



WESTERN TALE SPINNER

N E W S L E T T E R

WELCOME!

Spring!

Around the corner. (As I sit here on a most blustery day...but it is coming!) And with it, News and Events and Inspiration for SCBWI folks. We have it all here, along with articles from Lois Peterson and Dianne Young, and wonderful illustrations from Emily Miles and Theresa Henry-Smith. I am grateful for all of your contributions. Ken Kilback, as always, has put together a fine list of events. Do check out and mark up those calendars!

Any comments, questions, thoughts on future issues, let me know:
alison@alisonacheson.com

A newsletter published by the Canada West Chapter of the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Information published in this newsletter does not constitute an endorsement by SCBWI and/or SCBWI-Canada West.



Copyright Notice: All articles contained herein are the property of the authors. Please do not reprint without permission.



illustration: Theresa Henry-Smith

What's Inside

- 1 - Editor's Note
- 2 - Good News
- 4 - Stubbonness vs.
Persistence - by
Dianne Young
- 6 - Nine Telltale Signs
by Lois Peterson
- 7 - Lit Fest New West
- 8 - Event Horizon - Ken
Kilback
- 9 - Critique Groups

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

Good News!

Dianne Young is excited to launch her fifth book, *Dear Flyary* (Kids Can Press), which she first wrote nineteen years ago! (Stubborn or persistent—you be the judge...read her article on page 4.) It's the picture book diary of a little alien named Frazzle Pattzer who just bought his very first spaceship. As time goes by the spaceship makes one strange noise after another, but Frazzle resists replacing it with a new model, despite the urging of his friends and co-jobbers. When it finally breaks down in the middle of the flyway, Frazzle's mechanic, Wurpitz Hooloo, proves that she really is the wisest ship-fixer on the planet. The fantastic illustrations are by John Martz of Toronto.

BEE a researcher. Discover the important role bees play in our world. **Kari-Lynn Winters'** first non-fiction book for children will be on the shelves in May, 2012. *Buzz About Bees* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside—ISBN: 978-1554552023) explores these bee-related topics: honey hunts, bees throughout history, solitary bees, social bees, the benefits of bees, colony collapse and how to save the bees, and extraordinary bee facts.

As a Canadian author whose picture books have all featured American illustrators and been published by U.S. houses, **Mary McKenna Siddals** finds herself in an awkward limbo where most awards are concerned. With Canadian awards generally requiring an all-Canadian cast of collaborators, and U.S. awards generally open only to an all-American team, her titles have been ineligible for the vast majority of awards on both sides of the border. So she's delighted to report that her picture book, *Compost Stew: An A to Z Recipe for the Earth*, illustrated by Ashley Wolff (www.facebook.com/CompostStew), has been shortlisted for the Chocolate Lily Award (<http://chocolatelilyawards.com>). This is BC's Young Readers' Choice Award, so it's especially gratifying to know that students in kindergarten through grade 3 all across the province will be digging into



Compost Stew as they read the six nominated titles and prepare to vote for their favorites! Delighted to be in such fine company, and extending congratulations to all the nominees. <http://www.siddals.com>

Yolanda Ridge has a book coming out in the spring with Orca. *Road Block* is a middle grade novel, a sequel to *Trouble in the Trees* which was published in 2011. Both are part of the Orca Young Readers series. www.yolandaridge.com

Rebecca Kool credits Allen Say with giving her the inspiration to use Japan's old-style storytelling, *kamishibai*, to tell *Fly Catcher Boy's* story. After a successful 2011, Rebecca's one-woman theatre troupe, **KAMISHIBAI 4 KIDS**, has a full year of

