

**MAY
2023**

SCBWI
SoCal
NEWSLETTER



Illustration by Annie Hobbs, as seen in SoCal's December 2022 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"

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Logo by **Jonathan St. Amant**

MEMBER NEWS

By Desi St. Amant



Illustration by **Rodolfo Montalvo**, as seen in SoCal's December 2022 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"

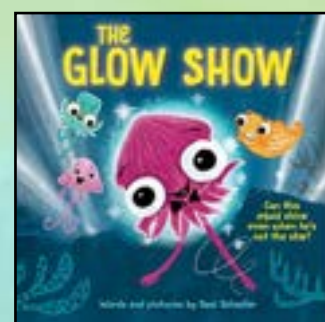


Shaelyn Zeitz has signed with literary agent Lauren Spieller of Folio Literary Management.

Twitter: @shaelynzeitz
Website: szeitzwrites.com



Carla Mino's Peruvian Folklore adaptation, **THE MAGIC LAKE**, was published in April 2023 through Learning A-Z (Educational Digital Publishing). She is also excited to launch her new Children's Creative Writing Summer Camp this year. For more information, visit carlamino.com



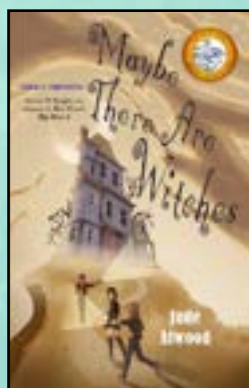
Susi Schaefer's third picture book, **THE GLOW SHOW**, will lighten up the deep on May 2, 2023!

Twitter/Instagram: @susischaeferart
Website: susischaefer.com



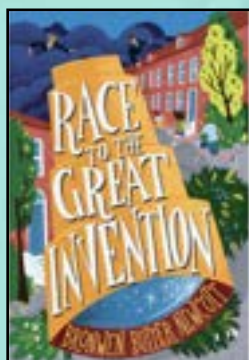
Jude Atwood is excited to announce that his debut novel, **MAYBE THERE ARE WITCHES**, will be published June 13, 2023 by Fitzroy Books.

Twitter: @JudeAtwood
Facebook & Instagram @JudeAtwoodSketches
Website: judeatwood.tv



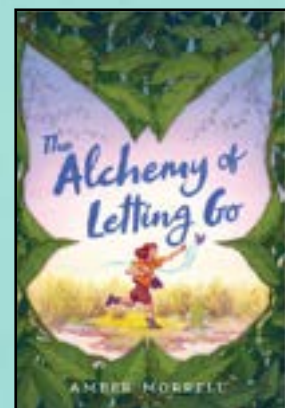
Ellie Huynh's picture book **A DIVE INTO THE BLUE**, illustrated by Bao Luu, will be celebrating its book birthday on May 23rd, 2023! She will have a book signing at The Frugal Frigate in Redlands on June 3rd, at 10:30 a.m.

Website: elliehuynh.com
FB: Ellie Huynh



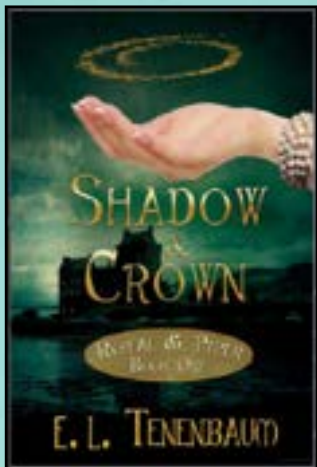
Bronwen Newcott is thrilled to announce her debut MG novel, **RACE TO THE GREAT INVENTION** was released on May 4th. It is a magical adventure of 12-year-old Tessa and Gus and is now available on Amazon!

instagram: @bronwenbutternewcott
linktr.ee/bronwenbutternewcott
Website: bronwenbutternewcott.com



Amber Morrell's debut middle grade novel, **THE ALCHEMY OF LETTING GO**, will be released on April 27th from Albert Whitman.

Twitter: @atmorrell
Instagram: @atmorrell
Website: ambermorrell.com



E.L. Tenenbaum's New book, SHADOW & CROWN, the first of the ROYAL & PIPER Trilogy, was released February 21st.

Instagram & Twitter @ELTenenbaum



Shiho Pate is illustrating *The Rescues*, written by Tommy Greenwald and Charlie Greenwald. These easy-to-read chapter books highlight the humor and love in a found family of rescue pets. Red Comet Press has bought world rights to *The Rescues* in a two-book deal. The first book is slated for fall 2023.

