



SCBWI
france

THE SOCIETY OF CHILDREN'S BOOK
WRITERS & ILLUSTRATORS

2006 Edition, no. 18

SCBWI France Expression is published annually by
SCBWI FRANCE
Association loi 1901
38 Boulevard de Courcelles
75017 Paris

EMAIL:

leslie@kidbookpros.com

WEBSITES:

kidbookpros.com
scbwi.org

**PRESIDENT/REGIONAL
ADVISOR**

Ann Jacobus (outgoing)
Leslie Greene (incoming)

ADVISORY BOARD

Claudia Classon
Andi Ipaktchi
David Martin
Dorothy Naylor
Rhea LS
Bridget Strevens-Marzo

Next issue in 2007

Publication date: March 2007
Submission deadline:
31 December 2006
Please send all submissions for
Expression
to sandra@kidbookpros.com
Expression OnLine
to bpteditor@yahoo.com

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Sandra Guy, **Editor**
Michelle Perino, **Assistant Editor**
Candy Gourlay, **Art Direction**
Alex Buchet, **Translations**
Bridget Strevens-Marzo,
Illustration Coordination
Ann Jacobus,
Directeur de la Publication

Featured artist this issue:

illustrations © Tomie dePaola

Copyright © SCBWI France

EXPRESSION

Less is more

Poets work to conjure a feeling, a recognition, an entire world, sometimes with no more words than you can count on your digits. And poet Robert Browning was the first to coin the phrase, "less is more," in his 1855 poem, "Andrea del Sarto." (From this same poem comes, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?") Browning, along with artists such as Mies van der Rohe, Phillip Glass, Mark Rothko, or Coco Chanel, all knew the power of less.

Understanding and embracing this concept will improve our picture book texts and prose. (Illustrators are off the hook – a picture is already worth 1000 well-chosen, jam-packed words.) Economy, however, is not the same thing as minimalism. Hemingway wrote in a minimalist style, which stripped a story to its essential, fundamental features and communicated it sparsely. I'm talking writing distilled for strength. As in hootch, so in prose.

It looks easy. It's not. A writing teacher once asked me to reduce two pages from my novel to one. How? Few adjectives or tags, no adverbs, no filler words, one muscled word for two weak, flabby ones. Every single page was richer. Unquestionably better.

If we appreciate the miracle of arranging letters, sounds - words on a page and communicating meaning, how can we in good conscience squander this opportunity? Make each word a gem, a nugget or a booger.

Or, as Funky Winkerbean once said in his comic strip, "A storyteller's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a metaphor?"

MOINS c'est PLUS

Les poètes s'efforcent d'évoquer un sentiment, une correspondance, un monde entier, parfois avec autant de mots que vous avez de doigts. Et le poète Robert Browning fut le premier à inventer l'expression «moins, c'est plus» dans son poème de 1855, «Andrea del Sarto». (De ce même poème: «un homme doit atteindre ce qu'il ne peut saisir, ou à quoi servirait le ciel?») Browning, ainsi que des artistes tels que Mies van der Rohe, Phillip Glass, Mark Rothko, ou Coco Chanel, savait bien la puissance du «moins».

Comprendre et accepter ce concept améliorera le texte et la prose de nos albums illustrés. (Les illustrateurs ne sont pas en cause—une image vaut déjà mille mots bien choisis.) L'économie de style, cependant, n'est pas du minimalisme. Hemingway écrivait dans un style minimaliste, lequel dénudait une histoire pour en atteindre la substance essentielle et fondamentale et la présentait sans fioritures. Je parle d'une écriture distillée pour sa force. La prose est ainsi comme l'alcool.

Ca a l'air facile. Ca ne l'est pas. Un professeur d'écriture m'avait une fois demandé de réduire deux pages de mon roman en un. Comment? Moins d'adjectifs, pas d'adverbes, pas de mots

bouche-trou, un mot musclé en remplaçant deux mots flasques. Chaque page était enrichi. Meilleur, sans conteste. Si nous apprécions le miracle d'arranger des lettres et des sons—des mots—sur une page pour transmettre un sens, comment en bonne conscience pouvons nous gâcher cette occasion? Faites de chaque mot un joyau, une pépite, ou une crotte.

Ann Jacobus
Former RA, SCBWI France
Ancienne CR pour SCBWI France

Ann will be stepping down as Regional Advisor for SCBWI France in 2006. The region and organization thank Ann for her hard work and welcome on board the artist/illustrator, Leslie Greene, as the new RA for France. Ann va démissionner comme Conseillère Régionale pour SCBWI France en 2006. La région et l'organisation remercient Ann pour son travail acharné et souhaitent «bienvenue à bord» à l'artiste illustratrice, Leslie Greene, comme nouvelle CR France.



PICTURE BY TOMIE DEPAOLA

Bravo!

SCBWI France is proud to present work published all over the world by local members. If you have good news for 2006 and 2007, please let us know!



Pedro de Alcantara's middle-grade novel, *Befuddled*, has just been published by Delacorte, an imprint of Random House. It tells the story of 13-year-old Becky Cohen and her struggles to become a violinist. Delacorte has also offered Pedro a contract for a new novel, a time-travel epic of New York City, tentatively entitled, *Latrella Rewinds*.

Doug Cushman and **Jack Prelutsky** have a new school poem book coming out. *What a Day It Was at School!* to be published by Greenwillow in July 2006. Doug also wrote and illustrated a new book for the HarperCollins 'I Can Read' series entitled, *Dirk Bones*, that will be out this summer.

