

WESTERN TALE SPINNER



N E W S L E T T E R

HAPPY SPRING!

Going through photos, looking for something...and this wonderful old dog, lying on her back pops up, and I think, “why not?” I purchased it from iStock, and used it in a presentation on “writing funny.” Kids howl when they see it. Not familiar with iStock? Google and check it out. If nothing else, on a day Bereft of Ideas (it happens), you can spend some time browsing all the visuals...and you’ll come up with *something!* Go ahead...try it. And Happy Writing!



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Good News!



Goldilocks by **Theresa Henry-Smith**

Gloria Blanchard has sold an historical story called "Tomb Robbers!" (set in ancient Egypt) to Red Squirrel Magazine.

Maggie Bolitho's debut novel, *Lockdown*, is being released by Great Plains Teen Fiction. The launch party will be in North Vancouver on May 2nd. Details on www.maggielolitho.com.

Eileen Cook's latest YA, *Year of Mistaken Discoveries* was published Feb. 25 with Simon Pulse/Simon Schuster. Bookreporter has selected it as a YA Book You Need To Read <http://www.bookreporter.com/features/young-adult-books-you-want-to-read>

Danika Dinsmore's third book in her middle grade fantasy series, *Ondelle of Grioth*, launches on April 15th from Hydra House. A launch party is at Christianne's Lyceum in Vancouver on Saturday, April 12 @ 7 pm. Danika is in the midst of an ArtStarts residency at Southridge School teaching speculative fiction to 12th graders.

Laura Langston is pleased to announce the release of *Hot New Thing*, a novel out this spring by Orca Book Publishers for their Limelights Series. The series features teens who love the performing arts and seek the limelight! Laura is also contracted to write a second Limelights novel, due out in 2016.

Irish Beth Maddock, (Calgary AB) has written a children's picture book about growing up on Okanagan Lake in BC. *The Great Carp Escape* has been accepted into "The Great Canadian Author's Program" at Word Alive Press which means it will be available in select bookstores across Canada.

Leanne Shirliffe's debut picture book comes out on May 6, 2014. It's called *The Change Your Name Store*, and it's published by Sky Pony Press (and distributed by Thomas Allen in Canada). The book launch is open to the public and will be held in Calgary on May 10, from 2-4 PM. Details of the launch are here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/484584871669368/484618271666028/>.



Dianne Young's latest picture book, *Dear Flyary* (Kids Can Press), has been nominated for a Saskatchewan Book Award in the Children's Literature category. Winners will be announced on April 26th.

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So You Think You Know It All?

by Diane Jones

After age 65, it's possible to take university courses for free. I qualified a long time ago, and finally this year I signed up. I didn't much care which course I'd take. Maybe history. Maybe literature. Browsing through the courses, I made a wish list, but was informed that spaces in all courses were reserved for those who required them for degree qualifications. Seniors like me had to wait to be informed that our turn had come to sign up for whatever was left over.

All the courses on my wish list were already gone to those who needed them, and I was given a list of the leftovers. Imagine my surprise and delight to find the perfect course—one I hadn't even hoped for—Creative Writing 200. It's an overview of the varieties of types of writing—fiction, nonfiction, blogging, graphic novels, comedy, crime, poetry, and best of all, writing for children. Better still, the section on writing for children was to be taught by our own Alison Acheson!

Before that session began, I approached Alison and introduced myself. She seemed to think I'd know everything she had to say, and that it would all be old-hat to me. Not so. I learned a lot. I had taken writing courses, attended writing conferences, read books on writing, but I wasn't sure what was outdated and what was new. For example, I didn't know that there's now an age category called "new adult," going from Young Adult up to about age 25. Interesting. It was also encouraging to learn that much of what I thought I knew was still valid. Alison's lecture was anything but old-hat.

So what about the other sessions? Did I already know all that stuff? Some of it, yes. Again, I felt a sense of validation when I could nod in agreement with the professor. Some of it, I thought I knew, but found I'd messed around to suit my own way of looking at things. For example, there's Aristotle's triangle, or something. I've always called it Aristotle's Incline—a plotting paradigm he wrote about in *Poetics*. I didn't do well in that part of the quiz because I called the points by different names. The nice thing about taking university courses after age 65, when you already have your degree thank you very much, is that the quiz is nothing more than a wake-up call to the fact that, no, I don't know everything so there's good reason to be in this class.

Another reason I'll be sorry when this course ends in a week or two, is that I like the in-class writing exercises and the monthly written assignments (5 pages, double-spaced, submitted online). No excuses such as writer's block or busy-ness will do. I work best under pressure and with deadlines.

