



WESTERN TALE SPINNER

N E W S L E T T E R

BACK TO FALL...

Thanks to Theresa Henry-Smith for our wonderful fall illustration! I do not receive enough illustration from our chapter's artists...so perhaps this will inspire! As a writer, I look at this—the witch with the telescope, the affronted robin, the school bus—and Ideas begin to tumble through my mind. There's a hint of urban, suburban, old-style schoolhouse...wow! So much story food. Fall is a time of change, a time of seasonal collision and all the richness of "shift." Happy "shift" writing to all!



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.

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Good News!

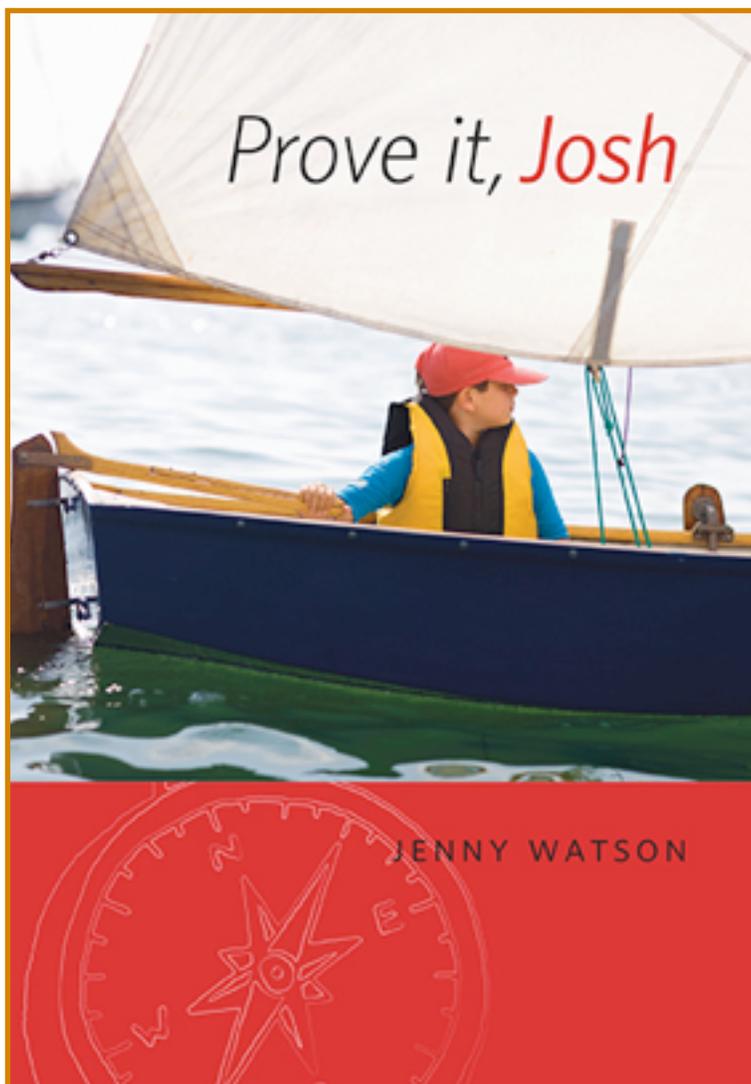
Eileen Cook is excited to announce that she has signed a three book contract with Harper Collins for her new series, tentatively called *Vanished*.

Whitehorse author **Claire Eamer's** latest book, *Before the World Was Ready: Stories of Daring Genius in Science*, has hit the bookstores. Claire will be talking about it and other aspects of writing about science for kids at the annual Celebrate Science! at the Beaty Biodiversity Museum in Vancouver on October 26.

Claire Eamer's 2012 title from Annick Press—*The World in Your Lunch Box: The Wacky History and Weird Science of Everyday Foods*—is shortlisted for 2013-2014 children's choice awards on two sides of the country: the Hackmatack Awards in Atlantic Canada and the Red Cedar Awards in British Columbia.