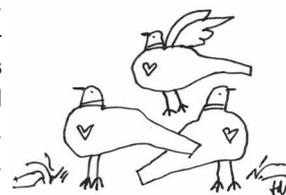
Susan Fletcher's YA novel, titled in English, *The Alphabet of Dreams*, will come out in the US from Atheneum/Simon & Schuster in August. It will also be published in France by Gallimard's 'Folio Junior' line in 2007. It's a story set in ancient Persia, where the main character, Mitra, starts selling her brother's prescient dreams for food and passage to Palmyra, so she can be reunited with her family. Along the way, their journey converges with that of the Biblical Three Wise Men, who (in the novel) are Persian Zoroastrian priests.

Medallion Press has sold the foreign rights of a Thai translation for **Jennifer Macaire's** book *The Secret of Shabaz*, which won the Road to Romance Reviewer's Choice Award. In other news, Medallion recently published Jennifer's new book, *Horse Passages*, a science fiction adventure for teens, which received a five-star review from *Affair de Coeur*.

Lawrence Schimel has four new picture books out in Spanish. Three of them are illustrated by fellow SCBWI-member, **Sara Rojo Perez**: *Mi Gata Eureka* (La Osa Menor, Madrid); *Amigos y Vecinos* (Ediciones La Libreria, Madrid); and *¿Lees un Cuento Conmigo?* (Panamericana, Colombia). The fourth, *Feliz Navidad, Rachid* (Ediciones La Libreria, Madrid), is illustrated by Miguel Navia.

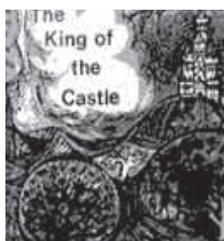
Bridget Strevens-Marzo's new book, *Les Petites Mains Dessinent* (Bayard Editions, France), will be published in March 2006. Bridget illustrated as well as co-authored the book with Marie-Pascale Cocagne. It features 60 large pages of story pictures for small kids to enter into – with pencils, crayons or just simply their imaginations! Also, Bridget's book *Kiss, Kiss!* won a Top Ten award in the 2005 Kid's Own Australian Literature Koala Awards. Kids down-under voted it one of the ten best books of 2005. Congratulations!

Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo and **Girl Valencia's** book, *The Christmas Fireflies*, was named as the Best Book in Children's Literature for 2004 by the Manila Critic's Circle. The announcement was made last September during the 24th National Book Awards in the Philippines. The book is award-winning singer-songwriter Girl's first children's book. Beulah has designed and illustrated more than 30 titles. View the book online at: www.geocities.com/scbwphilasia



The Book I Wish I'd Written

By Alan Durant



I was sitting slaving over a hot computer when the request came to name the book I wish I'd written. And I knew the answer at once. It's a thriller for young adults set at the very end of the fifteenth century in a monastery and concerns the murderous shenanigans of monks and an unhealthy interest in old body parts. Its title is *Flesh and Bones* and its author is ... Alan Durant. That's right, me! It's the book I wish I'd written, that my editor wishes I'd written, that my agent wishes I'd written, that my mum wishes I'd written.

I've been writing it for around three years now and I still haven't finished. Perhaps it's the research or the concern about historical accuracy that's slowing it down or maybe it's other stuff – like children and school visits and having a life.

What's certain is that, even after fifty books, writing doesn't seem to get any easier. It's hard work. But as we all know, the satisfaction can be enormous.

I know I'd never have been a writer if it hadn't have been for the books I read as a child – C S Lewis's *Narnia* stories, Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* series, Michael Hardcastle's football books and, most of all, a magical

allegorical fantasy called *The King of the Castle* by Meriol Trevor. I've loved that book since I first read it aged ten. I love the way it works on different levels, the way a boy from the real world is transported back into the past and an extraordinary adventure, and the brilliantly vivid recreation of that world at an unspecified historical time, but probably early middle ages, the boldly drawn characters ... Hold on a moment. I've always maintained that I love that book because it's so unlike anything I could or would have wanted to have written. And it's only in writing this that I see the connection. A suspenseful story set in the middle ages (albeit quite a lot later) that connects past and present through the agency of a contemporary boy, the different levels, the colourful characters, even the catholic theology.

So maybe, after all this time, I am trying to write the book I wish I'd written – or maybe I'm just trying to recreate the thrill I got from reading Meriol Trevor's great book.

Whichever, now I'll get back to trying to make my wish (and my editor's, my agent's, my mum's) finally come true.

Alan Durant is the author of over fifty books for children of all ages – from picture books to young adult novels. Latest titles include *Dear Father Christmas* (Walker Books) and *Burger Boy* (Andersen Press). He frequently visits schools and libraries to give talks and run workshops. From April 7-12, 2006 he is running a residential course for adults on writing for children at his house in Picardie, France. Further details can be found at www.alandurant.co.uk.

The best English-language lending library in France

Classic and contemporary fiction and non-fiction

450 magazines

Evenings with an Author

Children's programs

Various types of memberships are available. Ask for details when you visit the library.

Métro: Ecole Militaire, Alma-Marceau

RER Pont d'Alma

Bus routes: 42, 63, 69, 80, 82, 87, 92

10, rue du Général-Camou
75007 PARIS

Tel.: 01 53 59 12 60

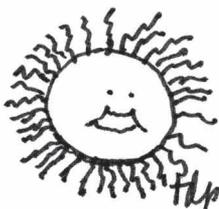


AMERICAN LIBRARY IN PARIS

How being a secret comics reader led to a career in children's books

Meet the author and illustrator: Jan Ormerod

Jan Ormerod taught art at tertiary and secondary levels, before turning to children's book illustration after becoming a mother. Jan's first book, *Sunshine* was acclaimed around the world. She has since published over 50 books, including *Moonlight*, *Peek-a-Boo* and *Ms Macdonald Has a*



Class. Her latest book, *Lizzie Nonsense*, published by *Little Hare*, has been selected as Australia's 2006 *IBBY Honour Book* and is the story of a mother and daughter – and a baby – living in the Australian outback. She was interviewed by **Bridget Stevens-Marzo** in November 2005

SCBWI: Can you tell us a little about your childhood in Western Australia?

