



Prairie Song

SCBWI Nebraska Newsletter

New Season. New Look.

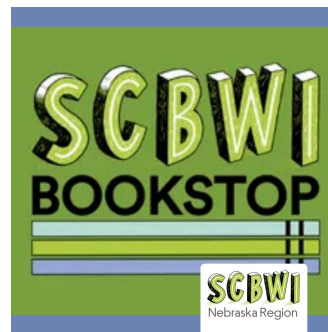
Welcome to the Prairie Song Newsletter's New Look!



Sometimes your work just needs a little "me time." Story Spinners to the rescue! Join us Saturday in Lincoln. [Click](#) for details.



Mark your calendar for our next In-PERSON Creative Connections event with author Mylisa Larsen on Nov. 13! More info [here](#).



BookStop opens on Oct. 22nd. An SCBWI Bookstop page is a great way to market your published work. Learn more [here](#).



Jennie Gollehon
SCBWI-Nebraska Co-Regional Advisor

A note from Jennie...

OCTOBER 2025 - As we're creeping into fall, I feel like I'm writing this from a new office. There are new graphics above me and a new *Volunteer View* below. We hosted a mingle in Seward, have a Story Spinners scheduled in Lincoln, and an in-person Creative Connections on the horizon. It looks fresh and new around here.

But really, I'm sitting in my same little nook, pecking away at my same tired keyboard, with a very old cat keeping me company. Change is interesting that way. Sometimes, little steps of growth go unnoticed until you stop and take a look around.

I invite you to stop and look around. As you can see, our newsletter has taken on a fresh-looking update. (Huge shout-out to Heather and Tim for the hard work.) This season, we're trying a few new things with regional events. We hope you enjoy them. Feel free to send any feedback my way. I'd love to hear it.

But also, stop and take a look at where you are in your creative career. With each day of creating that passes, each event you attend, each person you connect with, you're growing and changing. If you really look, I'm confident you'll notice the little differences in your sentence structure, or character arc, or illustration palette.

Growth isn't always big and flashy. Change can be subtle. Just like this newsletter.

As always, happy writing, drawing, and creating,
~ Jennie

FEATURED MEMBER: Let's Meet Kristin Ganoung!



Kristin Ganoung is a Nebraska native who grew up on a farm near Rushville in the panhandle of the state. She attended a country school through 8th grade and enjoyed the experience so much that she later returned to teach in a different country school in the area. Kristin later moved to central Kansas to be with her new husband, Kris. After convincing him of the many benefits of being a Nebraskan, they moved to Brewster, then Halsey, to teach in the Sandhills Public Schools.

In her 33 years at Sandhills, Kristin first worked as the kindergarten teacher, followed by a brief stint as substitute teacher while her own kids were younger, and then a position as the assistant school cook. Now she is the school's librarian and art teacher. (In a small system, a person gets to try out lots of hats!) Although Kristin no longer resides on a farm, she still loves animals and growing things. At one time, the family maintained three gardens, a flock of chickens and ducks, several rabbits, pigeons, and a goodly number of cats, dogs, and guinea pigs. Sadly, she's never been able to convince the rest of the family to acquire large animals (though Kristin has been tempted to obtain a milk cow, a llama, and a pig)!

Animals and farm life are the inspiration for Kristin's stories. Her three published middle grade novels star George, a take-charge farm cat. George believes he has everything on his farm in perfect order, with the other animals falling into line at his command. Unfortunately, the humans aren't so cooperative. Through adventure and misadventure, George always manages to come out on top. Kristin believes that the best part about writing children's books is the opportunity to visit schools and share the excitement of writing with kids! [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about Kristin and her work!



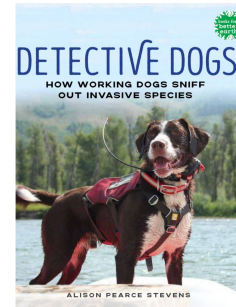
Congrats to Our Nebraska Members!