Trevor Newland has just received his first contract for two children's books with Mosaic Press (Canada). The books are called *The Scallywag Solution* and *Race to Pisa!*

Margriet Ruurs has two new books coming out with Kids Can Press. She had a 4 series article accepted by *Dutch* magazine about hiking in The Netherlands and will be teaching again in 2014 at the Oregon Coast Children's Book Writers Workshop (see: www.occbww.org)
<http://www.margrietruurs.com>



Jenny Watson's first book, *Prove It, Josh*, is being published by Sono Nis Press, and is due to be released in September. [Sono Nis Press website](http://www.sononispublishing.com). www.jennywatson.ca

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## **Introducing Helena: SCBWI Canada West's New IC**

By Ken Kilback

A few months ago, we said goodbye to SCBWI Canada West's first wonderful Illustrator Coordinator (IC), Shantala Robinson. Now we get to introduce you to Canada West's new wonderful Illustrator Coordinator, Helena Juhasz

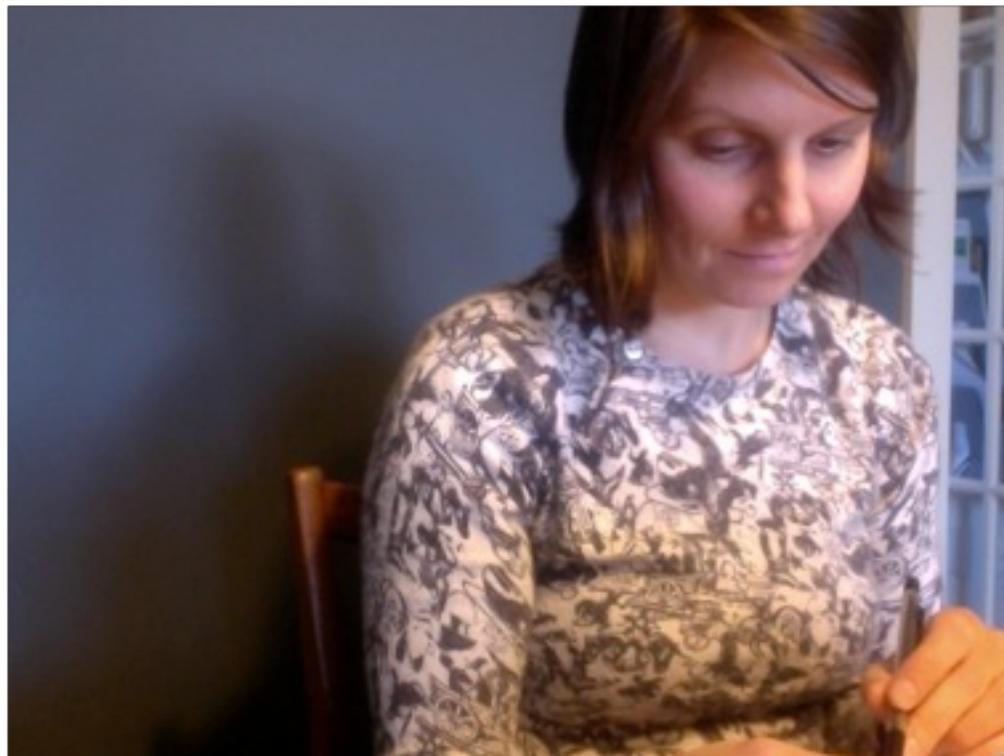
Helena has been a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators since 2011.

As an illustrator, she was published in the May/June 2012 issue of SCBWI's "The Bulletin," in *Nature First: Outdoor Life the Frilufstliv Way* (Natural Heritage Books—Dundurn Group, 2007, edited by Bob Henderson and Nils Vikander), in "Pathways: Ontario Journal of Education" from 2001 through 2011, in "Powder: The Skier's Magazine" in 1999 and 2009, and she had a weekly comic strip in "The Silhouette," McMaster University's student newspaper, in 2002.