Jan: I grew up in the fifties, in a series of small towns in Western Australia, with three older sisters. There were no children's or adult's books in our house, but each year I would be given illustrated English school-girl annuals, such as *Girl's Crystal* and *School Friend*. I poured over this foreign world of boarding schools, tea parties and snow with fascination and longing. I drew constantly and compulsively – images of glamorous girls in tutus, skating in little skirts and fur trimmed hats, or riding ponies. Barbie dolls had not been invented, so I drew my own fantasy female role models.

SCBWI: You are one of only a few British /American/ Australian creators to have pioneered the comic book format in picture books for younger children. What led you to adopt that form?

Jan: As a child I secretly devoured American comics. Without knowing it, I was learning about good stories, told economically, with superb draughtsmanship. My passion for visual narrative was born. My task as a visual storyteller is to observe, record and edit. I need to capture the moment that has clarity and simplicity, invites empathy, and allows the reader to bring her own knowledge to that moment, to enrich it and develop it according to her own life experiences.

Telling a story with words and pictures is a little like watching a movie, then selecting the evocative moment, like a still taken from a film, so the 'storyboard' or comic book format is a useful one.

SCBWI: What is most important to you when you tackle a new subject?

Jan: I am aware that picture books are almost always shared by the child and a caring adult. I find the challenge of communicating with both child and adult, working on two levels in one book, a demanding, intriguing and rewarding task.

SCBWI: Your artwork ranges from bold forms and bright colors to subtle and detailed narrative description. What prompts you to vary your approach?

Jan: It just seems logical to me to use a different look and feel for different books. If a text is exploring a child's experience of the grieving process, such as *Goodbye*

Mousie by Robie Harris, it needs an approach that allows great nuance of facial expression and body language. If I am illustrating traditional animal stories such as *A Twist in the Tail*, edited by Mary Hoffman, I grab the chance to play with color and pattern.

SCBWI: What kinds of things prompt your writing?

Jan: Often playing with language, rhyme and rhythm is the starting point for me, such as the books for Oxford University Press illustrated by Lindsey Gardiner, *If You're Happy and You Know It* and *Doing the Animal Bop*. The exuberant illustrations Lindsey responds with are always a surprise and delight.

SCBWI: In a review of *Lizzie Nonsense*, Kate Kellaway of *The Observer* wrote, "It is amazing how an emotionally complex narrative can, with skill, be distilled into a picture book." How did you begin work on this book? Were there any struggles along the way you that you could touch on?

Jan: It was probably the most difficult, and the most rewarding book I have ever done. I found it emotionally confronting to be working with my family history, and felt very far from Australian light and color in my studio in England. I had to dive deep into my personal memory banks to capture the sights, sounds and smells of that distant landscape. Several times I wanted to pull out of the process, but with editorial support and art direction from David Francis and Ali Lavau of *Little Hare*, I struggled on to complete it.

SCBWI: What grabs you in a manuscript someone else has written and you are being invited to illustrate; what makes you say, "Yes!"

Jan: Body language! If a text offers a chance to draw emotions and relationships, I can't resist. On the other hand, if a text allows me to use strong graphic shapes and enjoy color, that is also a real plus.

SCBWI: How, if at all, have your relationships with publishers influenced your work over the years?

Jan: My relationships with publishers over the years reflect the changes the industry. I was lucky

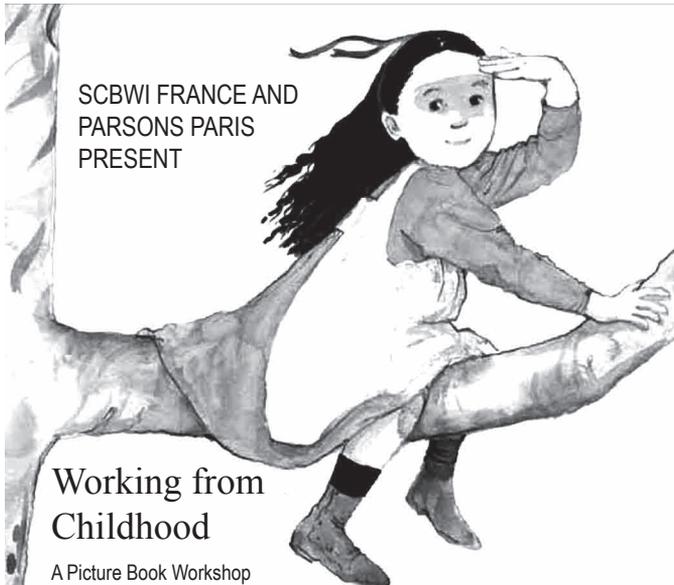
enough to work with the magical Sebastian Walker of Walker Books UK before he died, and knew that he was interested not only in the book I was working on, but anticipated sharing in and supporting my life's work. I now work mostly with American and Australian publishers, as the UK picture book industry is difficult at the moment.

SCBWI: Are there any artists/illustrators whose work you'd like to single out for any reason?

Jan: Drawing is central to my work and my appreciation of the work of others. I went to art school at a time when the practice of drawing was regarded as the underpinning of all activity in the visual arts, "coming to know" by looking closely and recording honestly. I am fascinated by the human face, figure and gesture. The picture books that touch me deeply are those of the American illustrator Brinton Turkle. His *Obadiah* books have been a great inspiration to me.

SCBWI: Is there any other question that you'd like to ask and then answer?

Jan: Why do I keep working in this difficult industry? Well, it's certainly not the money, the pension, the company car or the great social life. I think the fascination with the visual narrative and the joy of communicating to children and adults keeps me making picture books.