DANIELLE HERZOG - Happy Book Birthday to Danielle

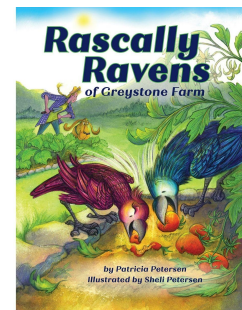
Herzog whose debut novel, *The Cassette Tape Secret*, a middle grade mystery, will release on October 21st from Beaming Books! The book recently received a positive Kirkus Review, "Alex's struggles to overcome his debilitating OCD impulses manifest with an honest sensitivity that many readers will appreciate. . . . An engaging mystery blended with a strong story about forming a new friendship." We're so excited for you, Danielle!



ALISON PEARCE STEVENS - Hooray for Alison Pearce Stevens who has two upcoming book signing events for her recent release *Detective Dogs: How Working Dogs Sniff Out Invasive Species* published by Holiday House. Alison will be at Sower Books in Lincoln, NE on October 18 at 10:00am and The Bookworm in Omaha, NE on November 8 at 10:00am. Be sure to stop by if you'd like to get a signed copy of your very own. Keep up the great work, Alison!



SHELI PETERSEN - Kudos to Sheli Petersen who will be a guest on KUZU 92.9FM Denton, TX Community Radio! Join in on November 2nd at 11:00am to hear Sheli's interview on INFORMED, hosted by Rachel Weaver. As part of the programming for the Greater Denton Arts Council's Exhibition *Empowering through Visual Storytelling: Rascally Ravens Picture Book Process*, Sheli will talk about the behind-the-scenes process for designing and illustrating picture books and share resources for getting started on your self-publishing journey. [Click here to listen](#). Way to go, Sheli!



STORY SPINNERS: Saturday, October 18 @ 10am



On Saturday, October 18 from 10:00am-12:00pm join like-minded creatives for some casual in-person writing and illustrating. Our venue for October is the Charles H. Gere Branch Library located at 2400 S 56th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. We will be located in Meeting Room #2.

Stay for as long as you are able or leave when you need to. Registration is not required but we kindly ask that you register to help gauge interest. And, if you're attending Story Spinners, consider stopping by Sower Books just down the road for Alison Pearce Stevens' book signing event of her recent release, *Detective Dogs*.

[Click here](#) for more information or to register. We hope to see you in Lincoln!

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS: with Author Mylisa Larsen

"BUILDING A CHARACTER ONE GAME AT A TIME"

Building a character is a vital part of writing a novel. It also requires quite a bit of work to incorporate enough texture, detail, and personality for the character to seem real to the reader. But this process doesn't have to be a chore. Join us as award-winning author Mylisa Larsen introduces writing games that will help you create characters that are round and real. Bring a character from a work-in-progress or start a new project with a character you'll create in this workshop.

Join us IN-PERSON on Thursday, November 13, from 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm (CST) at Ralston's Baright Public Library (5555 S 77th Street). This event is free and open to both SCBWI members & non-members.



REGISTER TODAY!

SCBWI BookStop Starts October 22



SCBWI BookStop is the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators' annual online book promotion designed to help members showcase and sell their books directly to readers, parents, educators, and librarians. This powerful marketing opportunity increases visibility for both traditionally published and self-published children's books, giving them exposure to a wide audience of book buyers. [Click here](#) to create your own BookStop page! Pages can be created anytime through December 8th.



Shop Talk Recap

Shop Talk kicked off in September with our new lunchtime zoom hour. Attendees shared First Pages of works-in-progress. Through group discussion and live critiques, writers walked away with fresh takes for shiny revisions. Below are ideas to help you tighten your first pages and make an impactful first impression.

The First Pages of your manuscript should:

- Introduce the main character.
- Hint at the conflict or story's core.
- Establish the voice and tone.
- Create curiosity without an excessive backstory.

Giving attention to the following techniques will make your First Pages pop:

- Make your writing action oriented.
- Show the character through behavior.
- Demonstrate your writing style.
- Hook the reader into wanting to read more!