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

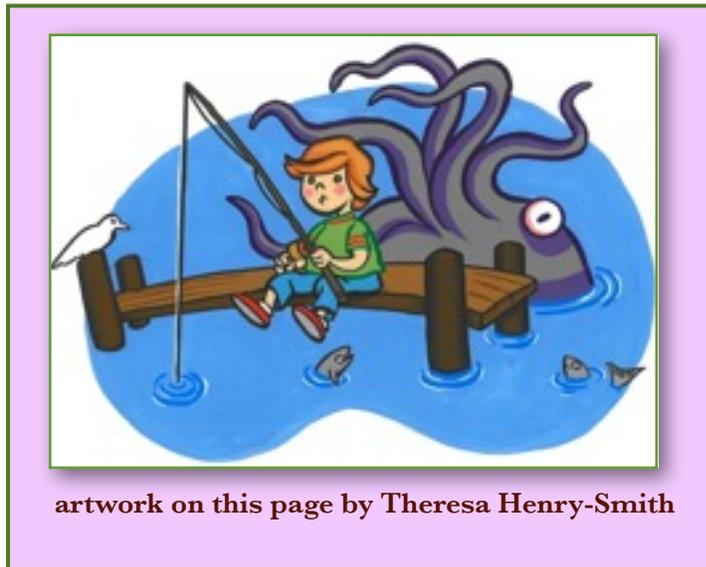
storytelling gigs booked: FVRL's **World Cultures** event will see authors visiting schools late March. Rebecca will be in Hope/Yarrow as well as Langley City/Willowbrook March 27 & 28th.

Sakura Dsya, Japan Fair, April 7 & 8th, Van Dusen Gardens, Vancouver. Performance time: 12 noon both days

The second book in **Danika Dinsmore's** MG fantasy series *The Ruins of Noe* will be released this April followed by a three week U.S. book tour (*Faerie Tales from the White Forest* is the name of the series).

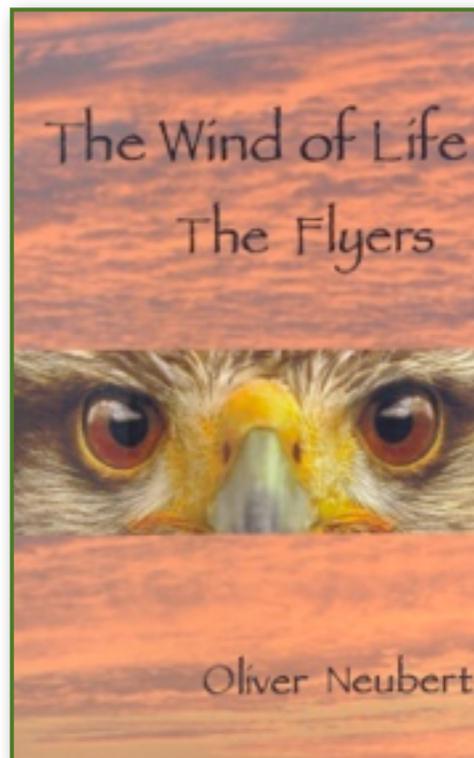
Lindsey Carmichael is thrilled to announce the publication of her first ever children's books. *Humpback Whale Migration*, *Locust Migration*, *Zebra Migration*, and *Wilbebest Migration* are part of an educational series for young readers, now available from The Child's World. Lindsey would also like to note that, after nine years of trying, she's finally received an acceptance from the Carus magazine group. Look for her articles to appear in the January 2013 issue of *Dig!*

Alison Acheson's seventh book, *The Cul-de-Sac Kids* (Tradewind), will be released just in time for the Canadian Children's Book Centre and TD Bank's Book Week Tour in May. And she's thrilled to be on her way to Ontario!



Oliver Neubert has Good News: *The Wind of Life - The Flyers* made the cover of the CM Magazine!

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol18/no24/thewindowtheflyers.html>



WESTERN TALE SPINNER

Stubbornness vs. Persistence

by Dianne Young

In 1993, I wrote a picture book story about a little alien and his very first spaceship. This March, nineteen years later, it is coming out with Kids Can Press. Yeah! Over the years I've learned a bit about stubbornness and persistence.