Helena looks forward to carrying on with regular meetings for an illustrators' critique group, networking with fellow illustrators, and exploring other ideas for illustrators to participate in.

She is on Twitter, Facebook, and Blogspot, at <http://helenajuhaszillustration.blogspot.ca>. And she can be contacted at [Helena.juhasz@gmail.com](mailto:Helena.juhasz@gmail.com).

Welcome, Helena!



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## Ten Ways to Breathe Life into the Germ of an Idea

by **Lois Peterson**

I have a drawer crammed with of half-baked ideas and story germs that refuse to sprout.

But a germ does not always a story make, and many editors will tell you that their Inboxes are stuffed with submissions that are just too insubstantial to offer enough to their readers.

The following strategies (not necessarily in this order) might help bring to life an idea that has languished too long.

### 1. Dig Deep

Many writers' instinct is to start writing as soon as they pick up the germ. But by doing this, you risk heading down a dead end street. Instead, start by committing notes of your idea to paper, either in the form of lists, clustering or using stream of consciousness. In this way you have a better chance of mining all the connections and associations, questions and subtopics that might apply BEFORE you start writing the actual piece.

I find that using index cards at this early stage helps prevent me from taking off on long narrative rambles before I have extracted everything I can from the initial idea. The original linear story about a girl looking for a lost dog / an angel with frozen wings / a teen waking in the back seat of a carjacked vehicle... has the chance to develop into something more complex and interesting with some initial digging.

### 2. Talk about it

Newer writers often worry about others 'pinching' their ideas. But you're likely to gain more by talking about your current project than keeping it too close to your chest. You could well end up with leads for further research, referrals to other books on the topic, and questions that spur you to create an even more compelling piece than the idea you started with.

(If someone else does 'adopt' an element of your original idea, chances are that by the time they are done, the finished product will bear little resemblance to what you end up with.)

Many years ago I was telling a colleague about an article I was working on about the different views of Vancouver offered from its many bridges. Another colleague interrupted to say that if I was including the Ironworkers Bridge, I should talk to her dad who had been working on it when it collapsed. I did, and enjoyed an afternoon of great storytelling, and some details that I would not have known about without this conversation.

### 3. Explore metaphor

In my current WIP, the father the MC has never met shows up wearing a Superman outfit. (There is a story-related reason he does this that you don't need to know right now.) This character had been hanging around the story for a while before I started to research the cultural and psychological resonances of the super hero to learn he was brought up by adopted parents, a deep sense of morality is at the core of his actions... I had picked Superman at random, but what I now know about him has provided metaphorical associations that will strengthen the characterization and add depth to the story.

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Exploring the metaphorical associations of your setting, character and details of your story may well help breathe new life into it.

### 4. Make connections

At a US branding company that creates names for new car models, team members consider an eclectic and mostly unrelated assortment of materials—recipes and repair manuals, women's fashion magazines and promotional materials for non profits, novels and short story collections, train and bus schedules, etc—during brainstorming sessions. They believe that the broad range of materials encourages more creative thinking. You can achieve this by keeping your eyes open, and being open to new input.

The first germ of my current WIP emerged during a writing workshop I was presenting to local youth. Within days I read a *New Yorker* article about high rise window washing in New York City and soon after came across Lorna Crozier's lovely *Book of Marvels—a Compendium of Everyday Things*. And at about the same time I ran across an article in *The Tyee* about foster children aging out of the system. I won't tell you just how these four disparate elements all came together, but each in its own way provided me with valuable material for what is currently called *My Alphabet Life*.

### 5. Start writing

It's easy to back yourself into a corner when you've thought about an idea inside out and upside down. But eventually you have to start putting words on the page. The process of writing, rather than planning plotting, outlining, researching provides access to subconscious material that might only come to the surface when you are committing something—anything—to paper.

The trick here is to start writing when you feel 'pregnant' with the idea—when you can hardly hold back—rather than when you are just taking tentative steps.