Instagram and & Twitter: @shihopate
Website: www.shihopate.com

More 2023 books from Shiho Pate: *Ramen For Everyone* Chi-Chi and Pey-Pey: *Cupcake Catastrophe* Chi-Chi and Pey-Pey: *School Day Drama*

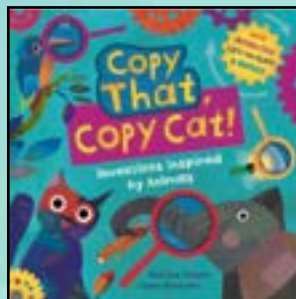


Three of Ilana Rogel-Wieder's submissions were acquired by *Highlights High-Five* magazine, which will be published in their 2023 issues.

Twitter: @llanaRW1
IG: llana_rw
Website: ilanaRWieder.com

Katrina Tangen's picture book COPY THAT, COPY CAT! ~ illustrated by Giulia Orecchia ~ will be released by Barefoot Books Sept. 5, 2023.

Twitter & Instagram: @katrinatangen
website: katrinatangen.com



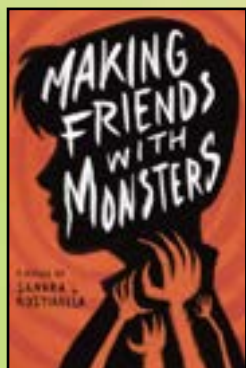
On 11/20/2022, RASMOOSE THE CHRISTMAS MOOSE was selected as Finalist for American Writing Awards in three categories: Best Children's-Picture Book; Best Cover Design-Fiction; Animals/Pets General.

Website: rasmoosethemoose.com
Social Media: @rasmoosethemoose



Judy Campbell-Smith's PB, ICE CREAM EVERYWHERE: SWEET STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD, will be released by Sleeping Bear Press in Spring 2024. She is also releasing a Spanish translation of her book, AJ'S NEIGHBORHOOD! It is called EL VECINDARIO DE AJ, and in Spring 2023!

Twitter: @j_campbellsmith
IG: @udyjcampbellsmith



Sandra Rostirolla's new YA/Coming of Age book, MAKING FRIENDS WITH MONSTERS comes out on April 4th. Her launch event was at the Village Well Books and Coffee in Culver City, CA. Publishers Weekly Booklife called her book an "urgent, unflinching YA novel about the 'monsters' of depression and family dysfunction" (Editor's Pick).

Instagram & Tiktok: @slrostirolla
Facebook & Twitter: @SLRostirolla
Website: slrostirolla.com



Kathleen Troy now has four books published from the DYLAN'S DOG SQUAD series, and all are available at the Placentia Library, Barnes and Noble, and Amazon— wherever books are sold.

Instagram, Facebook, & LinkedIn: @kathleentroyauthor



Susie Yi's third book in her *Cat & Cat Adventures* series, titled JOURNEY INTO UNIBEAR CITY, releases April 25th, published by HarperAlley.

Also, her debut MG graphic novel, A SKY OF PAPER STARS releases September 26, 2023, published by Roaring Book Press. Preorder Now!

Instagram: @soojimoo and @catandcatcomics
Website: susieyi.com



KILLER First Lines!

by Tim Burke



Illustration by Catherine Lee, as seen in SoCal's December 2022 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"

Welcome to the first of a brand new column. However, it will only thrive with your support! Email me your favorite, awesome opening line(s) to a book or short story (Any age level is okay from PB to adult):

tim@timburketales.com

We'll include them in future newsletters with credit to you as the contributor. Follow the format of the ones below, and if your email name is something arcane like TweedleBeelzebub6535, please sign your actual name so I can give proper credit to you.

You'll note it should ONLY be the actual first sentence, not a whole freakin' paragraph. The one exception is in the style of the example below by *Navdeep Dhillon* in which the first line is the set-up and a later sentence (maybe only second or third sentence please!) is the punchline.

Without further ado: "At first, I don't realize I am dead, let alone someone has murdered me."

—No Peace for the Wicked by Martin Edwards/Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine Sept/Oct 2022

"I would never have been accused of stealing the koala if Vance Jessup hadn't made me drop a human arm in the shark tank."

—Poached by Stuart Gibbs (the absolute master of the First Line!)

"Ever look in the mirror and think to yourself: I look fantastic. My face, my nose, my eyes, the blond streak in my hair, these clothes. Everything is lit. Yep. Me neither."

—Sunny G's Series of Rash Decisions by Navdeep Singh Dhillon



"Once again, Efrén Nava woke up to a chubby pajamaed foot in his face."

—Efrén Divided by Ernesto Cisneros

"Every day on her way to work, journalist Santa Ezeriña asked herself: what the hell is that thing?"

—The Calter Wave Conundrum by William Burton McCormick/Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine Sept/Oct 2022

About Tim Burke

SCBWI SoCal chapter member volunteer and past Regional Advisor, He also teaches ESL in the classroom and has his own private tutoring company.

Tim writes adventure tales for the MG and YA audience with slashes of humor, a bit of a dark side, and a few robots and dung beetles thrown in for good measure.

Tim is also the regular and generous contributor of our grammar column. Check out Tim's wild and wacky site at: timburketales.com

"Mabel Jones was woken by a sudden quiet."