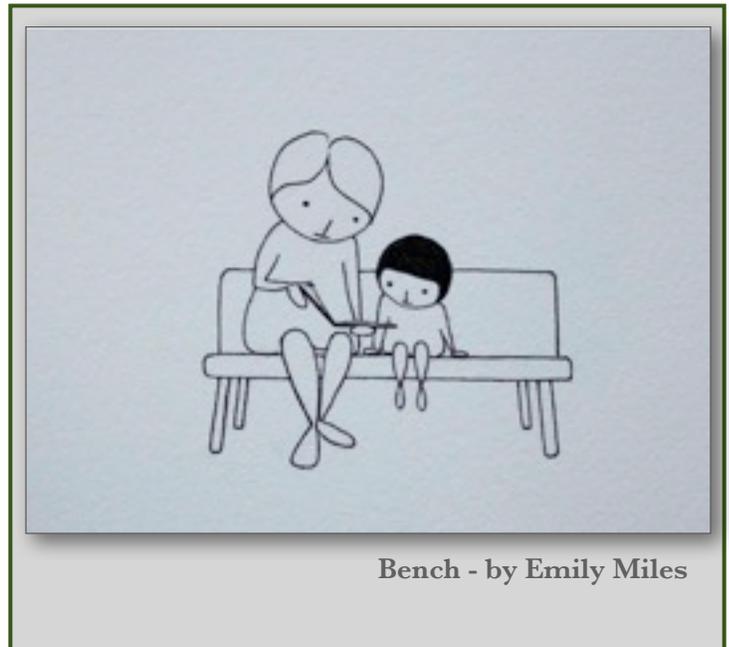
—If you believe in a story, never give up on it. That's persistence. I always knew this particular story was “book worthy” even though it was rejected 41 times.

This manuscript of yours that has just come back from another editor is a precious package. Don't consider it rejected. Consider that you've addressed it, “To the editor who can appreciate my work,” and it has simply come back stamped “Not at this address.” Just keep looking for the right address.

- Barbara Kingsolver

—Believing in a story and refusing to make any changes to it are two different things. That's stubbornness. Over the years I made minor revisions to this story three times and a major revision once. It wasn't until after that major revision that it was accepted (with more revisions between acceptance and publication). The story was always good, but how I told it wasn't. *The difference between the right word and the almost right word ... is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.*

- Mark Twain



Bench - by Emily Miles

—Pay attention to “good” rejections. Any time you receive a form letter with a handwritten note on it, or a personal letter, that's good! If you've received a few of them on the same manuscript, reread them. What do they have in common? Make changes and keep submitting. That's persistence. Out of the 41 rejections I received for this story, three of them were form letters with handwritten notes and nine were personal letters. *When novice writers ask my advice about getting published, one point I can't emphasize too strongly is the importance of being absolutely relentless about submissions. Once you've got a story to the point where you think it's worth submitting, you must submit it and submit it and submit it until someone somewhere breaks down and buys it.*

-Lawrence Block

...continued next page...

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

—Not everything you write will be good. If you think it is, that's stubbornness. As the rejections add up, look at your story closely before you send it out again. Maybe it's just not that good. I recently went through my filing cabinet. Yikes! There was some horrible stuff in there. (Dear Publishers—I'm sorry for sending it to you.) But I'm not sorry I wrote it. It was good practice – practice at writing, practice at submitting, practice at being rejected, practice at reevaluating.

Only the mediocre writer is always at his best.

- J.D. McClatchy

—Keep learning. That's persistence. Join a writing group. Take a workshop. Go to a conference. Read, read, and read some more. I belong to two children's writing groups. Critiquing other people's work helps me to look more critically at my own, and having my work critiqued by other writers makes my blind spots visible. I also belong to 5 writing organizations (SCBWI, CANSCAIP, TWUC, SWG, and the Saskatoon Coop) who put on workshops and conferences that I attend when I can and allow me to meet and mingle with other writers.

Writers "get" writers.

A writer is somebody for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people.

- Thomas Mann

What no wife of a writer can ever understand is that a writer is working when he's staring out of the window.