Common Pitfalls to Avoid:

- Excessive Detail. Weather, setting, or excessive information about the character or

- their history can bog down the reader.
- Too Much Exposition. Backstory and lengthy explanations can slow the pace.
- Lack of Character Interaction. It is possible for a character to begin a scene alone, but this can be tricky, as it limits the ability to show personality and can lead to exposition.
- Unnecessary Verbiage. This can impact pacing, so avoid too many adjectives, adverbs, and overly flowery descriptions.

Please join us at our next lunchtime Zoom on **Jan 22, 2026, from 12pm-1pm** as we focus on Messy Middles.

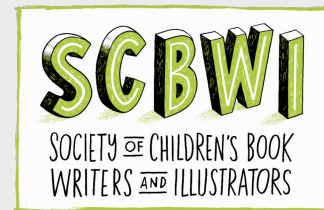
Until then, Happy Writing!

~ Mary Beth Rice & Ashley Karges, Shop Talk Co-Coordinators

SHOP TALK CALENDAR

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION IS OPEN! **SCBWI Winter 2026 NYC Conference**

The annual Winter Conference for children's book writers, translators, and illustrators is back! Highlights include: industry panels, one-on-one manuscript and portfolio consultations, a half-day intensive just for illustrators, the popular Portfolio Showcase and a choice of twenty-eight craft or business breakout sessions. Back by popular demand: expanded publishing house tours with unprecedented access to editors in the children's publishing industry! Visit the [SCBWI Website](#) for more!



Events In Other SCBWI Regions:

[SCBWI Iowa: Halloweekend In-Person Conference](#)

OCT. 31 - NOV. 2 - BOO! Don't be scared--join SCBWI Iowa for a multi-day conference in Des Moines! Best-selling picture book authors, agents, and publishers will haunt our halls! Written critiques, face-to-face critiques, and post-conference submissions available... if you dare!

[SCBWI San Diego: Picture Book Intensive](#)

NOV. 1 - From book dummy query letter to the final product on the shelf, what exactly happens?! And what are the best tactics to use for that submission? Tracy Shaw, Art Director at Little Brown Books for Young Readers, will take you through each step starting with how best to submit your picture book dummy, through what to expect when your book is in the hands of a publisher. You'll learn about what you're involved in as well as what you're not, and what to do after the ink has dried.

[SCBWI Pennsylvania East: Editor Says...](#)

NOV. 3 - For young readers, the jump from reading picture books alongside caregivers to reading middle-grade books on their own can be a huge leap. Thankfully, there are many different kinds of books that can help bridge this gap—including beginning readers, chapter books, longer-form picture books, and even early reader graphic novels. In this presentation, we'll talk about the transition readers make from picture books to middle grade stories, the different kinds of books for this age group, and how writers can craft stories that stick with kids and help to turn them into life-long readers

[SCBWI Michigan: Webinar with Cate Berry](#)

NOV. 12 - You've learned the craft. You've learned the business. Now learn how to survive it. Cate will show you how to navigate the highs and lows of the creative industry including the long

waits, rejections, low sales and how to elegantly level up your career when it flourishes without losing momentum or your creative soul. With her step-by-step "Unshakeable Artist" method you'll leave this talk with a tangible plan, so that you can enjoy a long and successful creative career. Online registration opens October 22.

[SCBWI Kansas/Missouri: Applying to Residencies](#)

NOV. 13 - If you've ever thought about attending an artist or writer's residency to focus on your craft, but don't know where to start - or are overwhelmed with all the options available - this webinar is for you! Fine artist and illustrator (and Kansas/Missouri Illustrator Coordinator) Lindsey Dunnagan will shine a light into this world for you. She will go over how to find and apply to these residencies, how to prepare your materials, whether it's worth it to pay for a residency, and more!

[MORE VIRTUAL EVENTS](#)

[MORE IN-PERSON EVENTS](#)



[Got questions? E-mail us by clicking here!](#)



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