It's a short course, only January to April, held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 to 2pm, but now I find myself searching the course lists again, and making my new wish list. It would be wonderful to find another creative writing course to follow this one, because I certainly do not know everything. If I find one, I hope it'll be one of the leftovers that I can seize and savour like this one. ~~~~~

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Story Idea Factory

by Denise Jaden

Where do you get your story ideas?

Mine come from all over the place, including movies, dreams, talking to friends and hearing what has happened to them, Facebook and Twitter, inline at the grocery store, and in newspaper headlines. All it takes is a spark of an idea, and I'm off and running to see if I can expand it into a novel-length plot.

Plot ideas can come from almost anywhere. The important thing is to keep your eyes and ears open and figure out where *your* best ideas usually come from.

Brainstorming is a simple but effective skill that you'll need as a writer. It's much like a muscle, and the more you build the skill of brainstorming, the easier and more natural it will become. I recommend brainstorming for five minutes every morning before speaking to another person. It's amazing what our minds can come up with after they've had six or eight hours to percolate, and before we get busy with the rest of life. Jot down everything that comes to mind, even in short form, so it doesn't slip away. My most important guidelines for brainstorming are:

1. There are no bad ideas. Write every single thing down.
2. Your instincts are more important than you usually give them credit for.
3. It's often the connection between ideas that will give us our "A-ha" moments.
4. Use free writing, writing prompts, or get social when you're stuck.
5. Dream big and wild.

Once you have the seed of an idea that you're excited about, spend some time thinking about what your story might be at its most basic level. Is it a character against a strong opponent? A character who needs to change and grow? A character who is battling something within him or herself?

Now take everything you have so far and create a story web—writing your main idea in the middle of a large page, and sprout off lines to indicate any other ideas you come up with that may fit with this plot and characters. Are you discovering new characters that could be useful in your story? Write them down, and give them each at least one identifying characteristic.

Does this story still excite you? If so, then keep with it! Continue to expand your ideas and form them into some kind of a story plan. (I have an example of my story plan online at <http://www.denisejaden.com/storyplan.html>). If you're seeing too many problems with this story idea, or if it doesn't feel like the right time for you to write it,

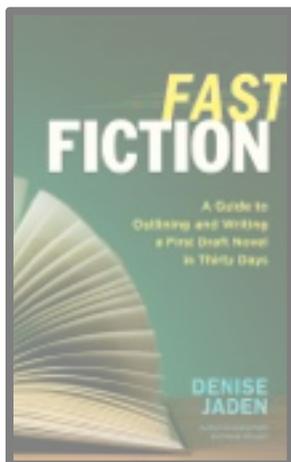
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go back to your “story factory” or the places you get your ideas, and continue to build that brainstorming muscle.

The kismet of a perfect story idea may not just show up exactly when you need it. You may have to go after it with a stick!

For more tips on story ideas or for inspirational writing prompts, visit my blog at denisejaden.blogspot.com.

Denise Jaden is the author of critically-acclaimed fiction for teens, including *Losing Faith* and *Never Enough* from Simon & Schuster. Her nonfiction books for writers include *Writing with a Heavy Heart: Using Grief and Loss to Stretch Your Fiction* and her newest release, *Fast Fiction: A Guide to Outlining and Drafting a First-Draft Novel in Thirty Days*. She lives just outside Vancouver, Canada, where she homeschools her son and dances with a world-renowned Polynesian dance troupe.



Steampunktopus by Apis Teicher

Multiple choice for writers

by Gloria Blanchard

When someone asks what you do, you hesitate to say you're a writer and instead, you...

- Stutter and say you “dabble” in writing.
- Say you're between careers and trying out different projects, one of which might be writing.
- Glare and snap that you don't answer personal questions.
- Smile and with supreme confidence, say, “I'm a writer.”
- All of the above, at one time or another.

(Correct answer e). Confess. Unless you're a many-times published author, your confidence wavers every day, several times a day. But think of this, a baker who produces bread, regardless of how many loaves are sold, is a baker. A teacher with a classroom full of students, is a teacher, regardless of how many of the students are successful scholars. Someone who writes is a writer, whether or not those thoughts are manifested into a physical or digital book that anyone besides mom, best friend, or significant other reads.

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Multiple Choice continued...

You've been thinking about your novel for years and now you've written and finished your first draft. Do you...

- Package it up and send it to every name on your meticulously researched list of publishers interested in your genre.
- Write a detailed synopsis and a bang-on query letter and send it off to only the most successful literary agents at the biggest agencies. Hello, New York City!
- Attend a far-off writing conference and scope out at least three agents; follow them, pitch them, offer them either a muffin or lodging at your place next time they're in town. (Ha! You know better than to stalk them in the bathroom.)
- Stick that manuscript in a drawer and go do something else. Take it out a month later and read it, first page to last. Mama mia! Start your first revision. (Bad news: there will be more revisions, and more revisions, and more...)