- Burton Rascoe



Butterfly - by Emily Miles

When it comes to writing, I am persistent. (I save my stubbornness for other areas of my life – just ask my husband.) Persistence includes rejection and revision and submission and reevaluation and education, but it also includes success.

*There's a word for a writer
who never gives up...
published.*

- Joe Konrat

Dianne Young

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

Nine Telltale Signs...

that reveal you are instructing (telling) rather than engaging (showing) your readers

by Lois Peterson

Much of my writing advice comes down to JWTDT (Just Write the Damn Thing)... then analyse it to see what needs changing, adding, and fixing.

Use this checklist to find out if you're telling more than showing in your fiction and nonfiction. Then rewrite offending passages and see how much more engaging and immediate your writing becomes.

Symptom: The verb 'to be'

Seek out forms of the verb to be (*is, were, are, etc.*) – which produce static writing that doesn't demonstrate with action.

Treatment: Rephrase using stronger verbs.

Bonus tip: Be brutal in replacing *to be* verbs when they appear in power positions—the beginning and end of sentences, paragraphs and chapters.

Symptom: Too many cerebral verbs.

Your characters *think, feel, hope, suspect, fear, regret and understand.*

Treatment: Instead of naming emotions or describing what's going through your characters' heads, let readers discover it for themselves. Consider how fear, grief and joy, etc. are experienced physically and viscerally, then convey these emotional states through actions, reactions, interactions and dialogue.

Symptom: Weak verbs.

Verbs such as *entered, moved, went, fell, rose* describe an outcome rather than an effect.

Treatment: If Jorge *lumbers* into a room, or Lily *glides*, readers see their specific actions and have a clearer sense of the characters' physical presence at the same time.

Symptom: Adverbs

Adverbs weaken action and tell readers what's happening, rather than show them.

Treatment: *Blue belted/charged/raced along the sidewalk as he tried to catch the dog* is much more evocative than *Blue ran quickly*. Use your word processor's "find" function to identify words ending with -ly. Then remove the adverbs and replace their attendant verbs with stronger, more specific ones.

Symptom: Missing senses

Most writers use visual detail automatically, often overlooking hearing, taste, touch and smell. When you employ all the senses, you transport to the places and situations you're writing about.

Treatment: Identify the sensory details in your piece. If you haven't engaged all five senses, add specifics that do.

Symptom: Nonspecific adjectives

Mention an *old* man or a *decrepit* house, and readers must make their own interpretation of what they're looking at.

Treatment: Use specific images to show the picture you want to convey. Telling details of a building's *weathered siding*, or a man's *liver-spotted hands* evoke decrepitude and age, respectively. Instead of telling the reader *Skye was shy*, show her standing apart from the partygoers.

Symptom: Generic nouns

Nouns such as *children, building and vehicle* do not provide specific images.

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

Treatment: Move the camera a little closer to reveal *toddlers* or *teenagers*, a *warehouse* or *corner store*, a *dune buggy* or *pickup truck*.

Symptom: Narrative summary

Some narrative summary, such as *Jorge and Lydia greeted each other and sat down*, effectively moves readers to the meat of the story. Just be certain that you're not rushing through material that ought to be covered in scenes.

Treatment: Use full scenes rather than narrative summary to convey significant action and story development—include action, reaction and interaction, description and dialogue.

Symptom: Overloaded dialogue

Dialogue that is too long or is weighed down with information (info dumping) contributes to writing that tells.

Treatment: Use a light hand. Keep exchanges between characters short and oblique. Avoid “info dumping.” And read your dialogue aloud to find out how realistic it sounds. Ask yourself whose voice is the reader hearing? They need to hear your characters' authentic voices communicating their own story in a realistic way.

