



The Picture Book Writing Project 2020

Teaching Artist: Molly Beth Griffin

Your sessions for the year:

Winter/Spring

Tuesday evenings; 12 weeks; 6–9 p.m.
January 28, 2020–April 14, 2020

Summer

Saturday June 13, July 11, & August 8 2020, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Fall

Tuesday evenings; 12 weeks; 6–9 p.m.
September 15, 2020–December 8, 2020, no class 11/24 for Thanksgiving

Final manuscripts due to Molly on December 8; final one to one with Molly must take place no later than February 28, 2021

Final public reading (5-7 min from each reader) at the Loft on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, 7 p.m. in the Target Performance Hall at Open Book.

4 one to one sessions with Molly Beth Griffin, date and time to be determined between each student and Molly Beth throughout the year. The first one to one must take place before the first class meeting in January; the final one to one must take place no later than February 28, 2021. No extensions, no exceptions.

The youngest readers deserve the BEST literature. When children are given books that foster empathy and value curiosity, they can grow into the enthusiastic readers and critical thinkers our society needs. We will start with this basic premise and move forward from there, studying the craft of picture book writing and the process of picture book creation in all its depth and complexity. We will read great



books by at least 50 accomplished authors, generate stories from writing prompts, revise drafts with rigorous exercises, workshop your manuscripts in a supportive environment, and learn from visiting writers, illustrators, and industry professionals. Come in with a passion for writing for young people, and you will leave with 3-5 polished, submission-ready manuscripts and a plan for getting them into kids' hands through traditional or independent publishing avenues.

Perhaps you have ideas for picture books but have trouble getting them down on paper and seeing them through to completion. Perhaps you've taken other picture book classes and are looking for a more intensive program that can help you bring your stories to the next level. Perhaps you're at a point in your writing life where you're ready to work closely with a mentor, or you're eager to connect with a more productive writing group. Perhaps you've even published picture books already, and are looking for inspiration to develop new work. We will set goals with you at the beginning of the year and then help you achieve them, all while enjoying the playfulness of this unique form.

We will read and reference dozens of picture books throughout the year.. Students can look at the teaching artist's copies in class, and can purchase or find at libraries any title they wish to return to outside of class. Authors we'll study will include Lauren Castillo, Jacqueline Woodson, Suzy Lee, Joyce Sidman, Matt de la Peña, Margarita Engle, Phyllis Root, Cynthia Leitich Smith, Bao Phi, Javaka Steptoe, Kate Messner, and many more.

Other books you may wish to reference:

Writing Picture Books: A Hands-on Guide from Story Creation to Publication by Ann Whitford Paul (revised & expanded edition 2018)

Children's Writers & Illustrators Market 2019 (or 2020 when that edition comes out)

We'll have a line-up of children's picture book authors, illustrators, agents, and editors visiting our cohort throughout the year, including authors Bao Phi, Laura Purdie Salas, David LaRochelle and author/illustrator Mike Wohnoutka, editors Kristen Mohn (Capstone) and Carol Hinz (Millbrook), agent Dawn Frederick, and independent publisher Dara Moore Bevas (Wise Ink). More visiting writers and publishing professionals will be announced throughout the year.



Your syllabus:

The teaching artist will meet with each student prior to the start of the Winter/Spring term, to talk about individual projects and set goals for the year.

Winter/Spring: 12 weekly evening class sessions will address craft topics and explore genres of picture book writing, plus two rounds of workshopping student manuscripts.

*Workshopping will take place **live** during class time. Students will be expected to provide copies of their manuscript for all other students plus the teaching artist, will read their story aloud to the group, and listen and take notes while it is discussed. Keep in mind that we will be using your piece as a learning opportunity for ALL participants—through workshop we practice our critique skills, and learn about the form and process of picture book writing. Other students will contribute actively to the conversation, marking up the manuscript during the discussion, and will return the manuscript to the author at the conclusion of the critique. The teaching artist will take the manuscript home and write additional comments on the piece and return it to the author the following week. More detailed critique procedure will be explained during class on Week 1.*

Week 1: Character lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 1)

Week 2: Plot/structure lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 1)

Week 3: Setting lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 1)

Week 4: Theme lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 1)

Week 5: Language/mechanics lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 1)

Week 6: Language/lyrical elements lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 1)

Week 7: Humor lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 2)



Week 8: Nonfiction lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 2)

Week 9: Poetry lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 2)

Week 10: Beginning readers lecture, readings, discussion, and exercises
plus 2 Critiques (round 2)

Week 11: Visiting writer/illustrator 1
plus 2 Critiques (round 2)

Week 12: Visiting writer/illustrator 2
plus 2 Critiques (round 2)

Second meetings with teaching artist will take place prior to summer sessions.

Summer: the 3 summer sessions will each include:
writing prompts and time to generate new work together
student-lead "read and share" favorite picture books with the group
a hands-on activity like dummy making, storyboarding, collages, etc.
4 critiques (1/3 of the class at each summer session - round 3 for everyone)

Third meetings with teaching artist will take place prior to Fall term.

Fall: 12 class sessions will address the process of picture book writing and publishing, plus two more rounds of workshopping student manuscripts.

Week 1: Visiting agent/editor
plus 2 Critiques (round 4)

Week 2: Visiting agent/editor
plus 2 Critiques (round 4)

Week 3: Picture book process: query/cover letter writing
plus 2 Critiques (round 4)

Week 4: Picture book process: market research & comp titles
plus 2 Critiques (round 4)

Week 5: Picture book process: working with agents
plus 2 Critiques (round 4)



Week 6: Picture book process: working with an editor
plus 2 Critiques (round 4)

Week 7: Picture book process: illustration
plus 2 Critiques (round 5)

Week 8: Picture book process: indie publishing
plus 2 Critiques (round 5)

Week 9: Picture book process: work for hire
plus 2 Critiques (round 5)

Week 10: student-chosen topic
plus 2 Critiques (round 5)

Week 11: student-chosen topic
plus 2 Critiques (round 5)

Week 12: Next steps & celebration
plus 2 Critiques (round 5)

Final meetings with teaching artist and final manuscript critiques. I will provide feedback on up to 5 picture book manuscripts per student (manuscripts must be under 750 words each). Students can expect line edits on each manuscript as well as overarching suggestions. Our meeting can include submission planning and next steps for moving forward with this polished body of work.