

Suggested Reading List

The more children's literature you read, the better.

Picture Books

Anything written by Sandra Boynton (she writes and illustrates board books for very young children, but is a great example of humor for this age group)

Where is the Green Sheep by Mem Fox

That's Not My Kitten (or any of these in the series)

Jamberry by Bruce Degan

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

Everything written by Dr Seuss

Penguin by Polly Dunbar

Anything by Mo Willems, especially Knuffle Bunny

Anything by Oliver Jeffers – particularly look at his illustrations

Anything by Karma Wilson for rhyme and rhythm

Anything by Julia Donaldson, especially Paper Dolls

Chapter Books

Clementine by Sarah Pennypacker

The Adventures of Captain Underpants by Dav Pilkey

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Matilda by Roald Dahl

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl

Everything *Narnia*

Everything *Harry Potter*

The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo

Middle Grade

Harriet The Spy by Louise Fitzhugh

Spiderwick Chronicles by Toni DiTerlizzi and Holly Black

When You Reach Me by Rebecca Stead

Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney

Dust by Arthur Slade

Tribes by Arthur Slade

The Hunchback Assignments by Arthur Slade

The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

The Doll People by Ann M. Martin and Laura Godwin

Middle School, The Worst Years of My Life by James Patterson

Capture the Flag by Kate Messner

YA

The Hunger Games (trilogy) by Suzanne Collins

An Abundance of Katherines and *The Fault is in Our Stars* by John Green
(and anything else he's written)

How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff

If I Stay by Gayle Forman

Through to You by Emily Hainsworth

Before I Die by Jenny Downham

Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

Before I Fall by Lauren Oliver

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

Forever by Judy Blume

Anything by David Levithan, especially books he's co-written with Rachel Cohn.

Wither by Lauren DeStephano

Feed by M. T. Anderson

Alice, I Think by Susan Juby

Books about Writing

Writing Irresistible Kidlit: The Ultimate Guide to Crafting Fiction for

Young Adult and Middle Grade Readers by Mary Kole

Bird By Bird by Anne Lamott

On Writing by Stephen King

Eats Shoots and Leaves by Lynne Truss

Web Resources

www.alicekuipers.com My website, full of tips and suggestions for writers

www.wattpad.com A huge website for people wanting to share their writing online

<http://www.scbwi.org/> Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/lit_resources/cyahr_index.html A good YA/kidlit resource

<http://www.evelynchristensen.com/writers.html> Everything writerly

<http://kidlit.com> I love Mary Kole. She's an agent – actively looking for clients – and she distills the craft of writing beautifully

www.notimeforflashcards.com - this is an arts and crafts website for children and it's full of creative ideas that have nothing to do with writing, yet they'll inspire you, I promise! Also, there is always a suggested reading list after every craft. Get reading!

<http://cbiclubhouse.com/clubhouse/> - and of course, we all have CBI!!!!

One of my favourite places for writers of all things children's and YA.

Types of Books for Children

Board books: Newborn to 3 years old. Typically 10-16 pages. Little or no text.

Picture Books: Ages 3-8 years old. Split into younger (3-5) and older (5-8). Conventionally 32 pages long, and not more than 1,000 words. (These are trending to shorter texts, averaging 800 words or so.)

Easy Readers: Ages 5-9. First readers for children. Typically not longer than 5 short chapters. Words used should follow guidelines for early readers. Repetitive. Often written by teachers. 1000-2,500 words long. Highly illustrated but stand-alone text. Simple plots and minimal description. Have a look at the HarperCollins 'I Can Read' books, especially Frog and Toad by Arnold Lobel. And the Magic School Bus First Readers.

Please read here for more information:

http://www.robynopie.com/articles/writingforchildren_writeaneasyreader.htm

Chapter Books: Ages 6-9 or 7-10. In the 5,000 (younger) to 15,000 (older) word count range. Split into chapters. Plot heavy. Think Captain Underpants or Clementine. Illustrations supplement the plot, but are not essential, often depicting scenes as they are written.

Middle Grade: Ages 8-12. 25,000 to 40,000 words, although some can be much shorter or longer. More complicated characters, plots and world building.

Young Adult: Ages 12 and up. Conventionally 40-70,000 words long, although some can be much shorter or longer.

New Adult: Books that appeal to young adults and adult readers. Protagonists are ages 18-25. Also known as **Crossover Books**. These can be as long as an adult novel, and full of gritty content.

Here is similar information to the information I've given you above:

<http://www.writing-world.com/children/genres.shtml>

If you search through the Internet you'll find lots of sites that give word counts, terminology, and rules for writing different formats for children. You'll notice some variation from site to site. This is because

although there are 'rules', rules can always be broken. My first YA novel, for example, was only 11,000 words long. Also, different publishers may have different criteria. The other thing to remember is that different kids have different reading ages – some ten year olds are reading adult novels with gusto, others are only just finishing up with picture books. When the delineation of the different categories of children's books blur, don't let it worry you. These rules aren't one size fits all – kids are, after all, unique, which is one of the many things that makes writing for kids so fun.