(Correct answer d). It is absolutely amazing what you will see and hear in your writing when you put distance between it and the next careful read. Who wrote this shit? You? Yes you, and me, and every other writer. Even Ernest Hemingway said, "The first draft of anything is shit." After letting your first draft sit and rest (like a lasagne or a pie fresh out of the oven), begin to read from the first page with new eyes. Make notes or perhaps print out the entire manuscript and scribble on the page if that makes it feel more real. Rewrite and then let it rest again. It might be necessary to make several revisions. The neatest trick comes later: learning when to stop.

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley Again. That's what you want, a killer first line as good as the one Daphne du Maurier wrote for her book, *Rebecca*. But it's hard to come up with something brilliant when you're not. Do you...

- Take a nap. It may come to you in a dream.
- Go to a first line generator site which sometimes will spit out compelling sentences like: "Call me Aunt Maude for I just killed Jeeves and I am to become your new butler."
- Request some ideas from your friends on Facebook because you're brave.
- Don't think about it. Just start writing the first paragraph and keep going. You will revisit the problem after you've typed The End.

(Best answer: d). Even if you plot meticulously, your novel or short story will surprise you as you write and create. When you've finished and firmed up the theme, creating a tantalizing first sentence will be easier. You may never write a first line as good as Daphne du Maurier's but you will write one that's better than the one you started with.

Which of these facts do you wish you knew before you became a writer in the twenty-first century:

- You need a platform and you should have started building it long ago, when the first idea for the first story sprang into your little mind. But, you know... where to put it? On the deck? In the apple tree? Overlooking the rusting hulk of a car in your neighbour's back yard?
- Literary agents are as hard to get as a publisher.
- Ebook technology is confusing, rapidly changing, time consuming and still might have an unpleasant whiff about it.

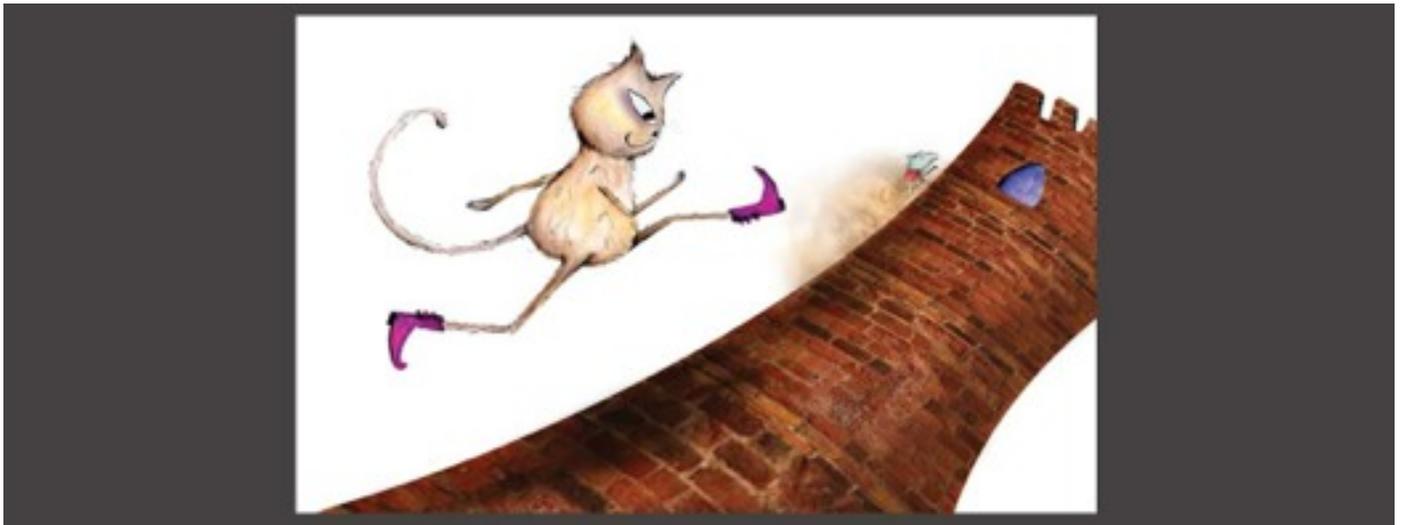
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Multiple Choice continued

- d) Children's ebook sales are meagre, and even then most sales come from well-known print authors of previously published books.
- e) Before you submit your manuscript, do you know where your book would be placed on the bookshelf, e.g. with the romances, dystopian, western, vampires and werewolves, etc. If your story doesn't fit any of the predictable, usual genres, it might be impossible to sell, even with an agent and even if well written 'cause, you know, they have to put it somewhere and it can't be alone.

