Schumerth, Sam Cora**

2A *Getting Giggles in Picture Books* **Deborah Buschman**

2B *What does a Literary Agent do? And why might you want one or need one* **Liza Voges**

2C *How to Write Authentic Characters and Multiple Points of View That Leap Off the Page* **Liza Wiemer**

3A *It All Starts with Structure: Finding the Perfect Framework for Your Picture Book* **Pat Zietlow Miller**

3B *Reading Images: Components of Visual Storytelling* **Kait Feldmann**

4A *Demystifying Dummies for Author-Illustrators* **Leah Gilbert**

4B *Ya Gotta Have Heart... In Picture Books* **Julie Hedlund**

Friday Night Social

Saturday Industry Pro Panel *Irresistible Stories*

Saturday First Pages Feedback

Saturday Portfolio Review

Thursday, October 8, 2026

1:00 – 4:00 PM

Check in for the conference 1:00 to 4:00

Check in for your Green Lake Conference Center lodging **4:00**

Set up Portfolio Showcase

Conference attendees' book sales (free table space for attendees to sell books, *prearranged*)

| Brayton Case | Johnson | Hanson | Stansbury | Brown | Boehr Cary |
|--|---|---|---|--|---------------|
| Portfolio Showcase set up 1:00 - 4:00 | Area Meet Ups 2:00 - 4:00 | Conf attendees' book sales 2:00 to 4:00 | Ask Me Anything moderated by Liza Wiemer | Informal Meet with your critique group! | |



5:00 - 5:45 PM dinner in the Green Lakes Conference Center dining hall

6:00 - 7:00 PM Thursday Opening Keynote in the Brayton Case Room

Engagement Is a Promise



Teresa Ho Robeson is an Asian Pacific American Librarians Association Picture Book Award-winning author of fiction and nonfiction books on science and her own culture, from picture books to middle grade to graphic novels. She has seven more books scheduled to release over the next three years. A former Co-Regional Advisor for Indiana SCBWI, Teresa also teaches about writing (Highlights, SCBWI, and more) and is working on some novels and another graphic nonfiction. She lives on a mini-farm in southern IN with her scientist husband, younger child, and a flock of unruly chickens. Teresa is also an artist and surface pattern designer.

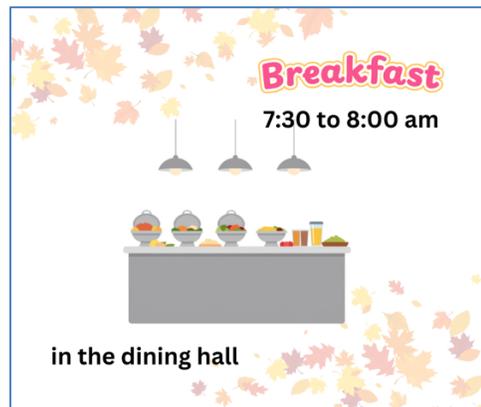
Keynote Description: **Engagement Is a Promise**

As Lisa Cron claims in one of her bestselling craft

books, we humans are wired for story. But there are stories, and then there are stories. How do we tell ones that truly touch others? How can we reach across that vast expanse that appears to divide us? How do we engage those who seem so different from us? By definition, to engage is to attract or involve. But it is also a promise. Let's discover all the HOWs together this weekend to fully engage readers.

Friday, October 9, 2026

7:30 AM Breakfast in the dining hall



7:30 AM Knuth Book Cellar Book Store **Friday** 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A: Deep Dive Graphic Novel Intensive *Writing a Graphic Novel for the First Time*



Time: 9:00 to noon

Room: BROWN ROOM max 25

Description: Graphic novels are hot! Many publishers now have their own graphic novel lines. Not only do many kids (and adults) gravitate to GNs because they're a mesmerizing art form, but they have helped numerous reluctant readers enjoy reading, or kids with reading difficulties learn how to read. You don't have to be an author-illustrator to create them either; editors will look at scripts from writers-only. This session will get you started with a concise intro that will enable you to draft your first script.

Teresa Ho Robeson is an Asian Pacific American Librarians Association Picture Book Award-winning author of fiction and nonfiction books on science and her own culture, from picture books to middle grade to graphic novels. She has seven more books scheduled to release over the next three years. A former Co-Regional Advisor for Indiana SCBWI, Teresa also teaches about writing (Highlights, SCBWI, and more) and is working on some novels and another graphic nonfiction. She lives on a mini farm in southern IN with her scientist husband, younger child, and a flock of unruly chickens. Teresa is also an artist and surface pattern designer.