SCBWI FRANCE AND
PARSONS PARIS
PRESENT

Working from Childhood

A Picture Book Workshop
with Jan Ormerod

Beginning with an illustrated presentation of her own work in picture books, Jan Ormerod will conduct a creative workshop using our personal history and geography as a route into picture book conception.

For all levels of writers and illustrators

Saturday, March 18, 2006; 10.30-12 and 2-4 pm
Parsons Paris School of Design, 14 rue Letellier, 75015 Paris

Register now for early bird SCBWI members' rate: 40 euros
Contact: Bridget Stevens-Marzo b@bridgetstevens.com

ILLUSTRATION FROM LIZZIE NONSENSE © JAN ORMEROD



Dr Suzanna E Henshon points out what we can learn from the work of Ludwig Bemelmans

Lessons from Madeline

Dr Suzanna E Henshon graduated from William & Mary with a PhD in May 2005, and now teaches writing at Florida Gulf Coast University. Her first novel, *Mildew on the Wall*, was published in 2004 by Royal Fireworks, and another novel, *Spiders on the Ceiling*, will appear in 2006.

During his lifetime Ludwig Bemelmans (1898-1962) wrote more than three-dozen books for children and adults and was a contributor to *The New Yorker* and *Vogue*. He is best known for the Madeline series. *Madeline* (1939) received a Caldecott Honor, while *Madeline Rescues* (1954) won the Caldecott Award as the best-illustrated book in the United States.

If Bemelmans could look over our shoulders and be a muse through the creative process, what lessons would he teach about writing and illustrating a children's book? Here are a few:

Adventure sells. The Madeline books are filled with danger and adventure. In the first book, Madeline suddenly becomes ill and has to have her appendix taken out, leading to an outing at the hospital. The series continues through Madeline's gypsy adventure and Christmas celebration. A colorful cast of characters enters the picture – Pepito, son of the Spanish Ambassador, Miss Clavel, and the dog, Genevieve. By including exciting events storylines and adventurous characters, Bemelmans creates reader interest.

Good rhyme is effective. Bemelmans begins each book with these lines:

*In an old house in Paris
that was covered with vines
lived twelve little girls
in two straight lines.*

The rhythm of these lines fits perfectly with the con-

tent of the narrative. While Bemelmans could have *Madeline* in prose, poetry gives a sense of movement, action, and cadence to the storyline. It's true that most publishers say they dread submissions written in rhyme. But in this case, the rhyming form fits the content of the story. It's difficult to imagine *Madeline* written in anything other than verse.

Find the perfect setting for your story. Bemelmans chose to set *Madeline* in Paris and includes pictures of the Eiffel Tower, the Opera, Notre Dame, and the gardens facing the Louvre. By depicting one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world, Bemelmans connects with the adult reader who might be sharing the book with a child; the writer feeds adult fantasies about France. While the story

and main characters appeal to a child, adults might buy the book because it is set in Paris. Bemelmans caters to a dual-audience of adults and children by using Paris as a background, increasing its commercial success.

Pictures and text should complement each other. The 12 little girls are often separated into two rows, creating a natural symmetry across the page. This symmetry is complemented by poetic language. Additionally, the little girls dress alike, so the color scheme matches on most pages.

The littlest girl has the greatest adventure. In childhood, small size is often a disadvantage. But for *Madeline*, her small size and youth is her gateway to adventure, and to her own book series.

Madeline continues to attract a wide audience of readers because the story is visually appealing; the language is a pleasure to hear. The series includes *Madeline's Rescue* (1954), *Madeline and the Bat Hat* (1957), *Madeline and the Gypsies* (1959), *Madeline in London* (1961), and *Madeline's Christmas* (1985).



Bayard Box Sets: More than Magazines!

Sandra Guy talks to Elena Iribarren, International Editorial Coordinator for Bayard Presse, about opportunities for writers and illustrators with the Bayard Box series of magazines.

Imagine your picture book published with an initial distribution of more than 23,000 copies worldwide. Imagine your publisher also publishing writer-illustrators like Tony Ross and David McKee. Imagine that same publisher actively working to build an international reading community by researching what works best for a particular audience, and then setting up monthly questions and quizzes to encourage reader feedback.

It's hard to imagine any publisher not wanting to do all this, but even harder to imagine a publisher finding the time to make it happen. Hats off, then, to Elena Iribarren, the lively International Editorial Coordinator for the Bayard Box series of magazines, targeted at English-language speakers worldwide.

The Bayard Box magazines are developed for three distinct age ranges: Story Box for children between the ages of 3 and 6, Adventure Box for those between 6 and 9 and Discovery Box for children between the ages of 9 and 12. Each Box magazine is made up of a number of different regular features – including a story. For Story Box, it's a straight picture book format, usually with a simple narrative that allows the reader/listener to enter a different world. Adventure Box stories are more like short chapter books where the reader follows a character through a series of escalating events. Discovery Box stories are good short stories often with a seasonal feel.

Whilst much of the non-fiction content of these magazines is taken and translated from Bayard's French-language range of magazine titles, Elena says she is always looking for good stories, especially stories set in other countries. But she asks writers to get to know the magazines well before submitting, as there is a particular feel to each of them. Getting your hands on a copy might be difficult; they are only available on subscription – though many schools and libraries do carry them.

Elena is also happy to look at artwork samples from illustrators. You can send samples to her at the Bayard office in Paris, (3-5 rue Bayard, 75393 Paris cedex 08) but don't send original artwork and do include a SASE if you want your work returned.