—The Unlikely Adventures of Mabel Jones/Will Mabbitt

"It should come as no surprise that the day I almost got my face clawed off by a vicious monster was a Thursday."

—The Legend of Greg by Chris Rylander

"The first time a guy felt me up was in the big church prayer room."

—Beyond the Break by Heather Buchta

Illustration by Annie Hobbs, as seen in SoCal's December 2022 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"

That's what I got, peeps.

What do you have for us?





Illustration by *Asia Simone*, as seen in SoCal's April 2023 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"



Podcast Highlight

By E. L. Tenenbaum

Greetings Fellow SoCal Chapter Members!

The (almost exact) quotes to follow are from Episodes EXTRAS! of my podcast Oh My Word!, spotlighting all kinds of people from the storytelling world, librarians, writers, agents, editors, illustrators, and more. There's so many different kinds of people in our book world, each with their own path, stories, and advice to share.

The podcast has officially wrapped, for now at least, but the full catalogue of episodes remains available to hear. Check them out [here](#) and look out for ones marked BONUS!/EXTRA! or visit [this](#) YouTube playlist.

"Commercial appeal is going to be something that, I would say, more mainstream. So you have kind of technically two categories. So you've got literary on one side, commercial on the other. commercial is gonna be more of that mass appeal, think *Harry Potter*, *Hunger Games*, *The Bad Guys* is another recent one...it's more about sales. Where versus I think literary is kinda skews more toward the award side of things. It's a little bit skewed more toward garnering those awards, and you have kind of a more prestigious appeal to it. The writing is probably a little bit more detail oriented and sort of thing. At a publisher you have imprints, so different imprints, I think, skew one way or the other, typically."

Kayla Cichello - [The Grapevine with Kayla Cichello](#)

“It’s really fun when you take the courageous risk early on, but then you can take creative risks later on. It makes it worth it. You just build, build, build, build...there’s income opportunities in a lot of different channels that, I think, sometimes we overlook, and maybe there not as tremendous as the printed book, but they’re still the still monthly income that’s coming that’s enabling you to create more books to put into the world.”

Sheri Fink - [Juicy Good with Sheri Fink](#)

“I always believe that inside of us we are another age, we carry that one age around with us, and I think inside of me I’m about twelve in a lot of ways...I liked the way that kids think at that age, they’re starting to feel a little bit of freedom from their parents, but the hormones haven’t hit yet. They know a lot of stuff and if only an adult would ask them the right questions, they would be able to tell them all kinds of interesting things, so that was the person I really wanted to write for...and I was a little nervous about writing for grownups because I had never really written fiction before, I didn’t really know what to do with the descriptions, I wasn’t quite sure of the grammar,...and I thought at least if I’m writing for kids they’re not quite as judgmental—that’s not true—but that’s what I thought.”

Kitty Felde - [Off to D.C. with Kitty Felde](#)

“For me to write a book that represents my kids feels like the best assignment for me as a writer...They gave me a lot of really great feedback. They really helped me infuse a lot of it with humor, because as heavy as the subject as it is, when you’re dealing with kids, there’s just always so many funny things that happen. Little kids are funny.”

Leia M. Johnson - [“We are Family” with Leia M. Johnson](#)

“I really struggled with how to plot it, because when I first started out, I would just sort of put a bunch of scenes together and there wasn’t really any tension. And so, I had to be taught, hey you need tension in every scene, and that’s sort of what they want, but the reasons why they think they can’t have it, and then you need to have the last sentence of your scene be strong but the last sentence of your chapter has to be really strong... I almost always have to rewrite those in the editing process... so you have to learn.”

Heidi McCahan - [Love, Inspired with Heidi McCahan](#)

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Marathons and Novels

By Ilana R. Wieder

Editor's Note: Due to a glitch in the Fall 2022 Newsletter layout, we only saw the first page of Ilana's wonderful article. Here we reveal the full story with deepest apologies.
~ SoCal Newsletter Team



Illustration by **Annie Hobbs**, as seen in SoCal's December 2022 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"

In his book, *Writing the Breakout Novel*, Donald Maas suggests that while we work on our amazing masterpiece, we work on other stories as well. The Breakout Novel is the novel "that takes your fiction all the way to the highest level of achievement." And that takes time and patience. If you depend on quick advances to make a living, Maas suggests to keep writing your books and work-for-hire novels, and to set aside some disciplined time to continue developing your Breakout Novel.

There was a time, several years ago, when I declared to my friends, "I'm signing up to run a marathon!" I was expecting cheers, smiles, and "Atta girl" type of responses. Instead, I was met with puzzled faces, silenced looks, and questions like, "Really?"

My friend Josh was the brave one, "Did you ever run a marathon before?" he asked.

"Nope. But there's nothing to it. I can do it."

"Do you know how long a marathon is?"