B: Deep Dive Nonfiction Craft Intensive *Telling It True: Writing True Stories for Today's Kids*



Time: 9:00 to noon

Room: BRAYTON CASE ROOM max 40

Description: Do you have a fascinating true story you're dying to share with young readers? Whether you're drawn to biographies, STEM books, or even magazine articles, this intensive masterclass will give you the essential tools to craft compelling nonfiction that kids can't put down. Based on award-winning author Kirsten W. Larson's comprehensive guide *Telling It True*, you'll learn how to transform facts into page-turning stories, conduct efficient research, and structure your work so young readers stay hooked from beginning to end. **Materials Needed:** Bring a current work-in-progress or story idea you're excited to develop, plus your laptop or notebook for hands-on exercises.

Kirsten W. Larson used to work with rocket scientists at NASA but now writes books for curious kids. She is the acclaimed author of over 30 nonfiction books for young readers, including *The Fire of Stars*, an NCTE Orbis Pictus Honor book, as well as the craft book *Reimagining Your Nonfiction Picture Book: A step-by-step revision guide*, praised as “a must-have for every nonfiction picture book writer’s bookshelf.” You can also find her hosting the *Nonfiction Kidlit Craft Conversations* podcast, which takes a deep dive into the craft and business of children’s nonfiction.

What you’ll learn with Kirsten Larson:

- Find Your Hook: Discover your surprising angle that makes your true story irresistible to kids, agents, and editors
- Master the Research Process: Learn strategic techniques for finding primary and secondary sources, from library databases to archives and expert interviews
- Structure for Success: Whether you're writing narrative or expository nonfiction, you'll learn proven structures and approaches for letting your story unfold in ways that keeps young readers eagerly turn pages
- Craft Compelling Beginnings & Endings: Start with a bang and end with emotional resonance that leaves readers transformed
- Bring Stories to Life: Learn the basics of constructing scenes for adding tension to your writing.
- Navigate the Publishing Landscape: Understand the different markets for children's nonfiction and how to position your work for success

Perfect for:

- Writers new to children's nonfiction who want a comprehensive foundation
- Journalists and academics pivoting to write for young audiences
- Fiction writers ready to try their hand at true stories
- Published authors expanding into new nonfiction territories

You'll Leave With:

- A tested pitch for your nonfiction project
- Clear understanding of narrative and expository structures
- Practical research strategies you can use immediately
- A revision checklist for tightening your prose
- Confidence to share your work with critique partners and submit to publishers Whether you dream of publishing your first magazine article or crafting the next award-winning nonfiction picture book, this masterclass gives you the roadmap to make it happen.

1A: Session *Irresistible Submissions, from Craft to Pitch and Back Again*



Time: 9:00 to 10:00

Room: HANSON ROOM max 40

Description: Come to this workshop to better understand how thinking about the craft of bookmaking can serve the business of bookmaking, and how thinking about the business can serve the craft! In the happy overlap between these goals there lies opportunity: for you, and for your manuscripts. Make them irresistible to editors and agents by making them irresistible to READERS.

Melissa Manlove is an Executive Editor at Sourcebooks. She has been an editor for 22 years and a children’s bookseller for as long. Her acquisitions encompass picture books, chapter books, nonfiction, graphic novels, and novels in verse. When acquiring, she looks for fresh takes on familiar topics as well as the new and unusual. An effective approach and strong, graceful writing are important to her.

B: Session *From Print to Page: Picture Book Pagination*



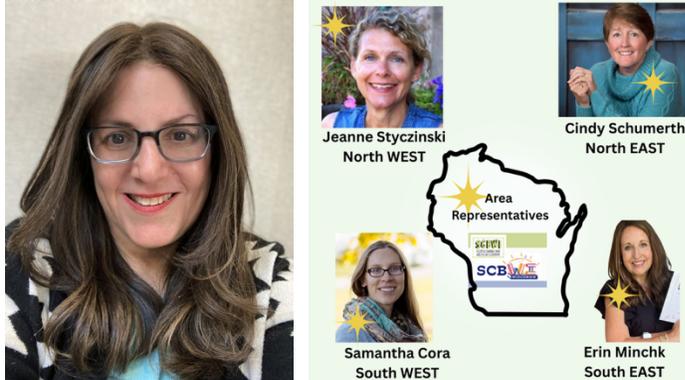
Time: 9:00 to 10:00

Room: JOHNSON ROOM max 40

Description: In this session we’ll take an in-depth look at how picture books are printed, folded, and bound—and see how this process informs the way stories are structured. You’ll learn how endpapers and page count affect the space you have to tell a story, and how to paginate to account for frontmatter, backmatter, page turns and overall pacing. You will also get to make two of the cutest little book dummies to use as reference! (Bring a writing utensil and one of your favorite picture books, all other materials provided.)