To find out more about the Bayard Box series of magazines check out the Bayard website at: <http://www.bayard-magazines.co.uk/gammebox/index.jsp>. A special SCBWI France visit to these Paris-based publishers to talk with Elena Iribarren and another Bayard editor/art director is being discussed for May 2006. Details to come on www.kidbookpros.com.

A Conversation between Jack Prelutsky and Doug Cushman

Friendly Collaborators

Poet songster **Jack Prelutsky** (*Scranimals*, *If Not For the Cat*, *Wild Witches' Ball*, *Dog Days: Rhymes Around the Year*, *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children*) and *illustrator extraordinaire* **Doug Cushman** (*Easter Mice!*, *What Grandmothers Can't Do*, *Inspector Hopper's Mystery Year*, *Aunt Eater series*) talk about writing, sketching, singing, and their newly published collaborative work, *What a Day It Was In School!*

Doug: Well, Jack, after knowing each other for 20 plus years, we're finally together on a book, *What a Day It Was In School!* The first question I'm sure you're always asked is: where do your ideas come from?

Jack: Ideas come from everywhere. They come from things I remember, from my childhood, from reading books, newspapers, and magazines, from my dreams, from conversations, from things that happened to friends and relatives ... everything! My secret is that as soon as I have an idea, I write it down.

Doug: I always have a sketch book with me as well. Sitting in a café, plane terminal, museum – almost everywhere I see people that can be turned into interesting characters. I have a whole shelf of sketchbooks to refer to if I need a character for a new book.

How do you begin a new book? Is there a typical writing day?

Jack: I don't have a typical writing day. Sometimes I go for weeks or more without writing a poem, and sometimes I can't stop, and write around the clock.

Doug: Sounds familiar. I try to draw something every day, even if it's just in my sketch book, to keep from getting rusty. When I begin a new project, I have a zillion little drawings scattered around the studio, trying to get the look of the character just right. It's especially difficult when I'm writing the book as well; text and pictures must be perfectly matched. Only then am I ready to show it to somebody. Who is your first reader when you finish a manuscript?

Jack: I show almost everything I write to my wife Carolyn before submitting it to a publisher. She's often saved me from sending 'garbage' to them. I'm sure that I'll show her this interview before I send it.



PICTURE BY TOMIE DE PAOLA

Doug: As visual as your poems are, I recall getting stuck for an idea with a couple of them. My mind was a complete blank! I ended up drawing the little cat character with different props over and over in different situations in my sketchbook until an idea began to form. For me, just drawing the character without any goal loosens up my imagination, similar, I guess, to free association. Do you have any tricks or methods to help overcome writer's block?

Jack: I could build a house out of my writer's blocks. When I do have writer's block, I either move on to another manuscript, or do something completely different ... like take a long walk or go to a movie.

Doug: How often do you rewrite?

Jack: I'm a compulsive rewriter ... almost nothing comes out right the first time, and usually not the second or third time either. There are poems that I've rewritten over a hundred times, even years after I began them.

Doug: Do you read everything out loud?

Jack: Not only do I read all my poems out loud to myself, I often set them to music and sing them.

Doug: Yes, I've seen your presentations and I know you're an accomplished guitarist and singer as well, coming out of the old coffee house circuit in New York City during the sixties. Have any of your poems begun as a song or melody?

Jack: The poems always begin as poems ... the lyrics come first. Once in a while, the words and music seem to come out together. But I can't think of an instance where the melody came first.

Doug: Editors tend to keep the author and illustrator separate while both are involved in the book. Have

you had any experience in working with an illustrator on a book?

Jack: I haven't met many of my illustrators, but there have been exceptions. I've usually become friends with those I've met, such as Garth Williams, Arnold Lobel, Ted Rand, Peter Sis, Petra Mathers, and yourself.

Doug: Do you and your editor discuss the choices before hand?

Jack: When I began, about forty years ago, I had no say in who would illustrate my books. However, as I developed a track record, I've been consulted more often, and now my editors always ask for my input. That's how you were chosen to illustrate *What a Day It Was In School!*

Doug: How often do you see the illustrator's work in progress for a book ie the dummy, sketches etc? Are you consulted for any changes?

Jack: I do get to see my illustrators' sketches and finishes, and though I'm consulted for changes, I never suggest any unless I notice something really egregious. I did seven books with Arnold Lobel, and only made six suggestions. I've been fortunate to work with wonderful illustrators, all of whom know what they're doing.

Doug: Do you think interest in poetry books for children is strong?

Jack: There are many more children's poetry books now being published than there were when I began. Not only that, I think that the general quality is improving.

Doug: My tastes tend to run to some of the older poets like Emily Dickinson and E.A. Poe though Langston Hughes is a favorite and some of Dorothy Parker's little poems are fun. And, of course, there's your work. I've even attempted to write some poems of my own. Do you have any advice for novices wanting to write poetry books for children?

Jack: Sure. First of all, if you're interested in writing, get yourself a notebook and carry it with you all the time. Second, whenever you have an idea, and you will have ideas, write that idea down immediately. I can almost guarantee that if you don't write down an idea as soon as you have it, you will forget it, and it will be gone for good. Third, write about what you know. Don't start out by writing about purple creatures from distant planets. Write about yourself, your family, your pets ... the things you know best. And most important of all, PRACTICE! Write as often as you can ... the more you write, the more you'll improve.

Doug: Anything else you'd like to add? Is there a question you always wanted to be asked?

Jack: I've always wanted to be asked why I didn't become a movie star. Of course, when I look in the mirror, I know the answer.

Doug: Moi aussi! Thanks, Jack. So, shall I open this Côte du Rhône or will you?

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF PARIS

Where the world goes to school

The only English-medium school within the city of Paris with Primary, Middle and High School sections.