"26.2 miles," I said with proud certainty. Josh nodded and sipped his Long Island ice tea,

"That's a long way to run. Maybe you should try a shorter race first? Like a 5K?"

I heeded his suggestion and I'm glad I did. The 5K race proved to be challenging enough for me even though I considered myself in top physical shape. It gave me great satisfaction to run a race with all the marathon runners, only my portion of the race was 3.2 miles instead of 26.2. I still received a medal and a t-shirt and celebrated along with everyone else. Josh was there to pat my back with an "Atta Girl" and a big smile.

In 2020, I attended my first SCBWI online summer conference. I'd been thinking of adapting the one-person show I wrote into a novel, and I was eager to soak up all the knowledge - the tips and tricks of the trade. No one challenged my decision to write a novel. No one asked me, "Have you ever written a novel before?" or, "Do you know how many pages you need to write?" No one was there to bring to my awareness that writing a novel was a project longer than the thesis I had to write for my graduate degree. But if they did, my answer would have been the same, "There's nothing to it. I can do it."

I began plugging away, writing as much as I could between homeschooling my son and working. And then, it hit me. I'm running a marathon before learning how to run a 5K.

In a recent Highlights workshop, I noted author Sarah Aronson's advice, "Find a project that is small enough for you to finish. It feels good to be able to complete a project."

Slowly, I began shifting my focus to writing picture books and short stories for magazines. While querying my polished stories, I continued plugging away at my novel. Two years into it and I'm just about half way through.

Of course, just because a story is short, doesn't mean it's easy. Just because we can complete a first draft in a day or a week, doesn't mean it's ready for submission. My short stories and picture books go through months of critiques, revisions and edits until I feel they are polished enough for submissions. But for me, having polished 500 words in picture books or 1800 words in magazine stories, feels a lot more satisfying than waiting until I'm done with a first draft of at least 50,000 words for a novel before I can even begin to revise.

Now don't get me wrong, for some writers, starting off with a big project such as a novel might just be the challenge they need. Just like some runners prefer long distance over short distance races, some writers work better on long projects over short ones. As for me, I'm working my way up to a 10K race first, and building up from there.



Ilana R. Wieder received her MFA in Theatre Arts from UC, Davis. She worked as a motion capture actress in L.A. for over 10 years, appearing in numerous children's TV shows like BRATZ and STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE and performing in her own original One-Woman show. Currently, Ilana enjoys writing and directing plays as well as writing for children. Look for her stories and poems that are due to be published in Highlights High Five magazine in 2023. You can follow her on twitter @IlanaRW1 and IG @Ilana_rw You can also sign up for her newsletter at ilanarwieder.com

Illustration by Asia Simone, as seen in SoCal's April 2023 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"





SOCAL SPRING WRITERS RETREAT

By Carlene Griffith

May 2023 SCBWI SoCal YA & MG Writers Spring Retreat was another successful event! The survey results are in, and 100% of the attendees said it was money well spent.

Young Adult and Middle Grade Children's book writers from all over Southern California participated in a four-day critique workshop, May 4th through the 7th, in the beautiful snow-kissed San Bernardino mountains at Pine Rose Cabins in Lake Arrowhead, CA. In addition to the four 2-hour critique group sessions, writers had an opportunity to receive feedback and insights from four fabulous faculty members including: **Kaylan Adair**, Executive Editor at Candlewick Press, **Bibi Lewis**, Agent at Ethan Ellenberg Literary Agency, **Molly O'Neill**, Agent at Root Literary, and **Kaitlyn Sanchez**, Agent at Bradford Literary. Writers could also enjoy a 15 minute 1:1 coaching session with a faculty member of their choice. They could also register for a written critique prior to the event. Altogether it was a wonderful opportunity to get manuscripts in front of industry eyes and mingle with other published and aspiring writers in a casual atmosphere.



Kathleen Troy, a repeat attendee, said, *"It is always a fun and inspiring event."* As a second-year participant, I know I wasn't the only one who'd been looking forward to it.

Among the twenty-eight in attendance there were several new faces from within and outside of our chapter. One newbie said, *"As a first timer I felt welcomed and supported. The critique group was incredibly knowledgeable and willing to share openly and kept things constructive and kind."*

This year's attendees indicated they were highly satisfied with the event and valued the feedback during the critique groups, mingling opportunities with fellow writers and faculty members and enjoyed an overall positive vibe.

For my critique group, made up of seven writers and one faculty member, we met in a cozy little cabin snuggled up on couches surrounded by a warm fireplace. Each writer was given 15 minutes to spend how they wished, from reading whole or just parts of chapters, to asking focused questions or getting general feedback. With valuable insight from faculty, the appreciated constructive criticism both verbal and written, and positive encouragement was exactly what we needed.