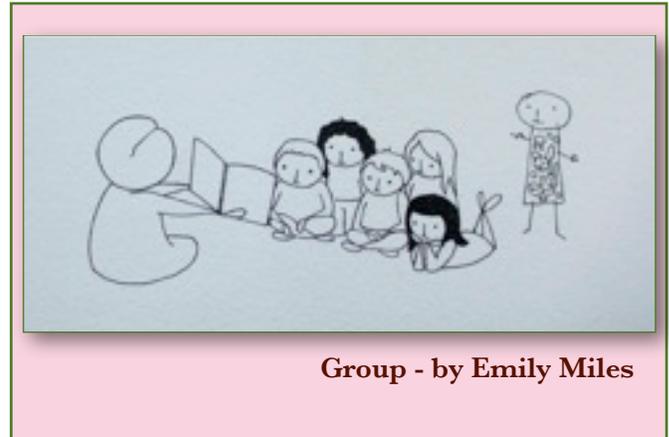
Just as readers want to interpret your work through their own lens and experience, rather than being told what to see, think or feel.

Lois Peterson is the author of four children's books, with two more—*The Wrong Bus* and *The Paper House*—to be published by Orca Book Publishers in April and May 2012 respectively, and *101-and more-Writing Exercises to Get You Started & Keep You Going*.

Lois will share more of her JWTDT process in a workshop on Reverse Outlining at the May SCBWI Conference.

Check her website at www.loispeterson.blog.com.

This article is adapted from the original that appeared in The Writer in May 2009.



Group - by Emily Miles

Lit Fest New West: Opportunity for PAL Members

The annual Lit Fest New West in New Westminster, BC, is happening on Saturday April 14, 2012, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at the city's Douglas College campus. This event celebrates the literary arts as well as authors/writers and their accomplishments.

SCBWI—Canada West has sent in registrations for two tables at Lit Fest New West in order to promote SCBWI and its members. In addition, members who have the Published and Listed (PAL) status of SCBWI membership have the opportunity to promote and sell their books during the course of this day. We already have several members who have signed on to take advantage of this opportunity.

Please note that: People must be current members of SCBWI and have the PAL status (Published and Listed—by traditional publishers, regardless of how big or small the publisher may be.)

The books the member wants to sell must also have a PAL status; that is, members must not have paid in any way to have their books published.

People are asked to volunteer their time at the table for part of the day.

People are asked to pay a \$5 fee to help cover the cost of the table rental (if more people take part in this opportunity, that fee will be reduced; we only want to cover the cost of one of the two tables.)

If you are interested in being a part of this, then please contact Ken at rawest@scbwicanada.org

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

Event Horizon

by Ken Kilback

The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators—Canada West presents its fourth annual **WestCwic: Western Canada Children's Writers & Illustrators Conference** on **Saturday May 5 2012** at the Holiday Inn Express in Burnaby, B.C. Featured speakers are Brian Deines, illustrator; Kallie George, editor, Simply Read Books; Tiffany Stone, author and freelance editor; Lois Peterson, author; and Shelley Hrdlitschka, author. For registration and conference details, go to www.scbwicanada.org/west (registration will open by the beginning of March).

SCBWI Canada West is holding a **Special Topic** in Calgary, Alberta as part of its **Speakers Series** on **March 26 2012**. Author Lois Donovan will explore writing **Historical Fiction for Kids**, including creating historically accurate characters. Free for SCBWI members, \$5 for non-members. 7:00 to 8:30 pm, Southcentre Mall, Calgary. For details, contact Pamela at pmcdowell@shaw.ca

SCBWI Canada West is holding a **Special Topic** in Calgary, Alberta as part of its **Speakers Series** on **April 23 2012**. Illustrator Val Lawton will speak on **Getting Started as an Illustrator**, including how to build your portfolio and how to approach publishers. Free for SCBWI members, \$5 for non-members. 7:00 to 8:30 pm, Southcentre Mall, Calgary. For details, contact Pamela at pmcdowell@shaw.ca

SCBWI Canada West is holding a **Special Topic** in Calgary, Alberta as part of its **Speakers Series** on **May 28 2012**. Nancy M. Bell, Senior Editor of MuseItUp Publishing will discuss everything about **E-Book Publishing**. Free for SCBWI members, \$5 for non-members. 7:00 to 8:30 pm, Southcentre Mall, Calgary. For details, contact Pamela at pmcdowell@shaw.ca