Kait Lee Feldmann is a children’s book agent at kt literary representing illustrators. She has been romping around children’s book publishing for the past decade, previously as an editor at HarperCollins and Scholastic. Her list as editor included award-winning books that received a Caldecott, Coretta Scott King, and Sibert Honor; the Ezra Jack Keats Award; York Times, NPR, Kirkus, and more. Kait is hapa (mixed race Chinese/white) and is passionate about championing books by, about, and for BIPOC. In 2020 she received the CBC Diversity Outstanding Achievement Award. Kait resides in a hoarder’s paradise in Los Angeles, surrounded by books.

1C: Session *Research*



Time: 9:00 to 10:00

Room: STANSBURY ROOM max 40

Faculty: Liza Wiemer, Jeanne Styczinski, Erin Krase-Minchk, Cindy Schumerth, Samantha Cora

Description: In this session, Erin Minchk, Samantha Cora, Cindy Schumerth, Jeanne Styczinski, and Liza Wiemer delve into the research process, helping you from start to finish. They'll share their best steps to find, collect, and utilize authentic resource material for your books. They'll address best practices and challenges, including how to determine what to incorporate and what to leave out of your story. Participants will leave with a toolbox of ideas and resources.

2A: Session *Getting Giggles in Picture Books*



Time: 10:30 to 11:30

Room: HANSON ROOM max 40

Description: This session will give you some keys to use in your writing to get laughs and giggles. Humor is tough and subjective but there are some tools you can use to get a laugh from adults and kids.

Deborah Buschman was born in Brooklyn, New York and raised in Wisconsin. She has never lived far from a lake. She graduated from Carthage College, located on Lake Michigan. Over the years she has held various jobs, including busgirl, waitress (how she met her husband), fashion model, copier salesperson (didn't last long) to human resources for a bank. But by far her two favorite careers have been being a mom to

four sons and a children's writer. She has been a member of SCBWI since 2011 and served as the Wisconsin Regional Advisor. Deb won an honorable mention in the humor category of the Vivan Kirkfield's 2022 #50precious words. Her debut picture book *A Knight and His Trusty...* released this year with The Little Press. She was 6 feet tall when she was 14 years old. Deb has fond memories of summers on Green Lake playing flashlight tag with bats swooping around. She loves writing informational fiction, especially humorous animal stories. You will find her outside in every season of the year and cheese is her favorite food group.

2B: Session *What Does a Literary Agent Do? And Why Might You Want or Need One*



Time: 10:30 to 11:30

Room: JOHNSON ROOM max 40

Description: The duties of a literary agent will be outlined to show how they might be of benefit to you and your work.

Liza Pulitzer Voges has been a literary agent for over 40 years, representing children's book authors and illustrators from pre-school through young adult. Some of the Eden Street clients include Dan Gutman, Alyssa Satin Capucilli, Joyce Uglow, Sue Lowell Gallion, Joan Holub, and numerous others.

2C: Session *How to Write Authentic Characters and Multiple Points of View That Leap Off the Page*



Time: 10:30 to 11:30

Room: STANSBURY ROOM max 40

Description: Whether you're starting your novel or are in the editing process, Liza Wiemer will share her best writing tips to create authentic characters and best practices for utilizing multiple points of view in your novels. This interactive workshop will provide guidance that writers will be able to utilize over and over again. Participants will walk away with numerous helpful ideas to put into practice. Handouts and practical exercises will be included.

Liza Wiemer is an award-winning educator with over twenty years of teaching experience. Her second novel, *The Assignment*, was published by Delacorte Press and has received 13 honors, including being named a Sydney Taylor Notable Book and 2025-2026 Facing History All-Community Read of the Year. To date, *The Assignment* has also been translated to Russian, Polish, Italian, and Korean and has been optioned for film. In addition, Liza has had two adult nonfiction books published and several short stories included in the New York Times bestselling *Small Miracles* series. Since August 2020, she has presented over 750 talks and workshops across the globe. She's been interviewed by media outlets like NPR, BBC, ABC, and gave a TedXTalk at the UW-Madison. Her debut picture book, *Out and About: A Tale of Giving*, was published by Kalaniot Books in August 2023. A graduate of UW-Madison, Liza has two married sons and lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with her husband, Jim.



