

Developing Children's Literature

Dr. K. A. Korb
University of Jos

Assignment Options

- Original picture book story (text only)
- Original poem for children from birth through 3rd grade
- Illustrate a story (pictures only)
 - Drawings
 - Photographs

Overview of Picture Books

- Typically 32 pages
 - 12 and 14 spreads for the story
 - **Spread:** Two facing pages
 - Note the spreads when writing a picture book
- Word count from 0 to 1,000 words
 - Usually, picture books have less than 500 words

Choosing a Story

- Write about what you know
- Strategies for getting ideas for a story (Note: You are not writing the story, but allowing ideas to flow that could develop into a story):
 1. Think of a subject that catches your imagination (e.g., an object or a place)
 - Make a list of possibilities for the subject
 2. Think of the central character
 - Write or draw him/her into existence
 - Let the character identify the plot
 3. Remember your experiences as a child, your feelings, childhood memories, worries and pleasures
 - Write a story based on those experiences

Structure of Story: Beginning, Middle, and End

- Stories usually have beginnings, middles and endings
 - A story is a journey along a winding road – not straight one
 - The end should not be predictable from the beginning
- **Beginning:** The first line should capture the reader's attention
- Typical basic sequence of events:
 - Arrival of conflict
 - Initial success of the main character
 - Challenge
 - There could be multiple success-challenge cycles
 - Final victory
 - Outcome

Plot

- The main character is normally involved in a conflict
 - Conflict with:
 - Another character
 - Circumstances
 - Within him- or herself
- Conflict can be a problem the main character must resolve
 - The character oftentimes learns or grows in the process

Style

- Quality of writing – spelling, punctuation, grammar – is vital
 - Children learn by example. When children are exposed to incorrect grammar and spelling in storybooks, they learn incorrect grammar and spelling
- Write with clarity
 - Children need language that is immediate, clear and easy to follow
- Write with warmth and humor

Theme

- Good stories have a theme that is meaningful to and appropriate for young children
- The theme should not necessarily be explicitly stated – it should emerge from the story
- Keep the theme positive. If writing about a social problem, offer constructive ways for children to deal with it

Character/Setting

- Character
 - Before writing, know the characters thoroughly
 - The main character should be someone the reader can identify and/or sympathize with
- Setting
 - Set the story in a place and time that will be either interesting or familiar

Illustrations

- Pictures should help:
 - Tell the story
 - Describe the setting
 - Set the mood
 - Convey information about the characters
- Pictures help the author tell a story in fewer words

Revisions

- Revise
- Revise
- Re-re-revise
- Read the story to children to assess their attention, interest, and questions
- Revise
- Give the story to adults who frequently interact with children for their feedback
- Revise
- Let the story rest for some time
- Revise