

# Create a Kids' Book

## Create a Picture Book Email course - Outline

### **PREAMBLE:**

Who needs to know about the creation of picture books?

### **Authors:**

Obviously authors who want to write picture book texts, but there are two other groups who could benefit from it as well.

### **Illustrators:**

Those who want to illustrate picture books. The best folio piece you can present to a publisher is an illustrated text. In it you can demonstrate: your ability with narratorial pictures; consistency of characters; flow of the pages to make up the book as a whole. And the easiest way of finding a text to illustrate is to write it yourself. The course will also advise on the illustration, when it is done in conjunction with the writing aspect of the course.

### **Novelists:**

The other group is those writing novels for older children - as soon as they have a novel accepted, their publisher will usually ask them to produce a picture book as well.

The course is specifically on creation of picture books, though there will be a similar unit on writing novels, eventually. In the meantime, authors of novels can be tutored by sending in drafts for comment and advice, and individual exercises and reading lists will be given out, in the process.

### **STRUCTURE:**

The course covers ten topics, and could be done in ten weeks, but students may take as long as they like to complete it, as their other activities permit. Each student will develop a picture book text during the course, and the student's previous ideas for stories will also be worked on. There will be at least one exercise to be completed each lesson, with individual feedback. Any subsequent assessments of works written during the course will also be covered, up to a year later. Fortnightly e-bulletins on writing, publishing and events, will be included.. A certificate will be issued at the completion of the course.

### **FEE:**

\$550 for ten modules, each with individual feedback.

\$650 for additional work from an illustrator.

## **MODULES**

### **1. Have you read ... ?**

A book list, for students to read and discuss some. The importance of knowing what is being published now, and what has changed since you were a child. Brief history of the picture book. Discussion of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak) and *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins). How to locate the best of the recent ones. Awards, review journals etc.

### **2. What will I write about, and for whom?**

The different types of picture books, different levels and to whom they are aimed. You can start reading aloud to infants - effect and value. And you should be buying too, especially for baby presents. How "trade" picture books compare with school readers. Discussion on fear, humour, indigenous culture, social and environmental problems, sexism, multiculturalism etc. Fairy tales and nursery rhymes, and "fractured" versions thereof.

### **3. Creating the secondary world - fantasy.**

The worlds of fiction are always created. They must be consistent - true to themselves, and follow the rules of this imaginary world. The relationship between the external physical "real" world, and the created one. Different types and levels of fantasy. Anthropomorphism.

#### **4. Structure of picture book.**

- The thirty-two page rule, and its variations.
- The storyboard and how to use it.
- Also mock-ups for illustrators.
- Length of text.

#### **5. Characters**

- The importance of the protagonist - age, name, gender, nationality.
- How closely do the readers/listeners need to identify with them?
- Is any type of character not recommended?
- How well do you know your characters?

#### **6. Verse in picture books**

- Discussion on its use - why children love it, and why publishers eschew it.
- Difficulties with rhyme and metre.
- Examples to study

#### **7. The plot and the title**

- What is revealed when a story is set out on the storyboard - gaps in the plot or perhaps too wordy.
- The importance of the opening pages - gripping beginnings, satisfying endings.
- How to choose a title.

#### **8. Grammar, punctuation and vocabulary**

Especially for children, grammar and punctuation should be correct. Lessons in the most common errors. Also discussion of the level of vocabulary - balancing words within the child's understanding, with not talking down to a child.

#### **9. Layout for submission**

- Deciding whether to illustrate as well as write, or not.
- How to present your manuscript to publishers, what to include in the package.
- Writing the cover letter.

#### **10. Understanding the publisher's market**

- How to research the market, and select the publishers to target.
- How many submissions to send at a time.
- The Writers' Marketplace.
- Use of the Internet.

To register for the e-course, ring Virginia on 03 9578 5689 or [vlowe@alphalink.com.au](mailto:vlowe@alphalink.com.au)