C: Deep Dive Lyrical Writing Intensive *Wake Up Your Writing with Poetic Elements*

Time: 1:15 to 4:15

Room: BRAYTON CASE ROOM max 40



Description: Feeling blah about your writing? Wondering what you can do to create a more vivid and emotional experience for the reader? In this intensive, we'll explore poetic techniques such as imagery, metaphor, and rhythm. We'll play with verbs and symbols. We'll look to poems to show us how poetry's music of words, economy of expression, and precision of language has the power to elevate any story to "art." Attendees will come away reinvigorated and armed with new ways to create and improve all kinds of writing.

Irene Latham writes poems and stories from the Purple Horse Poetry Studio & Music Room beside a mountain lake in Blount County, Alabama. The author or co-author of twenty-five books,

African Town, winner of the Scott O'Dell Award; *Can I Touch Your Hair? Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship*, a Charlotte Huck Honor book; and *The Cat Man of Aleppo*, awarded a Caldecott Honor. Her latest adventure is curating poetry anthologies with her "Poetic Forever Friend" Charles Waters, including *The Mistakes That Made Us* (an NCTE Notable Poetry Book), *If I Could Choose a Best Day*, and the forthcoming *For the Win*. Read hundreds of Irene's poems for free at irenelatham.com.

D: Deep Dive Self-Publishing Intensive *PUBLISH: Earn Enough to Pay Yourself a Salary*



Time: 1:15 to 4:15

Room: BROWN ROOM max 25

Description: Can you do what you love and still earn a living? It's hard. But it's possible. Learn the world of self-publishing and its potential for a lucrative career. Learn to choose story topics, develop a brand and followers, and optimize your storytelling and your income.

Darcy Pattison Children's book author and indie publisher DARCYPATTISON has written over seventy award-winning fiction and non-fiction books for children. Five books have received starred PW, Kirkus, or BCCB reviews. Awards include the Irma Black Honor award, five NSTA Outstanding Science Trade

Books, six Eureka! Nonfiction Honor book (CA Reading Assn.), two Junior Library Guild selections, two CLA Notable Children's Book in Language Arts, a Notable Social Studies Trade Book, a Best STEM Book, an Arkansiana Award, and the Susannah DeBlack Arkansas Children's History Book award. She's the 2007 recipient of the Arkansas Governor's Arts Award for Individual Artist for her work in children's literature. Her books have been translated into eleven languages.

E: Deep Dive Illustration Intensive *Story Within Story: Using Nested Narrative to Dance with the Manuscript*



Time: 1:15 to 4:15

Room: JOHNSON ROOM max 25

Description: This intensive is open to illustrators, authors, and translators. Participants will explore what it means to create story within story using the words on the page and our personal experiences. Illustrators will learn to read between the lines to identify concepts that are worth fleshing out visually to complement the verbal narrative. Authors will learn how to leave "crumbs" to feed the creativity of their illustrator partners. Illustrator Marie-Laure Couët will apply her experience in brand design to show how crossing over disciplines can help us explore narrative in new ways, to distill and champion the essence of a

story.

Marie-Laure Couët Hailing from Québec City, Marie-Laure Couët is a mixed media illustrator and designer with a love of collage, imperfection, and chickens. When she isn't working on her projects she volunteers as the SCBWI Canada East Illustrator Coordinator. In a past life Marie-Laure ran an award-winning cheesemaking company in Massachusetts and tended a dozen laying hens. The hens have been replaced by two human babies and, while the babies don't offer any eggs, they do provide Marie-Laure with all the snuggles necessary. And more than enough boogers.

3A: Session *It All Starts with Structure: Finding the Perfect Framework for Your Picture Book*



Time: 1:15 to 2:15

Room: HANSON ROOM max 40

Description: There are SO MANY ways to structure a picture book. And choosing the right one is as important to your story's success as choosing the right design when you're building a house. I'll share common picture book structures, tons of book recommendations and tips for making your structure sing.

Pat Zietlow Miller has published 23 picture books and has more on the way. Her first book, *SOPHIE'S SQUASH*, won the Golden Kite Award, an Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Honor, and a Charlotte Zolotow Honor. *BE KIND* was on the New York Times bestseller list for 10 weeks, and *IN OUR GARDEN* is a two-time Dolly Parton Imagination Library selection. Pat lives in Wisconsin. Find her at www.patzietlowmiller.com, on Twitter and TikTok at @PatZMiller, and on Instagram at @patzmill.

3B: Session *Reading Images: Components of Visual Storytelling*



Time: 1:15 to 2:15

Room: STANSBURY ROOM max 40

Description: In this session geared towards illustrators and author-illustrators, we will cover some exciting ways to use art as a narrative form. Come hungry to feast your eyes on lots of picture books and graphic novels that play with components like page-turn, gutter, white space, paneling, perspective, color, and more!