### 6. Pick one detail or fact to research

Even the most fantastical fiction contains some fact-based elements. Take one of them and research the topic. How are geodesic domes made? What's the basic structure of a fern? What happens to people hit by lightning? With nonfiction, select a secondary detail and see what added slants to your story this research offers.

Useful story elements, metaphor and imagery comes from the strangest places. But you have to go looking for them.

### 7. Change one thing

Change a name, setting, or detail and see if that pitches you forward into new territory. It's very easy to be too wedded to your original vision; forcing yourself out of the safe zone makes you look at the germ from a different perspective and offers a fresh set of alternatives.

### 8. Read related (and unrelated) material

Your own boredom and frustration with a stalled project will show up on the page. You—and the work—may benefit from some time apart. Read or do something totally unrelated to the project, so when you come back to it you return with fresh eyes and new energy. And perhaps new material to add to the original germ.

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## 9. Read a writing craft book.

I wasn't far into *Wired for Story: The Writer's Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook the Reader From the Very First Sentence* by Lisa Cron when I came upon a tip that made me realize why one of my recent projects had stalled, and how to fix it. There are many, many good how-to writing books out there that can help you refine your skills, and bring new life to works in progress. Sometimes they can lead you back to work you have set aside as unfixable and identify problems you did not know were hindering you.

## 10. Set it aside and start over

If you think you've wandered away from your original intent, try putting the piece in the bottom of a drawer or filing the document, and starting afresh. Yes. From scratch. Without referring to the past draft.

And/or you can open a fresh page or file with the words, "What I really wanted to write about was..." and keep writing for at least ten minutes without stopping. Dig deep, and let whatever is buried in your subconscious show itself on the page. You may be very surprised at rediscovering what you originally set out to do, and gain insight into why you are stalled and where to go from here.

Someone once said there are only so many basic story ideas. It's what you bring to each one that makes yours fresh and engaging.

## Ten Recommended Resources

### 1. *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*

In print or download free here <http://freepdfdb.com/pdf/dictionary-of-phrase-and-fable-online>

### 2. *A Dictionary of Symbols* by JE Cirlot

### 3. *Writing Subtext: How to craft subtext that develops characters, boosts suspense, and reinforces theme* by Elizabeth Lyon [Kindle Edition]

### 4. *Connections* – PBS documentary by James Burke

View online <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/james-burke-connections/>

### 5. **TED Talks (Technology Education and Design) [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)**

Powerful presentations on a broad range of topics by the best minds in the world.

### 6. **Interesting Strange Facts** website <http://interestingstrangefacts.com/category/amazing/>

### 7. *The Writer's Idea Book 10th Anniversary Edition: How to Develop Great Ideas for Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, and Screenplays* by Jack Heffrin

### 8. **Specialist dictionaries** <http://www.yourdictionary.com/diction1.html>

### 9. <http://www.encyberpedia.com/glossary.htm> Links to more dictionaries for ideas and research

### 10. **The New Book section of your public library.** Grab something at random each time you pass.

*Lois Peterson is the author of seven books for young readers and a popular workshop presenter and storyteller. [www.loispeterson.blog.com](http://www.loispeterson.blog.com).*

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## Writing Inner Monologue for Grieving Characters

By **Denise Jaden**

What a character says to himself during the grieving process is both important and revealing about where he is along his journey. If you're writing fiction in a close point of view, self-talk and inner monologue can be great tools to create inner tension and also to make the reader feel truly part of a character's emotional journey.

Is your character telling himself such things:

"Why can't I just get over it already?"

"I can't believe he's just walking around like nothing happened!"

"I should have been the one to die."

These phrases are wrought with inner struggle. Extreme criticism (toward self or others), blame, unforgiveness, guilt—these are all unhealthy states of mind, and act as sign posts for the reader that your character is still early along in his grief journey.

Is your character talking to himself more like this:

"I'm having another hard day. I should call someone and hang out."

"It's his business how he's reacting, not mine."

"I'm glad for the special times we had together."

