

How long does it have to be? www.writingforchildren.com says, "What is a picture book? The easiest answer is a book with pictures, but that's not quite right. A picture book is more than a book with illustrations. It's a book in which the pictures and the words work together to tell the story."

Self-publishing vs. traditional publishing

Writing for children can be even tougher than writing for adults because the competition is so much more difficult because there are so many more people writing for children. When people ask me about becoming an author, I always ask them two questions:

_____?
_____?

These two questions apply to children as well as adults. Self-publishing can be quite expensive depending on whom you hire for cover design, illustrations, editing, etc. Make sure your dream doesn't outweigh your budget. If you decide to traditional publishing, understand it may take years for your publishing dream to become a reality, if at all.

If you are an artist and can do your own art, that's great. If you know how to do your own book cover, you can easily place your artwork as the cover art. If you try traditional publishing, they hire their OWN artists. There are a couple of publishers who accept freelance submissions of illustrations, but for the most part, you are at the publisher's mercy when it comes to the cover art. They will ask you for input to see if you like the direction that they are going, but for the most part, their artists will interpret the text they way they see fit. Reminder: In traditional publishing, whether you receive an advance or not, you have sold them the rights to your material. This is no longer your project, but the publisher can do as he/she sees fit and interpret it in any way they choose. If you self-publish, however, you retain your rights, giving you more control over what the cover looks like, etc.

The structure of a children's book is _____

_____. Typically, picture books reach ages 4-8, which is a broad range to reach. Four year olds are preschool age where they are just learning to read (or for the more advanced child, reading well) to 8 year olds, which is 2nd or third grade, where the child could be beginning small chapter books. Therefore, it is important to keep the child engaged throughout each page turn. Losing their interest is likely _____.

Pay attention to _____. To check your rhythm to make sure it flows, _____. Often people resort to rhyming the text to give it a specific structure. However, if you are not good at rhyming, it can be more of a hindrance than a help to your writing. Rhyming is not necessary in a picture book. If you do choose to rhyme, however, make sure you follow the structure that poets use in their work. Iambic pentameter, for example, will help keep the amount of syllables needed in each line to remain the same.



Writing a Children's Picture Book

Michelle S Lazurek

Why are writing picture books so important?

1) It _____
-can you imagine what it will be like to meet someone in heaven who read your picture book and became a better person because of it? Whether your books are overly Christian or not, you as a Christian view the world in this way. Your worldview pours out from you onto the page. You are _____
_____. Kids today more than ever need sound doctrine communicated in simplistic ways so the concepts can be understood.

2) Picture books _____
_____ - in the current school system, artistic programs are being cut and replaced to make room for the basic subjects-reading, writing and arithmetic. But often reading is used as a measuring tool to ensure high test scores when it comes time for annual testing for state funding. It is a privilege to help children to learn to read before they even begin school, so that children can appreciate books for the entertainment and educational value they present, not merely and an instrument for learning.

3) Picture books written today _____
_____.
As authors, we have the privilege of presenting our words to the world. But after a couple of years, our books become less important and less in the forefront of people's minds. Picture books, however, grow with a child. A three-year-old who loves to touch the pictures of our book will enjoy reading the words for the first time at age 5 or 6. A child (or parent) may want to keep the book as a memento of their childhood, and may get passed down throughout the generations. Perhaps your grandchildren and great children may _____

Emile Buchwald said, " _____
_____." Some of my favorite memories of my children when they were young was pulling a kid onto my lap and reading books to them. Then as they grew, they read larger books and we pronounced the words together. It was a joy seeing them read for the first time. What a joy to participate in my kids' lives in this way. It has helped promote a love of reading in my kids and given me precious memories to cling to as an adult.

Here are five tips to help you if you have a desire to write a children's book but don't know where to start:

1) Write _____
2) Establish _____ - you are writing a book. What is _____

CONTINUED

To _____ or to _____?

Once you have established your purpose, next establish _____
_____. What is _____ How can your book _____?

3) _____ - What are your favorite children's books? Why are they your favorite? What vocabulary do they use? In a sense, children are the most difficult to write for since you have to communicate an entire message in a short amount of words and pages. Descriptions have to be shortened and less vivid than adult books because kids already use their imagination. Any words that are used that kids do not understand can jeopardize their comprehension of your material.

4) Who is _____ - Be well- versed on _____
_____.
What unique spin can you present about the topic you are writing about?

5) Be _____ - some of the best- crafted stories are ones
in which _____

Think about books like The Giving Tree, Where the Wild Things Are, Ferdinand the Bull. Kids love the animals and the children in the story. But parents grasp the overall themes of gentleness and giving to others. This is why these books have withstood the test of time after all these years.

Ann Whitford Paul, author of Writing Picture Books, says there are four ways to keep the audience engaged in the story:

- Write _____ Action doesn't have to be intense to engage the audience. Let's say, for example, you are writing a book where animals save their village from becoming extinct. The action can be as simple as the main character, a rabbit, rallying the animal inhabitants to help stop the humans from destroying them.
- Introduce _____ - the first scene can be just the rabbit learning of the village's fate, then slowly introduce the rest of the animal characters in the following pages. Children will love learning more about the animals in the upcoming pages.
- Moving _____ - the village can have multiple locations within itself, or the animals can go on an adventure to follow the humans to varying settings.
- Change _____ - one scene can give a sense of danger as the rabbit learns of the village's fate, then heighten the peril within each page as the animals come one step closer to extinction. This can also have a nice tie-in lesson of caring for the environment as God's stewards of the earth He has given us or that all animals have the right to humane treatment.

In a picture book, the illustrations are just as important as the text. A well- written text, when read aloud, will give way to specific images. The illustrations are used to enhance the text and bring it to life. Hiring an artist that best captures the essence of your text is essential to a successful work.

How to structure your book:

Structure your book _____:

1) Establish _____.

2) State _____. What _____
_____?

3) The story should _____. This is where the main character realizes the solution on his/her own. Most books emphasize a child (if a child is the main character) to realize and learn the lesson on his/her own rather than an adult telling them what to do.

4) Resolve _____. If there is a lesson you want the audience to learn, make sure it is clearly stated here.

5) Make sure _____
_____. Not sure if they can understand it, read
_____.

6) Although the typical page count of a picture book is _____, some of that goes for dedication, copyright page and other notes. Shoot for 24 pages 2 pages of text and 12 pages of illustrations.

7) Creating _____
_____. All you need is a simple bulletin board and some index cards. As you write a line from the book, tack it onto the board and place it in the order on the board you feel it belongs. It might help you fill in the gaps and rearrange your words so it can achieve a healthy and engaging flow.

Writing picture books can be an enriching experience not only for the readers you impact, but for you as an author as well. By following these few techniques you may be able to bring the concept you have had swirled around in your head onto the page and into the hands of a child.