“ Our High School students prepare for the International Baccalaureate (I.B.) Diploma with excellent results! ”

Contact: Gareth Jones, Headmaster, The International School of Paris, 6 rue Beethoven, 75016 Paris Tel 01 42 24 09 54 Fax 01 45 27 15 93 www.isparis.edu

Doug Cushman and Jack Prelutsky will be presenting their new book *What a Day It Was In School!* at the International School in Paris on 11 March 2006. For further details contact Doug on aunteater@aol.com

Meet the author: Susan Fletcher

The Wisdom of Waiting

When I first began writing fiction, I was very bossy with myself. I set out a plan for my novel and outlined it in advance, down to the level of the chapter. I even set up an exact timetable to work by. One week per chapter. Then a month or so for revision. And then...voilà! A novel.

Ha!

Right away, my plans began to unravel. The time schedule went first. Then, plotting problems began to creep in. The outline I'd made didn't always make sense when I actually wrote my way through it. Worse yet, that outline, manufactured in a state of cold logic, was sterile. Once the juices got flowing and my characters opened themselves up to me, better ideas kept popping into my mind. When I could, I shoe-horned the new ideas into my plot outline. But if they didn't fit, I just let them go.

I was determined to follow the plan I had made. I gritted my teeth and forced my way through.

When I finished the story, I read it over from the beginning.

Ouch!

It was dead. No life, no joy, no surprise, no spontaneity, no quirkiness, no subtlety, no grace. Dead.

I chucked it out and started over.

The problem, I think, is that business about the left and right brains, or about the subconscious and conscious minds. Well, I don't know if those labels apply exactly. But somehow you have to use the bossy, wants-to-be-organized-and-in-charge part of your brain when you're writing; and somehow you also have to use the sort of mysterious and unpredictable part, the part from which all the good, juicy stuff comes bubbling up. And if you don't do it right, they can get in each other's way.

It's true that some authors do manage to produce perfectly workable outlines

ahead of time and profitably stick to them throughout the writing process. But for me, the most creative part of my brain was active only when I was writing, and not at all when I was planning.

By a stroke of good fortune, I was asked to join a critique group with Eloise McGraw, author of three Newbery honor books, including the stunning *Moorchild*.

One day, while chatting in the car on the way home from a meeting, Eloise gave me the most valuable tip I've ever heard about how to deal with this problem.

Again, there are other methods. But this is the one that seems to work best for me.

Eloise suggested that when I was stuck for some reason, or didn't know what was going to happen next, or had some other question to which I didn't know the answer... I should not just think up or invent an answer. I should not bully it through. I should wait for the right answer to come.

Every day, Eloise told me, she would sit in front of her computer and pose questions to herself about her book. If the answers came, great. She'd write them down. But if they didn't, she would just let the questions hang there. She would go about the activities of her daily life, and sometimes an answer would come while she was cooking or doing her artwork or driving. But if the answer didn't come, the next day she would just pose the question again. And she would keep posing

the question, not answering it, until one day, the answer would just be there.

It always comes, eventually. It does!

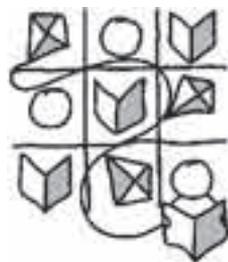
This level of faith was difficult for me at first. I wanted to make something happen. Just do it! But I have learned, over time, to be more or less comfortable in more or less of a fog. A state of uncertainty. A state of not knowing what the heck I'm doing or precisely where the heck I'm going.

Oregon poet Kim Stafford once quoted a jazz musician as saying, "Creative people are comfortable with not knowing ... yet."

I like that!

I find that the answers that come this way – by asking and waiting for the answers – are nearly always right. What a relief not to have to force things anymore!

It's true that I still don't have much luck trying to outline an entire book all the way to the end. But now I can sketch out a very rough map to guide me on my way. And it's nearly always reliable. As to filling in all the details ... I've learned to be reasonably comfortable with not knowing ... yet.



WORDS ACROSS PICTURES & PICTURING WORDS

**Saturday-Sunday
25-26 March 2006**

Bologna Children's Book Fair Grounds

A craft-based two-day conference in English sponsored by the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators (SCBWI) and the Bologna International Children's Book Fair

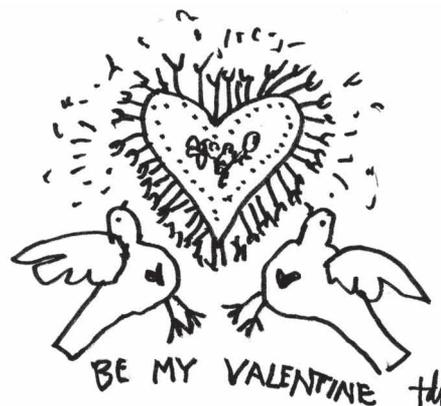
Workshops, Talks, Discussions:

- Creating and Manipulating Your Characters
- Writing a Synopsis: Standalones and Multi-volume Series
- Authentic Adolescent Voice (when you're no longer a teenager and don't have one)
- Co-editions and their impact on the creative process

Featuring: Author Scott Westerfeld (*Peeps*, *So Yesterday*, *Midnighters* series, *Pretties* series); Author Justine Larbalestier (*Magic or Madness*); New York Times Bestselling-illustrator Doug Cushman (*What Dads Can't Do*, *Aunt Eater* series); animator and illustrator Sara Rojo Pérez (*No hay nada como el original*, *Sopa de Sobre* studio); many international editors.

**Only 95€ for SCBWI members until Feb 15!
115€ Non-members**

More information and registration at www.scbwi.org



PICTURE BY TOMIE DEPAOLA

Susan Fletcher is the author of seven novels, including the *Dragon Chronicles* (*Dragon's Milk*, *Flight of the Dragon Kyn*, and *Sign of the Dove*) as well as *Shadow Spinner* and *Walk Across the Sea*. Her next novel, *The Alphabet of Dreams*, will come out from Atheneum/Simon & Schuster in the summer of 2006.