I suggest you read through the various categories and think about which sort of books you already understand well. Then head out to the library and start reading books **in the other categories** so you know what's possible for *you* as a children's author. I can talk about the different types of books forever, but until you read a few of each type of book, you won't really know what I mean. There's a big long list in the suggested reading list that I've included as part of this webinar, full of books in each category – if you don't know where to start, start there.

Character Worksheet

What's your name?

Where do you live (describe it)?

What's your earliest memory?

What's the worst thing you've ever done?

Who do you love?

What's your favourite food?

Describe a perfect day.

What do you do when you wake?

In this moment, what do you most want?

If you could go anywhere, where would you go?

And one bonus question: What did you do last time you were in trouble?

Try the rest of my character workshops FREE on my website:

<http://www.alicekuipers.com/teachers-librarians-writers/>

Editing Checklist

Macro and Micro Editing

I would split editing into two main areas. The macro and the micro. We'll start with a general description of macro editing and then move into micro editing. So, macro editing. Well, like it says on the box, macro editing is the part of the rewrite when you have to move around BIG things. Firstly you need to decide whether certain characters are still needed in the story, then whether the ending works. Is the beginning the right beginning? Does this scene lead to the next one? The best way to macro edit is to print out the manuscript and read the entire book to yourself without a pen in hand. (In the case of a picture book, make the dummy book I suggest on my website and use that). When you've finished reading, start writing. Write anything that comes to mind about the story. Be honest. If the ending is flat, you probably know this in your heart.

Then go back and break the book into chapters, or pages if it's a book for younger readers. Is every scene necessary? Are there scenes missing? Are the characters consistent in their personalities and motivations? Are there great big stonking clichés of characters or clichés of events that you could fix now?

When you've finished the big stuff, I'd suggest rewriting the book. There's little point fiddling with the micro edits when you're still moving big stuff around. Fixing the small stuff comes once the book is in the right shape – editing a character's lines only to cut the character entirely is very time consuming and, um, pretty depressing!

Now, micro editing. The small stuff. This is when you get to fiddle with every single line of the book. And there are billions of reasons for you to do so. I'm going to give you a big long online checklist at the end of this, but here I'll talk broadly about problems writers find at the micro level of their text. The best way for you to spot your own is to read every single line OUTLOUD with a pen at hand.

Shifting tenses as we talked about in the last lecture is a very common mistake on the page. You'll hear these tense shifts when you read your work aloud. In the same way, you'll hear your point of view shifts when you read the work aloud. These are moments when you lose the narrative voice and enter the head of a character you never should be hearing from.

The next big problem is TELLING instead of SHOWING. This is such a pervasive and tricky problem for many writers. Including me. Here's a note from my editor at Harper Collins that describes perfectly the problem when I show and don't tell:

That said—oh, you're going to hate hearing this—there's some telling-versus-showing going on in Callie's sections and elsewhere, as well. I know you know all about this and it'll change organically as you revise, but my editor's oath obliges me to note that there are places where thoughts or feelings could be demonstrated, rather than stated.

"I won't take no for an answer. Come on, lazybones. It'll be good for us. Plus I like totally missed you. I want things to go back to how they were. You're my best friend, right? Please?"

Here's another example:

For a moment, I long to be the one Mom rushes to hug when she wakes, the one Mom chatters to when she's cooking. Cosmo's little, but he takes up so much room. I slip out of my PJs, reminding myself it's stupid to be jealous of a baby.

Could you take us to a more specific place? For example, maybe she has a sensory memory of being small and crawling into her parents bed in the morning. She doesn't have to say she's jealous or that things are different; the empty bed provides the contrast. One parent is attending to another child, the other is off at work. Things have changed.

Speech tagging is a huge problem for lots of writers. The only way to get this right is to teach yourself how to do it properly. Don't be embarrassed or worried that you should somehow know how to tag speech – there are great grammar books that will give you this information perfectly. See the supplementary reading list.

Adverbs can be used to great advantage. Somehow, J.K. Rowling has littered her wonderful Harry Potter books with adverbs, and succeeded in creating brilliant, lively stories. That doesn't mean the rest of us need to fill our prose with adverbs. I think adverbs often try to do the work of weak verbs. For example, if you use the verb *walk* you may have to qualify it with the word quickly, like this.

She walked quickly.

Instead of: **She ran.** Or: **She hurried.** Or even, to add character:

She skipped.

Adverbs tend to tell the reader how to read the line. Strong verbs give the reader the chance to decide for themselves how to interpret the story. Kids, and adults, love to feel the thrill of discovering a character for themselves.

There are myriad moments in a book where a writer can edit and rewrite their words. At one point, it's time to let go and let the book head out into the big scary world. Before you do that, please go through the editing checklist described in the link below for each and

every book you write. I promise it'll give your book a better chance of meeting your readers' imaginations the way you intended.

Editing Checklist

<http://www.fiction-writers-mentor.com/editing-checklist.html>