Sad to say, all of the above, and more. Being a writer in the twenty-first century is both harder and easier at the same time. It's more difficult for traditional publishers to take a chance on a new writer but at the same time there are other avenues for writers today. It only takes research, courage and time. Sometimes \$\$\$ too. ~~~~~



Puss n' Boots by Patricia Pinsk (above) and 3 Blind Mice (below)



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WIFYR: Writing and Illustrating for Young Readers

by Suzanne Cooper

“It’s time to start your writing apprenticeship,” was the advice I was given three years ago. In addition, a few other things were added.

The first—keep reading...a lot, and write even more. Then, be around other writers and the best place to start was the “Writing and Illustrating For Young Readers (WIFYR)” annual conference held in Sandy, Utah.

Fifteen years ago, Dr. Christopher Crowe, professor at Brigham Young University (BYU) and award-winning author, asked Carol Lynch Williams the question, “If you could go to any kind of writing conference—the conference of your dreams—what would it be?” Thus the seeds for WIFYR were born. The annual conference has grown and has attendees from all over the US, Canada and several international attendees as well. Carol and her troupe of volunteers organize WIFYR starting a week after the last one ends.

WIFYR’s main goal is to help writers develop the skills to become the best writers they can be so they can publish the best possible books. There are classes for every writer—picture book, chapter book, middle grade, young adult—and for illustrators, who have a fabulous display at the end of the week.

Carol has an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts and teaches “Writing for Children and Adolescents” at BYU. She has over 30 books published for middle grade and young adult readers and still has time for her family of five daughters.

With considerable trepidation, I signed up. That done, I was quickly welcomed and given assignments to be emailed in ahead of time or to bring with me. It was going to be work. Because of the support and confidence instilled in me that first year, I returned to work able to admit that I was a writer.

Every morning I was in a class of about fifteen with an experienced instructor. Last year my instructor was A.E. Cannon who is an author, journalist and mother of five sons and a menagerie of pets. Those give her enough ammunition for many stories.

The year before I attended Cynthia Leitich Smith’s class. She wrote the *Tantalize* series. She is a Harvard trained lawyer who has taken a break from teaching Law to writing YA fiction. Her husband Greg, also a lawyer-turned-writer, will be with her again this year at WIFYR.

The afternoons were filled with plenaries where instructors and writers shared stories about their craft and what drives and inspires them to keep writing. At times, stories were poignant and others hilarious. They discussed the risks of how the writers’ life experiences leaked into their writings and what gave their voices authenticity. I learned to Edit, Edit, Edit.

Each class was visited by agents and editors who know this conference and are excited to come and look for new talent. They were at one or more plenaries and answered questions and provided opportunities to submit work. This year, four agents and editors representing Simon and Schuster, the Greenhouse Literary Agency and others will be there.

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Past faculty include Eric Rohmann, Tim Wynne Jones (hilarious Canadian and great teacher), Kathi Appelt, Virginia Euwer Wolff, Candace Fleming, Martine Leavitt with her incredible insights and professionalism, Louise Plummer, A.E. Cannon, Will Terry, and Matthew J. Kirby, winner of the 2012 Edgar Award for Best Juvenile Mystery for *IceFall*.

The keynote speaker this year is James Dashner, author of the *Maze Runner* series. In 2012 Trent Reedy, author of *Words In the Dust*, was the keynote speaker and spoke about his military work in Afghanistan and how he met the girl who is the heroine of the story.

WIFYR provides a great opportunity to mingle with other writers and illustrators in the quiet idyllic setting of the Waterford School in Sandy, Utah. I came to realize the value of support from other writers. SCBWI was recommended so I joined when I returned to Calgary. Being able to participate in a critique group, attend some great events and monthly meetings, has provided much support. SCBWI members receive a discount from their early WIFYR registration cost.

This year, between the 16-20 June, I will return under the Wasatch Mountains to enjoy WIFYR. It will be a busy week and worth every second.

For more information please go to WIFYR's website at www.wifyr.com

This article is an information/opinion piece and does not constitute an endorsement by SCBWI Canada West of the event portrayed here. Interested persons must follow up on all aspects of this event on their own.



Waterford School, Sandy, Utah



Carol Lynch Williams — founder of WIFYR

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To New York and Back Again

by Helena Juhasz

This was my very first time to New York City, and through some serendipity of events I was able to make my way to the SCBWI Winter Conference at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. It was just for the weekend, with almost no opportunity for any sightseeing at all, but I didn't care. It was all business.