When asked as a writer what benefited them the most from their retreat experience, first time attendee, Regional Advisor from the San Diego chapter, **Debra Schmidt** said, *"The positive feedback I received from Kaitlyn Sanchez and my critique team boosted my confidence and inspired me to finish my story and query agents and editors."*

Susie Salsa said, she benefited from *"The faculty feedback, the other writer's verbal and written feedback, the chance to really focus on my novel's beginning to revise it, and the socializing with other writers to talk about our work. I felt inspired by and bonded with other writers."*

What nobody anticipated this year was the ominous weather. One attendee mentioned driving in the fog was like being in a Stephen King novel. I echo that sentiment. Thursday, the first day driving up the windy mountain roads, the fog was so thick I couldn't even see the front of my car, let alone the road.

Carpooling from our dinner at Hortencia's At The Cliffhanger, a local Mexican restaurant to our Pine Rose cabins, I expressed my concern about the driving conditions. With **Tim Burke** squished in the back of my Toyota Prius and **Lori Polydoros** seated to my right, she advised me to follow the white lines like her father taught her. *"Now I know why the lines are white!"* she said reassuringly. With the windows steaming up inside and the thick fog outside, I had the windows down, hugging the steering wheel trying to see, driving 5 mph. I'm sure I looked like an old lady without her glasses on. It was terrifying, but we survived.

Marianne Wallace said, *"We all persevered and survived arriving up a mountain in fog and snow to an elevation of almost 5,800 ft. With that kind of fortitude, no wonder we're children's writers."*

In addition to the fog, this year was not without its challenges. From the start, SCBWI SoCal Chapter members including Regional Advisor, **Bev Plass**, **Heather Buchta**, **Tim**, and **Lori** had to take on the challenge of finding a new location for this annual event. Normally, the retreat is held in the scenic Idyllwild hills of the San Jacinto Mountains in Riverside County, but due to new ownership and major renovations the site would not be available this year. Diving headfirst into the challenge, a volunteer team researched multiple sites and Heather found Pine Rose Cabins. A spacious location with multiple cabins and lodges that provided large meeting and meal areas, along with cozy rooms for sleeping.





Marianne Wallace said she liked the *"Beautiful location, fireplaces, lots of common areas to write and meet for round table critiques."*

Erin Clark said, *"I also loved Pine Rose as a location and would happily return. Oh, and the food and wine were great!"*

For some the distance between cabins was a hurdle, and for that purpose, many volunteers went out of their way and shuttled people back and forth between lodges and cabins or helped with preparing meals.

Some big things went wayward. My lodge had an upstairs flood that saturated the downstairs rug making it smell like "wet dog" In another lodge, sinks and toilets backed up several times making them unusable. Heather and fellow committee members were amazing scramblers working things out—calling management for plumbing help, finding new places for critique groups to meet. Their efforts didn't go without notice.

I love what Debra had to say about the event hiccups, *"Cue up the camp theme song, "I Will Survive!" I survived the fog. I survived the flood. I survived the finicky printer."*

Russ Thompson said, *"I sincerely appreciate the heroic efforts of Heather, Bev, and everybody else who made the retreat happen."*

Laurie Young said, *"I want to thank Bev and Heather and Lori for doing an exceptional job at pulling this all together and being so flexible and resourceful as things were constantly changing."*

I enjoyed myself so much that on Sunday morning it was hard to pack up to leave. Nowhere else would I get the opportunity to hang out and play gin rummy with a literary agent, or enjoy a meal with industry professionals and get asked the question, "If you had to eat a human where would you start?" I will never forget Saturday evening, after dinner chilling, back at our cabin talking about writing, books, musical theater, and hearing crazy job stories. For me, bonding with fellow writers is what it's all about. That and when cabin-mate Crystal Schreck decided to give us an MMA lesson on self-defense. With Lori pinning Crystal to the floor in the attack position, like a scene straight out of a movie in walks Jodie Rizzotto and Bev. The look on their faces and the follow-up question of, "What the heck is going on here?" will forever be burnt into my memory. I laughed so hard, I nearly peed myself. Those are the humorous moments and memories that myself, and fellow writers made during this year's retreat. Was this year's retreat worth the money? For me, it was priceless!

And in my defense, I wasn't the only one who was concerned about wild animals, when I took an interrupting double-take during our group meeting, only to find out it was a big brown dog. **Jill Ackles** said, "*She got excited about possible mountain lion tracks in the snow, before she realized they were dog tracks. Silly city people!*"

I mean who can blame us when we make a living wrapped up in our imaginations, sitting at a computer trying to look through the eyes of a child.



Carlene Griffith is SCBWI SoCal's co-Assistant Regional Advisor and Newsletter Art Director. Author of 10 Minute Plays for Kids of All Ages and the Rose Maidelaiden series.
carlenegriffith.com



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MEET & GREET LOCAL CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHORS

June 3rd from 1:00-7:00 pm



Barnes & Noble Victorville Mall
14400 Bear Valley Rd.
Victorville, CA 92392



Society of
Children's Book
Writers and
Illustrators

Come check out some awesome children's books and meet the authors who wrote them.