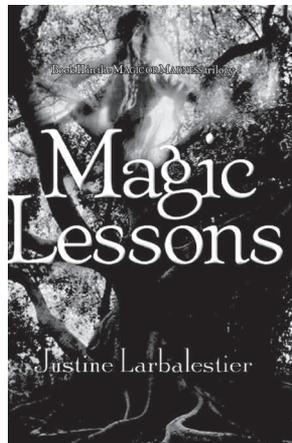
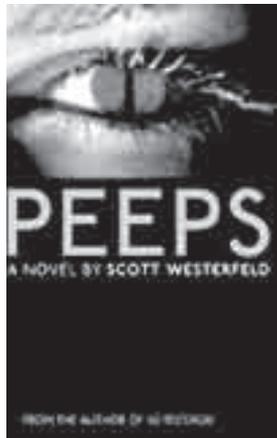
Before our Before-Bologna Conference: speakers Justine Larbalestier and Scott Westerfeld talk about writing novels for teenagers

Novels: it's all about stamina

SCBWI: How and why did you begin writing YA?

Justine: The idea for the *Magic or Madness* trilogy had been brewing for a long time, but the opportunity to write it didn't come until Eloise Flood was offered her own imprint, Razorbill, at Penguin USA. She was looking for inventory, so I pitched her my trilogy idea. She was interested but needed to see a proposal and first three chapters pronto. I put everything else aside and went to work writing and rewriting them over and over. Luckily, she liked the partial enough to buy the whole trilogy. A lucky break for a first-time novelist.

I've been reading YA for a long time. Obsessively, when I was a kid, but I stopped when I considered



myself too grown up for them (at age thirteen!). I took them up again in my twenties when a friend, Lawrence Schimel, introduced me to Philip Ridley's *In The Eyes of Mr Fury* and the many books of M. E. Kerr. I was hooked. The idea of writing one of my own occurred to me pretty early on.

Scott: At the end of a long ghost-writing project, one which had almost destroyed my brain, I had the idea for *Midnighters*. It came out of nowhere, and was clearly a young adult idea: about a group of teens in a small town where time froze at midnight every night.

I had already ghost-written some choose-your-own-adventure books for kids (*Goosebumps*, if the truth be told) so I knew some people in the business. I took the concept to 17th Street Productions, who developed that idea with me. Once I started writing YA, I found myself enjoying it too much to stop.

SCBWI: Not having kids of your own and no longer an adolescent yourself, what do you do to find or recreate an authentic teenage voice in your fiction?

Justine: Like many people, my teenage years weren't exactly fabulous. They are etched deep in my memory, accessing them is dead easy. It's being an adult that's hard.

Scott: I think YA is my most natural age to write for. I still have a lot of the same reactions about what's cool and interesting as I did when I was 14 or so. In other words, all the issues that were important to me then are important to me now. Why is the world like this? What's really happening at the levels that I can't see? Are we all robots?

I think teens are doing two things at once: questioning the world in a radical way, and inventing various versions of themselves. My teen voices come out of those two problems: What the hell is this world I've found myself born into and how do I fit in? That collection of bravura, insecurity, philosophizing, irony, bemusement, and language play (inventing new words to help muddle through all those conflicting emotions) all seem to come naturally to me.

SCBWI: Name one book (adult or YA) you wish you

had written?

Justine: *Seven Gothic Tales* by Isak Dinesen.

Scott: All the books I wished I could have written are actually quite flawed. That is, I wish I could erase them from history and write them myself, but better. I wouldn't mind redoing *Gossip Girl* and adding some vampires, for instance ...

SCBWI: Any advice for new writers?

Justine: Write, write, write! And then rewrite, re-write, rewrite!

Scott: In the 1980s, I followed Kasparov and Karpov in their interminable chess duels, and I remember Karpov losing one match due to exhaustion, because he wasn't as fit as Kasparov. When I joked about that, saying that they were just pushing little wooden pieces around, a friend chided, "Chess is a sport."

One thing I've realized since then is that writing is a sport too; it takes conditioning. You have to write every day to build your sentence-level craft. You have to write your way out of hundreds of plot-tangles and character breakdowns to develop sufficient problem-solving reflexes. And until you've written a novel in one focused stretch, you can't build up the muscles it takes to keep 80,000 words of plot and character arcs in your head, which is a hard, hard thing to do. Someone who writes "every once in a while" is like someone who plays chess by mail. It's much easier, but they don't really develop the stamina that it takes to fight their way through difficult problems.

All of which only means I'm giving the advice everyone gives new writers: Write. Till it hurts.

Justine Larbalestier is working on a YA fantasy trilogy, in which the door of a house in Sydney opens onto a street in New York City. She has also edited a scholarly collection of feminist science fiction, Daughters of the Earth (Wesleyan University Press, 2006) and her first book, The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction was nominated for the Peter McNamara Convenors' Award, the William J Atheling Award and the Hugo for Best Related Book. Scott Westerfeld is the author of five novels for adults and six for young adults. The most recent are Peeps (Penguin) and Pretties (Simon & Schuster). His books have won the Philip K Dick Special Citation, the Aurealis Award, and been named NY Times Notable Books of the Year. His YA novel So Yesterday (Penguin) won the Victorian Premier's Award in 2005. He has contributed nonfiction to Nerve, BookForum, and the scientific journal Nature, and published short fiction on scifi.com and in the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.

Justine and Scott will be speaking at SCBWI's Before Bologna Conference. They were interviewed by Lawrence Schimel.