I made it to our budget place to stay, and met my colleague and friend for a quick bite of authentic NYC pizza, then settled into our hotel, a ten-minute walk from the conference. I was a nervous wreck that night, as the Illustrators Intensive was the next day and I had to finalize the selection and order of my portfolio, double and triple check that I had packed my bag for the next day properly, and was too nervous to sleep. Sure enough, the big day came and as I walked into the Grand Hyatt, I had to laugh. Only an SCBWI event would do something like this: in the lobby, on top of two huge marble busts, sat two Cat In The Hat hats. I chuckled and reminded myself to calm down. This is going to be fun.

Tomie de Paola put us in a great mood that Friday morning with his infectious laugh. His lesson of the day surprised me: "Theatre is the most important thing that an illustrator has to understand." Just as actors put their whole mind into a role, so too do illustrators as they are drawing the character. We must imagine the characters having a life before and after the story we are creating for them. Wow! The conference already paid for itself. Tomie even likened doodling character sketches to a casting call and page composition as set design. "Then," he said, "set those characters in motion with an action, reaction and interaction in order to engage the audience," the reader.

Brett Helquist then brought up the nitty-gritty process of illustration. He reminded us that even the most talented illustrators of history would start with an ugly, messy thumbnail sketch. From there, beautiful illustrations come from a well-developed process and an ability to bring a figure to life. This is the result of hours of daily practice, where one must try a variety of faces, styles and expressions until you recognize the character you are aiming to create. He encouraged us to push ourselves in our images in order to avoid clichés. Or as Tomie put it: "really swing your cat!" (no cats were actually harmed in the use of this expression).



The Grand Hyatt...note the Cat in the Hat decor, in honour of the SCBWI Conference! Above is the Illustrators' Intensive.

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Paul Zelinsky, winner of count 'em three Caldecott medals, really drove home two main points: guide the reader's eye, by using white space and lighter values, to what you want them to see. Then, remember to overlap, not align characters, in order for them to stand out. To add drama, compose the background in an opposite diagonal to the action of the character. We had the wonderful opportunity to see him demonstrate his process of composition live on his laptop, projected onto a big screen for all of us to see.

Thereafter, was an in-class evaluation of submitted work, led by Arthur A. Levine. His foremost concern regarding each illustration surprised me. "How does it make me feel? Does it make me feel anything?" he asked himself aloud with every illustration displayed on screen. Another wow! It became so obvious once he said it. Arthur elaborated with the point that all of the characters on the page need to connect to each other in their reactions, for us to feel anything for them. Arthur and his colleagues evaluated thirty images in this way, and it was a much more rigorous approach to evaluating illustrations, than I had imagined.

Finally, we had smaller group evaluations of our individual Snow White-themed illustrations created for the conference. A lovely woman named Martha Rago sat down next to me. I was already nervous for our group review, but when she stated that she was the Creative Director at Harper Collins Limited, I broke out into a full-body sweat. I patiently sat through the other five-minute evaluations, and I feverishly took notes, not to miss any pertinent information. Then it was my turn. She took a moment of silence, smiled and then proceeded to provide a lot of constructive feedback: too dim palette, needs a clearer light source (more light/shadow to focus on characters), add more idiosyncratic details to the space/characters, viewer's eye is led to bounce around too much, show Snow White's face so you can focus the illustration on her reaction to the angry dwarf. I was more than grateful for receiving such incredible detail in my evaluation. In the meantime, our portfolios were being reviewed by a ballroom full of art directors, editors and agents. Luckily I was so diligent in my note taking that I had forgotten about my earlier anguish. I was too busy being a living ball of sweat, right next to Martha Rago.

The next morning started with the hilarious keynote speech by Jack Gantos. He has such incredible sarcastic wit and put the whole conference room, of one thousand, in stitches. When he finished retelling hilarious stories from his childhood, which he has weaved into his award winning books, he came down to some serious advice. This comes from a man who writes 200 days of the year and says he does a hundred full drafts per book. So, I feverishly took more notes. "Create a character that you cannot forget, in order to get empathy from your reader" he said. The best stories are where the action and emotional components of the story come together at the end. He advised that the character has to change emotionally in the ending, thereby the reader feels changed as a result of the story also. Another great day at the conference was off to a good start.

We all dispersed to our breakout sessions, mine led by Laurent Linn, Art Director for Simon & Schuster, who gave a talk on marketing for illustrators. Among many details, it was clear that an on-line presence is a necessity: social media, a blog and portfolio website. He reminded us to send art postcards quarterly and reassured us that those cards can sit in someone's office for a couple of years before the right project comes along. Then, another breakout session on writing for middle grade, led by Nancy Siscoe, Senior Executive Editor, Knopf Books. For these 8-12 year old readers, "they still believe in justice in the world and have the spirit of anything can change or anything can happen." For this reason, middle graders are open to fantasy novels and love learning about the world, Nancy

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explained. She reminded us to keep stakes up in the story, so the reader cares what happens, but they need hope in the ending.