Amber Morrell



Angela Cerrito



Carlene Griffith



CK Malone



Heather Buchta



Kathleen Troy



Lori Polydoros



Susi Schaefer



Maggie Grinnell

Things I've Learned From Author Events

by Kathleen Troy

Book Signings

Prior to a Book Signing Event

- 1 Make the effort to visit the bookstores in person Friday-Sunday. You will usually find the manager, assistant manager or the one who schedules book signings available. Bring your book(s) with you and have a quick (that is the operative word here) pitch to give to them. They are busy people, and you need to respect their time.
- 2 Are in-person visits/cold-calling better than a phone call/email? Yes. Remember, it is hard to slam the door when your foot is in it.
- 3 Always bring a brief (again that is the operative word) summary/synopsis of your book(s) with ISBN(S) and with your business card attached. Leave this with the person you speak with—no matter what—even if you are given a book signing date right then. This way they can order your books.
- 4 **Do not be sensitive.** Book stores have thousands of authors to choose from. If they decline your request for a book signing, ask about a future date. Remember, if you don't ask the answer is always no.
- 5 Always follow up with a thank you email.
- 6 The week prior to the book signing send an email confirming the info of the event.



Illustration by Rodolfo Montalvo, as seen in SoCal's December 2022 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"

At the Book Signing Event

- 1 **Always be gracious and grateful.** Again, bookstores have thousands of authors to choose from for a book signing and they have chosen to give you this opportunity. This is your chance to make a good impression and to meet new adoring fans for your work. If you have a gripe about the bookstore, keep it to yourself. You always have the choice to decline a future invitation but do not pass up this opportunity to get out there.
- 2 Show up a half hour prior to the event and stay for the entire event. If things get slow, pick up your book(s), walk around the store with them and approach shoppers. Show them your work and offer them a chance to enter a raffle to win a free book. You will get an email for your email list, and you may gain a new fan.
- 3 Make sure your display is eye-catching and appealing. Bring balloons or flowers, for example. Since I write the Dylan's Dog Squad series, I also have a stuffed dog wearing a Dylan's Dog Squad bandana.
- 4 I have a sign on a 30" pedestal that says, "Meet the Author". I could retire if I had a dollar for every time someone looked shocked and asked, "You wrote these?" (I want to ask them what they think I'm doing there but that flies in the face of #1 herein.)
- 5 Cheesy as it sounds and I'm embarrassed to do so, I wear a T-shirt that says Author. You'd be surprised how delighted people get about that. Taking advantage of the moment, I ask if they would take a picture of me and my display and/or a picture with me.
- 6 I always bring a box of See's candy to the event to give to the store manager(s). They always say that I shouldn't have but I notice the contents disappear quickly.
- 7 Should you have the bookstore order your books or should you sell them on consignment? I choose to have the bookstore order them. If I do not sell all the books, the remainder have always been put on the shelf for future sales rather than returned to the distributor.
- 8 At the end of the event make sure you leave your space as you found it and be sure to thank as many managers and staff as possible. You want to be invited back.

School events.

I go anywhere anyone asks me to go.

1 Do I charge? I don't turn down an offer of payment, but I understand budgets are tight. Since my goal is to sell books, I ask for the active opportunity to sell my books. This is what I mean by active opportunity.

2 Three weeks prior to the event I send a flyer to the teacher/librarian with my picture, a picture of my books and a QR code for preordering. The idea is they will distribute the flyers to the students and there will be pre orders. This rarely goes very well. The teachers and librarians (who are seriously overworked and underpaid) for many reasons can't/are reluctant to promote this—but it is something.

Additionally, I ask the school to put my visit in their weekly school bulletin/email announcing my visit and that I will be available in the student pick up area after school for book sales. This has always gone very well for me. (Be sure to have a table, an attractive display, plenty of books, gift bags, lots of change and some sort of credit card device. I use CloverGo since I bank with Wells Fargo. It is similar to the Square.)

3 Two weeks prior to the event I send over a slide presentation that I will use during my visit. The week of the event I double check to ensure all is well on the tech side. Since I like to use a mic, too, I arrange for one. If they do not have one, I bring my own.

4 As with book signings, I always bring gifts to the teacher/librarian: See's candy and hardcovers of my books. I also follow up with a thank you card to them and the principal.

Illustration by Asia Simone, as seen in SoCal's April 2023 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"



Kathleen Troy is a published author, children's book publisher, movie producer, writing and law professor at Cypress College, and former Director of Education and Development for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Kathleen is an active member of Sisters in Crime and Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and has won several awards for middle grade and young adult books. Dog training is Kathleen's passion, and she has achieved recognition, most notably for training service dogs for hospice work. kathleentroy.com.

Book Festivals

I do these. Some I've had better experience with than others.