If these types of thoughts are crossing your character's mental landscape, it's more likely that your character is nearing a place of healing in his grief journey (and quite likely also nearing the end of your book). At some point, your character needs to start letting go of hurtful thoughts in order for your reader to have a sense of closure.

### **Extreme Criticism, Guilt, Blame, and Unforgiveness**

These four states of being can be highly destructive.

**Extreme Criticism**, either of self or of others, will almost always serve to destroy relationships. Have you ever been around someone who is overly critical? I'll bet if you have, all you wanted to do was get away from them.

**Guilt**, especially when it comes to someone's death, is a burden no person can live permanently underneath. In the aftermath of a serious loss, it's too easy to misconstrue events and past actions, even if you are not to blame in any way. If you were at fault, was it a mistake? At some point our characters need to forgive themselves for their mistakes, even if that takes some time and prodding. Parents whose teenager dies of a home drug overdose may blame themselves for having the drugs in the medicine cabinet. But is the death really their fault? Their teenager was still the person who decided to swallow the pills. Healthy grieving means seeing the true circumstances for what they were, and forgiving mistakes.

**Blame** is a ticking time bomb for conflict when it comes to the loss of a person. Is it really someone else's fault, or in his grief does your character need someone to blame? Again, could it have been a mistake (even a preventable one)? Blame, if not worked out, will likely explode somewhere, and often the one who explodes

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with blame gets just as wounded, if not more wounded, than those on the receiving end of the explosion.

**Unforgiveness** is similar to blame, but it is more of a long-lasting blame. It may not have the explosive qualities of blame, but again, it often hurts the one who holds it the most.

Your characters may move into a less-destructive pattern of thinking—yet still destructive. This is the land of *What If's* and *If Only's*. Often people will need to go through this stage, think through all the possibilities, but eventually they have to move on from this point in order to move toward healing.

Questions to ask:

- Extreme criticism, guilt, blame, and unforgiveness are great mind states to have your main characters struggle with, but the reader may not feel satisfied until these states are resolved, at least to some degree. Do your characters correct misplaced blame by the end of your novel? Can they let go of mistakes that cannot be changed or fixed? Can they forgive themselves, even for a life-altering mistake? Answering yes to any of these will help give your novel a sense of closure.

*Denise Jaden is the author of books for writers and teens. Her fiction for teens includes the critically-acclaimed novels **Losing Faith** and **Never Enough**. Her first non-fiction book, **Writing With A Heavy Heart**, teaches writers to write grief authentically and use it as a tool to deepen characters and plot. Her next writing book, **Fast Fiction**, is forthcoming from New World Library in 2014. Find out more about Denise and her writing on her website at [www.denisejaden.com](http://www.denisejaden.com).*

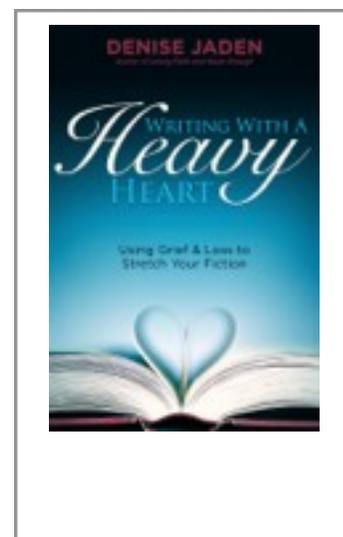
### Book Review

by Anita Miettunen

*Little Big Books, Illustrations for Children's Picture Books* first caught my eye in a museum shop while on holiday this summer in Europe. Published by Gestalten (August 2012), it's a compelling collection of works by practicing professionals and sure to engage any illustrator, experienced or aspiring, who is searching for inspiration, insight, or pure pleasure.