As if the conference wasn't jam-packed enough, there was even a Gala Dinner that Saturday night, where we socialized by SCBWI regions and I met all of our Canadian counterparts and, well, we talked hockey.

Sunday morning came early, with my Canadian colleagues and I trying to sneak in a bit of the men's hockey gold medal game. Alas, Kate Messner's keynote on the power of failure was too big of a draw for me. Kate did not disappoint, as she recounted the time she was invited to do a TED talk, and even though she prepared and rehearsed, she was seized with anxiety backstage. Kate did get through her talk, but in her mind it was a failure, in that it wasn't the talk of her life, even though she had the stage and opportunity for it. Kate reminded us that "your falls aren't failures... they're part of the process." Kate said that writing involves writing a lot of bad ideas and bad dialogue before a good story emerges. She mentioned a study about a pottery class, where those students who did the highest volume of pieces, ended up with the best work. However Kate's TED talk went, didn't matter to us, because she moved that conference ballroom--this was the speech of her life and the energy she imparted to the room, made us feel like we could aspire to reach anything we wanted to. The ugly fear of failure left my mind that morning, and I took home with me a piece of Kate's infectious determination.

The final keynote was so eloquently delivered by Nickki Grimes, the author's words dripping from her lips as she spoke. At that point, I was feeling saturated with information, but it was as if she was speaking to me when she said: "perfectionism doesn't play well together with impatience... it's living hell." I have managed to twist my thoughts into such hell, and luckily I have grown from this, helped along by her reminder: "Give yourself permission to take the time to make the story good."

I came away with new friends and an arsenal of advice and inspiration. But, as I said, the conference paid for itself in that first few minutes of the first talk, on the very first day. ~~~~~



A Happy Place by Apis Teicher

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The Canadian Verse Novel

by Cathy Ostlere

Let's celebrate our super-talented, home-grown verse novelists.

For a writer, crafting a verse novel is a thrilling exploration of language, form and story. No niggling voices nagging about punctuation and capitalization—only free-floating ideas, images, playful language and that wonderful white space—the drama of the implied thought.

Writing a verse novel requires huge leaps of faith to soar over terrifying doubt. It's a risky, sometimes crazy way to tell a story—but verse novelists have exceptional conviction: if they're exhilarated by writing these narratives they believe that their readers will be too.

Canadian writers have been slow to experiment with this beautiful, thoughtful genre—American and Australian writers have been doing it much longer—but we have finally arrived. So, Canadian verse novelists—take a well-deserved bow. Our list may be short but every book on it is pure joy.

Burn by Alma Fullerton, 2010

Usually, when Casey's famous mom went on tour, Casey got to go. But since settling down with a new husband and baby, things have changed. Casey begins building fires to send smoke signals to her mother, hoping her mother will see her message.

In the Garage by Alma Fullerton, 2006

A grief-stricken BJ deals with the aftermath of her friend Alex's death as we read Alex's journal.

Libertad by Alma Fullerton, 2008

When Libertad's mother is killed in an accident at the Guatemalan city dump where the family picks trash, Libertad and his little brother make the trip to the United States to find their father. Beautiful.

Walking on Glass by Alma Fullerton, 2007

A young man's mother has attempted suicide and is left in a coma.

My book of life by Angel by Martine Leavitt, 2012

Sixteen-year-old Angel is coerced into drugs and prostitution by a man she meets in a mall. You've never read a verse novel like this one. Based on real events.

The Apprentice's Masterpiece by Melanie Little, 2009

Ramon, 15, is a Jew forced to convert to Christianity. His family takes in Amir, born Muslim, also forced to give up his faith, during the Spanish Inquisition. Sophisticated and profound.

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Nix Minus One by Jill MacLean, 2012

When Nix's older sister, Roxy, starts breaking the rules things spiral out of control. This is a heartbreaking story told with grace.

Ann and Seamus by Kevin Major, 2004, illustrated by Kevin Blackwood

In 1828, Ann and her father rescue 163 Irish immigrants from a shipwreck off the coast of Newfoundland. Inspired by historical events.

Ghost Horse of the Mounties by Sean O Huigin, 1991 illustrated by Barry Moser

In this narrative poem, a storm overwhelms the Royal Canadian Mounties, scattering their horses in all directions and resulting in the mysterious disappearance of one horse. I love this book—though hard to find.