1

Huge book festivals have their merits, but they tend to become a day of sensory overload. The visitors can't possibly take in all that is being offered. And these book events are expensive. If the event is charging \$600-1000 for a table that is...well...a lot of books for you to sell.

For that reason, I prefer to be the big fish in the little pond. I prefer to be with vendors who sell things other than books but yet what they sell compliments my books. For example, I write the Dylan's Dog Squad series. It is about two, twelve-year old boys and a cocker spaniel who do search and rescue. I also write the Never Believe series about a down and out junior con artist. He is sent to live with a family he never knew he had. Unfortunately, one of his family members is a murderer and wants him very, very dead.

So...where am I going with this? People who like dogs and murder mysteries tend to like wine, chocolate, plants, etc. I sign up for a lot of these types of events and I am usually the only author. Hence, big fish in a little pond. I have no competition and I usually do very well.

2

Be prepared: Cash, credit card capability, gift bags, business cards, raffle opportunity (to build your email list), and bookmarks. Giveaways are nice. I give away pens with my info on them and Dylan's Dog Squad bandanas.

3

As with bookstores, arrive on time, stay for the entire event and make sure your display is eye-catching and professional looking.



P.A.L. EVENTS NEWS!

By Carlene Griffith

Recently, SoCal SCBWI has been making a concentrated effort to provide more PAL and signing opportunities for our published authors. In doing so, volunteers have been gathering information on California's local book festival, Cons and Bookstore events, where members can participate and gain exposure. In addition to our chapter's participation in the annual **Orange County Children's Book Festival**, this year our members were found at **Comic Orange** held at the Tustin Library May 6th and they shared a booth with the LA chapter of SCBWI at the **Los Angeles Festival of Books** held at USC April 22nd-23rd.

When participants were asked about their experiences at these events, several had positive things to say.

CK Malone, a Cybils Award nominee for their book *A COSTUME FOR CHARLY*, said, *"I love the PAL signing events because the organizers provide a structured and safe experience for all the authors and illustrators."*





Lori Polydoros, author of *QUAKE CHASERS*, said, *"I thought the LA Times Festival at Books was an amazing experience that allowed us to bond with not only other local OC SCBWI writers but also LA children's writers. It was also a great opportunity to promote not only my book, but myself as a presenter for school visits, and it allowed me to really reach out to my audience and interact with a lot of amazing kids! Looking forward to more events!"*

Susi Schaefer, Author Illustrator of the newly released picture book *THE GLOW SHOW*, said, *"I really appreciate what the SCBWI has been doing for PAL creators lately. I especially loved participating in the LA Times Book Festival and Comic Orange since I have a new book to promote. It gave me an easy way to do so without the*

pressure of hosting a solo event. Plus, the cross-promotion helped widen everyone's reach on social media."

Our next SoCal SCBWI signing event will take place at Barnes and Noble in Victorville, CA on June 3rd where we have nine authors ready to make a day of it from 1:00pm-7:00pm signing and selling books. If you're a published author interested in participating in these events, make sure to check your email frequently for the next opportunity to join us at our SoCal SCBWI booth.



Also, if you know of an event where we can participate, let us know so we can get the word out there!





Illustration by **Asia Simone**, as seen in SoCal's April 2023 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"





PINK SPHINX STORY STARTERS

BY SJ WINKLER

SJWINKLERART.COM

Need a spark for a new kid-friendly story? Pink Sphinx Story Starters are great for refreshing your creative flow!

You will need: 3 six sided dice, this page, and something to write/draw your ideas!

DROP A DRAMA BOMB

(STEP 1) Roll the dice for each column. Match the sum to the chart to complete the sentence below. This will be the prompt for your new scene.

“ _____ who _____ what _____ where _____ ”



(STEP 2) Free-Write a page exploring the story possibilities for your prompt.
BONUS CHALLENGE: Start your scene with a complaint.

#	Who	What	Where
3	A BULLY	IS TRAPPED WITH AN ENEMY	IN A SCHOOL PLAY
4	A JANITOR	IS KNOCKED OUT	AT SUMMER CAMP
5	A DREAMER	ALMOST DROWNS	IN A THEME PARK
6	A SINGER	MEETS THEIR SPIRIT ANIMAL	IN A HAUNTED HOUSE
7	A TEACHER	IS BENT ON REVENGE	DURING A SCHOOL DANCE
8	AN ARTIST	BECOMES A SUPERHERO	AT A SPORTS EVENT
9	A SLACKER	SENDS THE WORLD INTO CHAOS	IN A HOSPITAL WING
10	A DANCER	FACES DARK TEMPTATION	AT BOARDING SCHOOL
11	A THIEF	HAS A NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE	AT A CATTLE RANCH
12	A GAMER	IS TRICKED	IN A CHEMISTRY LAB
13	A PODCASTER	HAS A DUEL	IN A SKATEPARK
14	A MUSICIAN	HAS A PARANORMAL EXPERIENCE	IN A CRAMPED CLOSET
15	A SCIENTIST	IS ASKED ON A DATE	IN A MOUNTAIN TOWN
16	A PUPPETEER	LEVITATES	AT A HOUSE PARTY
17	A LOYAL FRIEND	LOSES EVERYTHING	IN AN APARTMENT
18	AN OLDER BROTHER	CONFESSES A CRIME	IN A MUSEUM