Kait Lee Feldmann is a children's book agent at kt literary representing illustrators. She has been romping around children's book publishing for the past decade, previously as an editor at HarperCollins and Scholastic. Her list as editor included award-winning books that received a Caldecott, Coretta Scott King, and Sibert Honor; the Ezra Jack Keats Award; and appearances on Best of lists for The New York Times, NPR, Kirkus, and more. Kait is hapa (mixed race Chinese/white) and is passionate about championing books by, about, and for BIPOC. In 2020 she received the CBC Diversity Outstanding Achievement Award. Kait resides in a hoarder's paradise in Los Angeles, surrounded by books.

4A: *Demystifying Dummies for Author-Illustrators*



Time: 2:45 to 3:45

Room: STANSBURY ROOM max 40

Description: Does the idea of creating a book dummy sound exciting to you—or maybe just a little daunting or overwhelming? We'll break it down and talk about the process of dummy making, covering some common considerations such as trim size, pagination, page turns, layout and more, and why they do or don't matter at this stage in the process. Great for beginners as well as advanced authors and illustrators looking for tips, tricks, and insight into this exciting process. Geared for author-

illustrators, but any author or illustrator is welcome to learn how to apply these techniques to enhance their own creative process.

Leah Gilbert is a picture book author and illustrator from Wisconsin. Her books include *No Bear Anywhere*, *The Perfect Plan*, and *A Couch for Llama*, and have been named to many awards and state book lists including The Children's Book Council Children's and Teacher's Favorites, Wisconsin Library Association's Outstanding Books of the Year, and Bill Martin Jr. Picture Book Award. After being born and raised in Wisconsin, she spent ten years in Colorado working as an illustrator and designer at a greeting card company before returning to her home state where she currently resides with her family.

4B: Session *Ya Gotta Have Heart... In Picture Books*



Time: 2:45 to 3:45

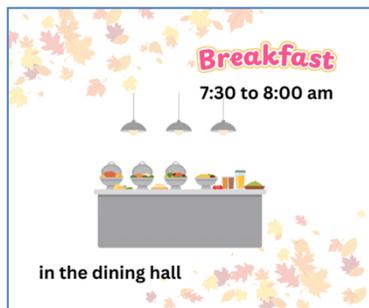
Room: HANSON ROOM max 40

Description: What sells picture books in today's crowded market? It's not the plot, the setting, the subject, or even the character(s). It's *heart*: the deepest layer that creates connection, meaning, and transformation for both child and adult readers. Heart is also, often, the most difficult layer to get right. This workshop will provide hands-on strategies for finding heart in the specific and taking it to the universal, infusing your stories with heart, and revising for emotional resonance.

Julie Hedlund is an award-winning picture book author. Her titles include *SONG AFTER SONG: The Musical Life of Julie Andrews*, *OVER, BEAR! UNDER, WHERE?, MY LOVE FOR YOU IS THE SUN*, and *A TROOP IS A GROUP OF*

MONKEYS. She lives in beautiful Boulder, CO with her family. Find out more about Julie at juliehedlund.com and follow her on Instagram, X/Twitter & TikTok (@juliefhedlund). In addition to writing her own books, Julie helps fellow authors achieve their publishing dreams in her role as Founder of The 12 x 12 Picture Book Writing Challenge, co-Founder of The Complete Picture Book Submissions System, and a co-Founder of Picture Book Summit.

Friday Night Social
Time: 6:30 to 8:30 pm
Place: Bauer Dining Room



Saturday, October 10, 2026
7:30 AM Breakfast in the dining hall

8:30 to 9:30 AM *Irresistible Stories: An Industry Panel discussion*
A panel of agents, authors, editors, and illustrators moderated by Laura Bird

9:45 to 10:45 AM
Round table First Pages Feedback sessions with assigned industry pros, Portfolio Review with assigned industry pro.

11:00 to 11:45
Wrap Up. Announcements, Door prizes, and Manuscript Contest PB, MG, and YA winners



Submission Opportunity guidelines for editor Melissa Manlove, agent Kait Feldmann, and agent Liza Voges will be emailed to all **registrants of the Engaging Stories in person conference** after the conclusion of the conference.

Submission Opportunity guidelines for the webinars presented by editors Melissa Manlove and Adam Blackman will be emailed to the Engaging Stories **webinar registrants** for both the individual webinar purchases and the Season Ticket purchases.