Karma by Cathy Ostlere, 2011

After her mother's suicide, 15-year-old Maya and her father travel from Canada to India for a traditional burial. The year is 1984, and on the night of their arrival in New Delhi, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is assassinated. The city erupts in chaos and Maya is separated from her father. This one's mine!

Fishtailing by Wendy Phillips, 2010

Natalie moves to a new school and entangles others in her forbidden world of partying and rebellion. A perfect book.

The Crazy Man by Pamela Porter, 2005

Emaline, 12, is maimed in a freak farm accident. Her father shoots the dog and storms off and doesn't return. Her mother, in need of help around the farm, takes in Angus, a gentle giant from the mental hospital. A Canadian classic.

I'll Be Watching by Pamela Porter, 2011

Set in Canada during the Great Depression, orphans, sixteen-year-old Ran, fourteen-year-old Nora, twelve-year-old Jim and little Addie find a way to make ends meet under the watchful eye of their dead parents. Told from multiple points of view, this book offers a compelling tale of faith and courage in the face of suffering and evil.

Audacious by Gabrielle Prendergast, released October 2013

Sixteen-year-old Raphaëlle says the wrong thing, antagonizes the wrong people and has the wrong attitude. She can't do anything right except draw, but she draws the wrong pictures that get her into a heap of trouble. This is a wild, bold story. Kudos to Gabrielle.

Counting Back from Nine by Valerie Sherrard, 2012

Laren Olivier knows the rules, but her attraction to a friend's ex-boyfriend is strong. When tragedy strikes, Laren finds herself struggling with a discovery so shocking it rocks the very foundation of her world. This quiet book sneaks up on you and then bam—hits you in the heart.

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Yellow Mini by Lori Weber

Mark has inherited a yellow mini from his deceased father. Stacey, his girlfriend, Mary and Annabelle alternate voices as they find their niches, be it concert pianist or activist. Dramatic and perfect for teenagers.

Zorgamazoo by Robert Paul Weston

Part Roald Dahl, part Dr. Seuss, this rhyming novel tells the story of Katrina, Morty, and the missing Zorgles. Sheer talent.

To see more fabulous verse novels from all over the world checkout Sarah Tregay's list: <http://www.sarahtregay.com/novelsinverse.html>

Writers—Watch Those Epigraphs

by Laura Langston

I love quotes. I collect them like some women collect shoes, only mine aren't organized in a closet. They're scattered everywhere: in notebooks and in e-files; cluttering my desk like bits of verbal confetti; on slips of paper in my coat pocket (my yoga teacher prints them out for us to take at the end of class.) I haven't stencilled one on my living room wall yet, like a good friend of mine has, because then I'd have to pick a favorite.

I love quotes so much I post one a week on my Facebook author page and, like many other writers, I generally pick one to start every novel I write. I've done it for years.

Last week I received an email from Penguin Publishing. "Had I," the editor asked, "Obtained permission for the epigraph I'd selected for *The Art of Getting Stared At*?" The epigraph in question reads: We should not feel embarrassed by our difficulties, only by our failure to grow anything beautiful from them. Alain de Botton.

"I didn't know I needed to," I responded. I assumed the short quote fell under the terms of fair use.

I assumed wrong.

Okay, not completely, unequivocally wrong, but potentially wrong if the epigraph was ever questioned. And publishers run from the phrase 'if it's ever questioned' like a cat running from hot water. In fact, the issue of using epigraphs is an extremely grey area. And publishers don't like grey either (unless it pertains to shades thereof, and they're the one responsible for publishing the shades thereof book).

Basically, as the Penguin editor explained it to me, they treat each epigraph on a case-by-case basis because there are so many variables (writer/editor Jane Friedman has written an excellent detailed, blog on this: <http://janefriedman.com/2012/01/23/permissions/>)

In my case, I was asked to contact Mr. de Botton and request permission to use his quote. De Botton is an extremely successful writer (*Status Anxiety*; *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* are two of his many titles), philosopher, and TV presenter. My anxiety around the pleasures and sorrows of my own small piece of work started to ratchet up. Would my email hit his spam folder? Be set aside by a publicist or a gatekeeper? What if my request was passed to his publisher? What if de Botton simply didn't get back to me? All legitimate concerns and given the fact that I had a deadline, I was a little concerned.

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

But I wouldn't know until I tried, so I fired off an email. Less than thirty minutes later, I had an answer from de Botton himself (and he lives in the UK so it was early evening when he received my note which made the quick turnaround all the more remarkable).

"I would be delighted," he said. "How very kind."

Not only did my anxiety float off like a dandelion seed on the wind, I was left feeling that I had done Mr. de Botton a favor, when in fact, the opposite was true. He was being extraordinarily gracious and generous to me.