At 240 pages, the book is a weighty, large-format hardcover, so I waited until returning home to get a copy to read in more detail. The book's obvious strengths lie in its dynamic coverage of the interdisciplinary nature and diversity found in children's picture book illustrations. A brief overview of over a dozen international leaders who spearheaded modern-day children's literature—from Tove Jansson and Dick Bruna to Maurice Sendak and Taro Gomi—provides a great introduction to the state of illustration in children's picture books today. More detailed reviews follow of 100 contemporary illustrators. Each of these artists has their work highlighted in a 2-page colour spread accompanied by mini biographies.

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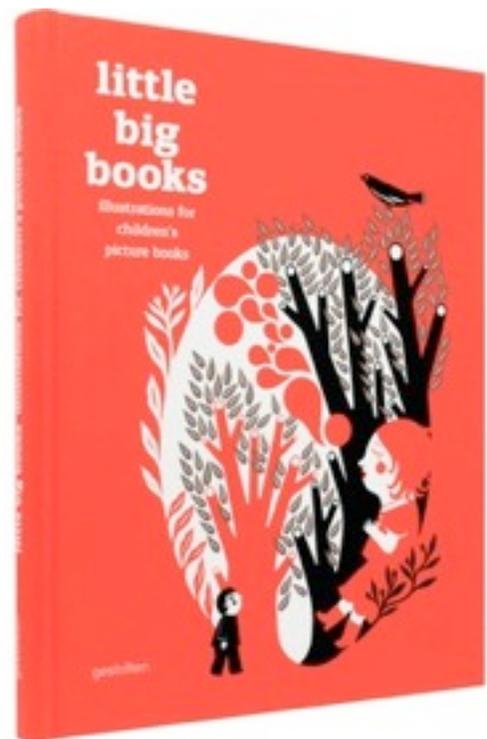
From traditional to multi-media, the scope of talent that's represented is broad. Included are wonderful examples of abstract and fine art, as well as minimalism. And presented together, you appreciate just how much the tone for children's illustration varies, from cute and whimsical, to the daring and downright disturbing, all depending of course on the intended audience. The range of styles—from different colour palettes to choice of media (e.g., from line art to graphic design and even 3-D paper art)—further reinforces the notion of diversity amongst today's talent.

A handful of longer interviews with experts such as an award-winning illustrator, a prize committee jury member, and an educator, round out *Little Big Books*, by providing deeper insights into the worlds of psychology, publishing and learning within the context of children's literature.

Although *Little Big Books* is dominated by talented European illustrators, a few notable creatives are also included from North and South America, Asia, Australia, India and Iran. The beauty of *Little Big Books* is how it does bring together examples from so many diverse perspectives and aesthetics into one outstanding book. My one disappointment with this inspiring collection, however, is that illustrators from Africa and the Caribbean are missing. While I'm sure the editors were challenged in limiting their list to 100 illustrators, this conspicuous gap leaves me wanting more. With such rich histories of art, colour, and pattern emanating from these unrepresented regions, any follow up volume would do well to explore further and also include children's illustrators from these areas.

Otherwise, *Little Big Books* is a very fine resource and one you will want to return to again and again, whether for inspiration, insight, or just pure pleasure. For more information, check out the publisher's website for a short book trailer (<http://shop.gestalten.com/little-big-books.html>). You can also search Amazon to order a copy or check your local library for availability.

*Anita is an active member of the SCBWI Canada West Chapter. She lives in Vancouver, BC, in a little white house under a giant fir tree.*



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## EVENT HORIZON

By **Ken Kilback**

**The Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators—Canada East** presents its **Annual Fall Conference** from **Friday October 4 through Sunday October 6 2013** at the Holiday Inn Select in Montreal, Quebec. Featured speakers include agent Linda Pratt; editors Bonnie Bader and Jill Santopolo; art director Laurent Linn; illustrator David Diaz; and more. Please go to [www.scbwicanada.org/east](http://www.scbwicanada.org/east) for more details or to register.

**Lethbridge Word on the Street** is on **Sunday September 22 2013** at the Main Library from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Guest speakers include authors Gail de Vos, Robert Heidbreder, Katie McGarry, Marissa Meyer; and more. For more details, please go to [www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/lethbridge](http://www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/lethbridge).