SoCal SCBWI CRITIQUE GROUPS

by Carlene Griffith

Critique groups and meet-ups are a vital part of the writing process for any author or illustrator and no matter what you write, from picture books to graphic novels, our SoCal SCBWI has you covered. In an attempt to meet our members' needs, our chapter offers writers five different types of monthly groups to join.

The SoCal Group

This group meets on zoom every 4th Sunday of the month at 1:00 PM PST.

Our Chapter Regional Advisor, Bev Plass, runs this meeting. Typically, in the first hour of the meeting, everyone listens to an author, or an industry guest speaker, or discuss everything from query letters and marketing to how to start an award-winning story or celebrate book birthdays. Sometimes we engage in a planned activity focused on bringing writers and illustrators together for collaboration. These activities bring us together and promote connections.

Following this meeting, writers & author illustrators are offered opportunities to breakout into critique groups to chat about their submitted manuscripts, usually within the same genre.

Christine Henderson, a submission coordinator for these meetings, had this to say about the usefulness of critique groups. *"It's vital to have those early readers, of course, to make sure our work is ready to submit. And group meetings are a great place to discuss any writing and publishing-related topics. The connections formed with other writers often go beyond the monthly critiques, with offers to help with the querying process and agent research."*

The Inland Empire Group

This group meets on zoom every 3rd Saturday of the month.

We offer critique groups for Picture Book, Middle Grade, and Young Adult writers. I have the pleasure of running this group. This meeting is much smaller in numbers to our Sunday zooms, and only the first few minutes are spent on upcoming events, members' good news, and industry talk. After which, the time is used to read aloud and critique one another's submitted manuscripts.

Before Covid and online zoom meetings, published author Marilyn Donahue ran the group in-person for years. She says, *"I think one of the greatest things about our monthly meetings is the sharing of the written word. We have such diversity in our group, and we all benefit from this. Zoom has been a lifesaver in many ways. Especially in letting us see the faces of other writers and artists! It is inspiring for me to listen to the advice given so freely and with such honesty. And what a joy it is to hear someone report a sale. That gives each of us a big boost. As I listen to the writers read their work each month, I am uplifted to note that improvements are being made, characters are coming to life; plots are taking imaginative turns. What a joy it is to see an idea grow into a manuscript worthy of an editor's attention."*

The Illustrator Group

Our chapter has so many talented illustrators, and for them, Shiho Pate, our current Illustrator Coordinator, runs a Hybrid (both on zoom and in-person) Critique Group every 2nd Saturday of the month.



When asked about running and working in a critique group, Shiho had this to say. *"I'm so proud that we are offering both in-person and zoom meetups. The most important thing for me as a host is to listen to the illustrators and tailor the meetup. A lot of people stay after the meetup and build connections, and I think that helps a lot. I've seen un-agented illustrators asking for tips from agented illustrators. I've seen PAL members share their books and exchange ideas. It all happens organically so as a host it's so beautiful to see."*

Shiho also explained that for in-person meetups, illustrators bring their work or their favorite books to share. They use a prompt to focus on building their portfolios. They also tailor the topic of the month to prepare for upcoming events while reviewing physical portfolios and improving their presentations.

The Bilingual Latinx Author Group

For our fantastic Bilingual Latinx Authors, there is a meeting offered every 2nd Wednesday of the month run by Cynthia De La Torre, our Co-Assistant Regional Advisor.

The Author Illustrator Group

And for our ambitious Author Illustrators, Samantha Winkler runs an online group that meets on zoom every 3 months. This group is great for those aspiring to meld their writing with their illustrations.

Of course, not all writers need a critique group, they are just that talented. But for the rest of us aspiring authors, having readers to help us see the flaws in our precious documents is vital. Many, including myself, have seen their writing grow over the years because of participation in critique groups. And often, the connection we make with other authors in these organized groups leads to priceless friendships and partnerships that ultimately contribute to our success as published authors. Which isn't success the goal in the end?

If you feel your group isn't represented here in our SoCal chapter, then let us know because all are welcomed, and we want to hear from you!

Til next time, happy writing!

Carlene Griffith is SCBWI SoCal's co-Assistant Regional Advisor and Newsletter Art Director. Author of 10 Minute Plays for Kids of All Ages and the Rose Maidelaiden series.

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Illustration by Annie Hobbs, as seen in SoCal's December 2022 edition of "Get to Know Our Illustrators"