Thank you, Mr. de Botton. Your response was a reminder to be grateful, something you've spoken about before.

"Rather than getting more spoilt with age, as difficulties pile up, epiphanies of gratitude abound." Alain de Botton.

SCBWI member Laura Langston lives in the Pacific Northwest and blogs weekly at www.lauralangston.com. She's the author of numerous books for teens and children including *Hot New Thing* and the upcoming *The Art of Getting Stared At*.



Puss n' Boots by Nancy Vo



WESTERN TALE SPINNER

Event Horizon

by Ken Kilback

The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators—Canada West presents its sixth annual **WestCwic: Western Canada Children's Writers & Illustrators Conference** on **Saturday September 20 2014** at the Holiday Inn Express in Burnaby, B.C. Please note the change of date from the usual time of year that it's held. As of now, author Denise Jaden and illustrator Lisa Cinar are confirmed speakers. Please wait for more details.

SCBWI Canada West is holding a **Special Topic** in Calgary, Alberta as part of its **Speakers Series** on **April 17 2014**. Illustrator Carolyn Fisher will talk about different options and strategies that illustrators have for getting their work published. Free for SCBWI members, \$5 for non-members. 7:00 to 8:30 pm, Southcentre Mall, Calgary. For details, contact Pamela at pseudowell@shaw.ca .

SCBWI Canada West is holding a **Special Topic** in Calgary, Alberta as part of its **Speakers Series** on **May 15 2014**. Shaun Cody, an intellectual property lawyer, will explain how copyright laws apply to creators such as writers and illustrators. Free for SCBWI members, \$5 for non-members. 7:00 to 8:30 pm, Southcentre Mall, Calgary. For details, contact Pamela at pseudowell@shaw.ca .

New Westminster, BC, is holding its annual **Lit Fest New West** from **Friday April 25 through Saturday April 26, 2014** at Douglas College. Gary Geddes is the keynote speaker as well as the author-in-residence. Children's authors Lois Peterson and Jacque Pearce are two of the people providing workshops at this event. For more information, go to www.artscouncilnewwest.org/litfest .

The **TD Canadian Children's Book Week** is being held from **May 3 through May 10 2014** this year. This event celebrates children's book and the importance of reading. Close to 35, 000 children, teens, and adults participate in activities held in every province and territory of Canada. For more information, go to www.bookweek.ca .

The 28th annual Vancouver Children's Book Festival, **BookFest 2014**, is being held in Nanaimo on **Saturday May 3 2014**. Special guest speakers include, Dan Bar-el, Aubrey Davis, Cynthia Nugent, Kevin Sylvester, Marty Chan, Sarah Ellis, Caroline Woodward, Rachna Gilmore, and Karen Patkau. For more information, please go to www.bookfest.ca .

The **University of British Columbia** presents the **2014 Graduate Student Research Conference in Children's Literature** on **Saturday May 3 2014** at the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre. This year's conference, **i Will Be Myself**, 'brings together both graduate students and professionals to explore the various aspects and themes of identity in children's and young adult literature, media and culture.' To register or for more information, please go to www.blogs.ubc.ca/iwillbemysself/ .

The annual **Vancouver International Children's Festival** takes place from **May 27 through June 1 2014** on Granville Island in Vancouver. Lots of fun stuff for kids and parents and children's writers and illustrators alike! This year, **Fred Penner** is a featured performer. In addition, CircusWest is performing "A Circus in Wonderland," a circus interpretation of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. For more information, go to www.childrensfestival.ca.

The **Oregon Coast Children's Book Writers Workshop Summer 2014** is happening the week of **July 14 through 18 2014** in Oceanside, Oregon. Featured presenters include: Associate Editor Laura Whitaker (Bloomsbury); Agent Rachel Orr (Prospect Agency); and author Margriet Ruurs. Go to www.occbww.com for registration and conference details.

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

Author **Dianne Young** is organizing a **Writers' Retreat** that focuses on time for writing and socializing with other children's writers. The retreat is being held from **Monday July 28 through Friday August 1 2014** at **St. Peter's Abbey** in Muenster, Saskatchewan. The cost of \$312.25 includes accommodation and meals. If you have any questions, or would like to register, please email Diane Young at dianne.young@sasktel.net. The deadline for registration is Friday June 13 2014.

The **Surrey International Writers' Conference** is happening **Friday through Sunday October 24 through 26 2014** in Surrey, B.C. This year's program is not yet posted, but check in at www.siwc.ca for registration and conference details as they become available.

Note: SCBWI Canada West distributes information about events, but passing along this information does not constitute an endorsement. Interested persons must follow up on all aspects of these events on their own.



Goldilocks by Patricia Pinsk