The Red
Wheelbarrow
Bookstore

Librairie anglophone

13, rue Charles V
75004 Paris

Tel. +33 (0) 1 42 77 42 17
Fax +33 (0) 1 42 72 85 27

good.reading@wanadoo.fr

www.theredwheelbarrow.com

Metro: St Paul



A word from our new RA – Leslie Greene

Welcome everyone to an abundant program of events for 2006. I'd like to take a few words to introduce myself as the new Regional Advisor for France.

A decade ago I was developing my first book project. Having been a visual artist for 20 years, constructing the dummy wasn't a problem. But what to do next?

I didn't know how to get it into the hands of publishers. I saw an ad in FUSAC (France USA Contacts) for a SCBWI meeting and went. It was a serendipitous moment to discover the budding of a supportive children's book network in Paris. Since then, I've gained lots of expertise and shared in valuable communication at the many SCBWI events I've attended.

Now I look forward to taking responsibility to help perpetuate the panoply of activities SCBWI offers us. I welcome your help on existing projects and look forward to hearing any suggestions you have for new projects which will continue the dynamic of stimulating and professional events.

Rendez-vous

MARCH TO NOVEMBER 2006

March 11 "CREATION: A Morning of Song & Ink" Jack Prelutsky and Doug Cushman at the International School of Paris, 13 rue Beethoven sponsored by SCBWI France. Contact Doug Cushman for details: AuntEater@aol.com.

March 18 SCBWI France presents "Working from Childhood: A Picture Book Workshop" with Jan Ormerod, award winning author and illustrator of over seventy picture books, published in twenty countries. For all levels of writers and illustrators. Event will take place in Paris. For details contact Bridget Strevens-Marzo : b@bridgetstevens.com

March 23 SCBWI British Isles, presents an evening in its Professional Series: "Writing on Commission." Amber Caraveo, senior commissioning editor at Working Partners, will discuss how writers can develop their writing career by ghost writing. Limited places available! Please RSVP to Sara Grant: murray_in_london@hotmail.com

March 25-26 SCBWI/Bologna Fiera Day-Before Conference: "Words Across Pictures and Picturing Words" at the Children's Book Fairgrounds, Bologna, Italy. A craft-based full-day conference in English. More info at: www.scbwi.org/events.htm or contact Lawrence Schimel: scbwispain@hotmail.com

March 27-30 International Bologna Children's Book Fair, Italy. For more info: www.bookfair.bolognafiere.it

April 7-12 Join Alan Durant on a residential writers' course in northern France. For further details contact Alan Durant at alan@durant1234.fsnet.co.uk, by phone on 07944 374734 or visit his website at www.alandurant.co.uk

May 6 SCBWI British Isles. "Illustrators' Day 2006: Picture Books for Writers and Illustrators." A one-day event of workshops and talks with individual portfolio reviews by children's book professionals, a panel on current children's illustration issues, and an open exhibition for all attending illustrators. Pub-

lished and unpublished alike are guaranteed to find guidance, inspiration, and ideas. For further details: www.britishscbwi.org

May 20 SCBWI France brings you a Fiction Plot and Character Workshop with Caroline Lawrence. Caroline Lawrence is the author of the Roman Mysteries series (Orion Children's Books). To be held at the International School of Paris, 13 rue Beethoven. For further details contact Emma: pergolea@club-internet.fr

May 25 SCBWI British Isles brings you as part of their Professional Series: "Hooking the Reader," Sarah Hughes, editor at Penguin, will share her insights into grabbing an editor's and the readers' attention on the first page. Please RSVP to Sara Grant at: murray_in_london@hotmail.com

August 4-7 Annual SCBWI conference in Los Angeles. Details at www.scbwi.org



October 14 SCBWI France brings you a workshop with famed children's book author Tomie dePaola in Paris. Details on www.kidbookpros.com

November 11 SCBWI-BI's fourth annual Writer's Day in Winchester, featuring speakers and seminars with the pros. Individual manuscript critiques will be offered. Get advice, inspiration and ideas for developing your craft, meet fellow professionals and learn what's new in the children's book marketplace! For details: www.britishscbwi.org

NEWSLETTER POLICIES

SCBWI France is the French chapter of The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, which is based at 8271 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90048, USA. For further information about SCBWI check the website at www.scbwi.org **Writers:** Consider submissions on topics about the writing process, the writing craft, techniques of illustration, creativity, marketing your work, school visits, bilingualism. News of book sales, critique groups, experience with publishers is welcome.

Illustrators: If you'd like to submit illustrations to appear in the newsletter please contact our illustration coordinator, Bridget Strevens-Marzo at b@bridgetstevens.com. **Book Reviews:** It is SCBWI policy to review only "how to" books on writing and illustrating, or books of criticism on children's literature. **Advertisements:** SCBWI France Expression will accept classified ads for writing and illustrating-related businesses. A business card sized ad costs \$10 or 10 euros. Advertising is also available on the SCBWI France web site and email list. Contact

Leslie Greene at leslie@kidbookpros.com for details. **Subscriptions:** Members in the European Union receive the annual newsletter, **SCBWI France Expression**, as part of their membership. All others may subscribe for \$10 US. Non-SCBWI members may also subscribe for \$15 US. SCBWI France Expression comes out in March. Any SCBWI member may receive **Expression OnLine**, which is published as-needed (daily, weekly, monthly, etc). To subscribe to **Expression OnLine**, please send an email to bpteditor@yahoo.com

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Sandra Guy, **Editor**
Michelle Perino, **Assistant Editor**
Alex Buchet, **Translations**
Candy Gourlay, **Art Direction**
Bridget Strevens-Marzo, **Illustration Coordination**

Ann Jacobus, **Directeur de la Publication**

ISSN: 1287-2482

Dépôt légal: March 2006

Imprimé en France par Copy-House