The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators—Canada East is presenting its **Niagara Falls Conference and Retreat** from **June 8 through 10, 2012**

in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Featured speakers include Tracey Adams, agent (Adams Literary); Nancy Conescu, Executive Editor (Dial Books for Young Readers); Patti Ann Harris, Art Director (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers); Emma Dryden Editing and Publishing Consultant; and authors Kathleen Duey, Lesley Livingston, and Kristen Clark Venuti. For registration and conference details, go to www.scbwicanada.org/east

New Westminster, BC, is holding its annual **Lit Fest New West** on **Saturday April 14, 2012** from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at Douglas College. SCBWI—Canada West is planning on having two tables at the event.

The **TD National Reading Summit III** is being held in Vancouver, BC from **May 2 through May 4 2012**. Attendees will review a draft reading plan and participate in facilitated group discussions on how best to shape this plan and move it forward as a national program to promote reading among children and the general population in Canada. Rick Wilks, co-founder and now sole owner and Director of Annick Press, will be one of the speakers at the summit. For more information, go to <http://nationalreadingcampaign.ca>

The **TD Canadian Children's Book Week** is being held from **May 5 through May 12 2012** 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 annual **Vancouver International Children's Festival** takes place from **May 28 through June 3, 2012** on Granville Island in Vancouver. Lots of fun stuff for kids and parents and children's writers and illustrators alike! This year, **Pete the Cat**, based on the popular and wonderful children's picture book, comes to life in a stage

WESTERN TALE SPINNER

performance. For more information, go to www.childrensfestival.ca

The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators—Western Washington Chapter presents its **21st Annual Writing and Illustrating for Children Conference on Saturday through Sunday, April 21 and 22 2012** in Redmond, Washington. Featured guests include authors Bonny Becker and Bruce Hale; illustrator Kevan Atteberry; Susan Change, Senior Editor (Starscape/Tor Teen/Tor Books); Executive Editor Nancy Conescu (Dial Books for Young Readers); and Senior Editor Andrea Welch (Beach Lane Books). Go to www.scbwi-washington.org for registration and conference details.

The **Oregon Coast Children's Book Writers Workshop Summer 2012** is happening the week of **July 9 through 13 2012** in Oceanside, Oregon. Go to www.occbww.com for registration and conference details.

The **Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators, and Performers** presents its annual **Packaging Your Imagination** conference on **November 10 2012** in Toronto. Check in at www.canscaip.org/pyi for registration and conference details as they become available.

The **Surrey International Writers' Conference** is happening **Friday through Sunday October 19, 20, and 21 2012** 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. Registration typically starts up in mid-July. Every year, there are guest speakers from the world of children's writing and publishing.

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.

Critique Groups

Looking for a critique group? If you live in Calgary or the Lower Mainland, then there are opportunities for you to join one.

The group in Calgary meets one Sunday per month at a home in the Riverbend Community, SE Calgary. The people in this group pre-read material before each meeting; the group is open to people who write for picture books, middle grade and young adult. Future meetings are on March 18, April 15, May 27, and June 17. For more information, contact Angela at alackerm@telus.net

In the Lower Mainland, one group meets in Burnaby near Metropolis at Metrotown Mall. The people in this group focus on picture books, but they are also open to reading material for middle grade and young adult. This group meets one Saturday per month. Future meetings are on April 28, May 26, and June 23. For more information, contact Ken at kenkilback@shaw.ca

Interested in starting a critique group under the SCBWI—Canada West umbrella? We would love to have critique groups wherever we can in western Canada—BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories—so, if you're interested and you can:

- Commit to a regular schedule of meetings—every month at least
- Commit to a minimum of one year of meetings—for example, from September 2012 through June 2013

—then please contact Ken at kenkilback@shaw.ca. Or contact him with any questions.