**Saskatoon Word on the Street** is on **Sunday September 22 2013** at the Civic Square around City Hall, in front of Frances Morrison Library, from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Guest speakers include authors Guy Gavriel Kay, Bev Brenna, Sigmund Brouwer, Alice Kuipers, Arthur Slade, Sylvia McNicoll; author/illustrator Ashley Spires; editor Nik Burton (Coteau Books); and more. For more details, please go to [www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/saskatoon](http://www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/saskatoon).

**Word Vancouver**, formerly Vancouver Word on the Street, is from **Thursday September 26 through Sunday September 29 2013**. Events will be held at a variety of places, including Carnegie Community Centre, Banyen Books and Sound, Historic Joy Kogawa House, and Library Square. Programming will be available soon on their website. Please go to [www.wordvancouver.ca](http://www.wordvancouver.ca) for details.

On **Saturday October 19 2013**, from 8:30 a.m. to Noon at the University Golf Club, the **Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable** is hosting its annual **Illustrators' Breakfast**, with illustrators Julie Flett and Julie Morstad and also with author Richard Van Camp. Please go to [www.vclr.ca](http://www.vclr.ca) for more details or to register.

The annual **Vancouver Writers Fest** is taking place from **Tuesday October 22 through Sunday October 27 2013** at Granville Island. One hundred writers from around the world will be speaking during the course of this festival. Guest presenters include authors Annie Barrows, Dan Bar-el, Kathy Stinson, Maggie Stiefvater, Deborah Ellis, Rachelle Delaney, Cary Fagan, Meg Tilly, Frieda Wishinsky, Eric Walters, and Shar Levine; and author/illustrators Ashley Spires and Julie Flett. For more information, please go to [www.writersfest.bc.ca](http://www.writersfest.bc.ca). To buy tickets, please go to [www.vancouververtix.com](http://www.vancouververtix.com).

From **Friday October 25 through Sunday October 27 2013** is the annual **Surrey International Writers' Conference** at the Vancouver Sheraton Guildford Hotel in Surrey. Guest speakers include editors Nancy Bell, Susan Chang and Sara Sargent; agents Rachel Coyne, Linda Epstein, Michelle Johnson, Kristin Nelson, Mandy Hubbard, Patricia Ocampo, Andy Ross, Carolyne Swayze, Nephelē Tempest, and Pam van Hylckama Vlieg; and authors Eileen Cook, kc dyer, Janet Gurtler, Bruce Hale, and Susan Nielsen; and more. Please go to [www.siwc.ca](http://www.siwc.ca) for more information or to register.

The **Canadian Association of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers** is presenting its annual **Packaging Your Imagination** conference on **Saturday November 16 2013** from 8:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Humber College Lakeshore Campus in Toronto, Ontario. Guest speakers include authors Aubrey Davis, Linda Bailey, Lizann Flatt, and Jennifer Maruno; and author/illustrator Kady MacDonald Denton; and more. Also available this year is the choice to register for the live online streaming of the conference. For more information or to register, please go to [www.canscaip.org](http://www.canscaip.org).

On **Friday November 22 2013**, the **Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable** is presenting **Poetry Please!** At the University Golf Club from 8:00 a.m. to Noon. Guest speakers include Robert Heidbreder and Tiffany Stone. In addition to the presentation, there will be speed dating for lovers of books. For more information, please go to [www.vclr.ca](http://www.vclr.ca).

The **Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable** is also featuring **Serendipity 2014** on **Saturday March 8 2014** from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the UBC Education Building in Vancouver, BC. The theme for the conference is **Children's Literature in a Digital Age**. Guest speakers include authors Arthur Slade and Tim Fenderle; illustrator Paul O. Zelinsky; blogger and 2014 Caldecott Committee member, Travis Jonker; and blogger and 2014 Newbery Committee member, John Schumacher. For more details or to register, please go to [www.vclr.ca](http://www.vclr.ca).

*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.*

