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Scooping the Kid's Market: Writing for Children in the Nineties

Judith Collins

SCOOPING THE KID'S MARKET

Writing for Children in the Nineties

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ABSTRACT

Many people think writing for kids is simple. After all, what parent, grandparent or teacher has not picked up A Little ABC Book book and thought, "I can do better than this!"

However, even though writing for kids in the 1990s is possible, exciting and fulfilling it's not as easy as it looks. In addition to knowing how to write well, writing for kids today takes more commitment, ambition, creativity, sensitivity and expertise because kids are much more sophisticated than they were ten or twenty years ago.

And, because global information systems and mass media have dramatically contributed to the sophistication of kids, children's writers have opportunities to cash in on their writing in the nineties to the tune of a billion dollar industry (Macdonald 250).

Just as writers realize there are big bucks in children's literature, they must also realize the importance of their voices. That without them there would be no business because publishers need books to sell. And without publishers there would be no editors. And as New York editor Olga Litowinsky commented, without books, there would be few intellectual and spiritual rewards (xiv).

Consequently, because books are companions to everyone, writers must answer their regal commands. They must consider publishers and editors as partners in a rewarding and profitable initiative. When such perceptions are embraced the world will be spiritually and intellectually richer.

So just how do writers break into the world of publishing in the nineties? This culminating project will discuss key themes relative to the writer's commitment, ambition, creativity, sensitivity and expertise.

In other words, this discussion will explore what it takes to be a writer for children in the nineties along with the responsibilities of writing for the young; how to plan time to write and write consistently; get ideas; and prepare manuscripts for submission.

The Review of Literature Chapter examines several author's accounts whose work reflects the history of literature during the last five decades and advice from a noted United States author on how to get work published.

The Results Chapter presents several personal works addressing various segments of children's literature.

Finally, the Discussion Chapter introduces an expert in children's literature to comment on the various aspects this culminating project discusses--"Scooping the Kid's Market: Writing for Children in the Nineties."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Introduction..... 1

Review of Literature..... 22

Selective Review and Evaluation of Research..... 52

Results..... 63

Discussion..... 97

Appendices

Exhibits I - X

INTRODUCTION

When people ask me when I knew I wanted to write for kids I want to say something uniquely Hollywood like, "Oh, when I was five--and the rest is history."

The real answer is that about eight years ago, a compelling desire to write for kids engulfed me.

Because I had no writing experience, I hadn't the foggiest idea of where or how to start. Maybe it was divine intervention, but in the next few weeks I stumbled onto an advertisement about the Institute of Children's Literature in Connecticut. After several weeks of researching the Institute, I signed up for their basic course, was hooked and continued writing through undergraduate and graduate degrees at Lindenwood College in St. Charles, Missouri.

As a result, my passions have birthed three books and countless ideas for the children's market as well as a newspaper column for adults.

Even though I'm waiting for that golden moment when the editor calls and says, "We love your idea and want to publish your book," I cling to each word of personal encouragement the editors jot onto my rejection letters and keep writing.

And while I'm waiting for my golden moment, the inevitable question, "Isn't writing for kid's hard?" always

pops up during social conversations. Usually what follows is another question like, "How do you handle the rejection?"

"Writing for kids may be hard," I answer, "but it's not impossible. And as far as the rejections, they put me closer to a yes."

Next, the conversation usually goes something like, "I've got this great idea for a kid's book--how do I start?"

"First," I add, "loving to write and loving children is a good beginning." The next step is writing."

As simple as that sounds, writing for children is not easy. St. Louis author and teacher Julie Kelleman explains, "It is obvious from the manuscripts writers send in they don't have a clue as to how to write for kids.

Make sure you know how to write well," added Kelleman. "Take basic English classes," she warns, "because better than seventy-five percent of the manuscripts editors review are rejected on grounds of grammatical sloppiness."

Another reason why beginning writers fail is they tend to underestimate kids.

Elizabeth Rinck, editor of Children's Digest reports, "Global information systems have created a worldwide awareness in our children, and recognition of that knowledge must be reflected in the literature written for them.

Even Nancy Drew books," added Rinck, "are being rewritten to accommodate the advanced sophistication of our contemporary youth" (Maifair 7).

And Milliken Publishing children's editor Kathy Hilmen adds, "Kids want to know about other kids in different parts of the world. Many of the children, added Hilmen, "are attending school with children from different countries.

As a result," continued Hilmen "school themes have a multicultural focus that didn't exist twenty years ago" (interview).

Whether a writer intends to scoop the kid's market or occasionally submit a story there are issues imperative to a writer's success.

Underlying this project's exploration of how to be a successful writer of children's literature are several basic concepts. Essentially, they are that a writer's success depends on his or her:

- commitment to the field
- ambition
- creativity
- sensitivity and
- expertise.

The following discussion explores each concept.

Commitment

Every writer can find out how committed they are by answering the following two questions.

The first question is, "Am I willing to learn how to write well before submitting my manuscripts to publishers?"

The next question is, "Am I willing to invest the time and energy needed to research my markets?".

Repeatedly, editors and publishers report that the majority of children's manuscripts are rejected because of poor grammar and sloppiness.

Rich Wallace, coordinating editor of Highlights explains, "If I'm reading, say, a biography, and the subject's name is spelled three different ways, or a birthday has a typo in it, then I'm not going to be really confident about you as a writer" (37).

On the other hand, even if writers know how to write well they often sabotage their own game plan by sending their manuscript to the wrong publishers.

Most editors agree with Beth Troop, manuscript coordinator of Highlights who resoundingly commands, "Know your market!"

Writers have prime opportunities to increase their credibility by showing editors they've done their homework. And homework consists of: requesting the publisher's or editor's guidelines; reviewing publisher's current books and magazines; knowing the hot topics and speaking to editors.

Guidelines are acquired by writing to the publisher, and publications are reviewed in libraries and bookstores.

Furthermore, if a writer shows interest, editors will

often spend a few moments with them in person or on the telephone. During that time writers can promote professional relationships with editors as well as acquire valuable information such as current topics and guidelines for the market.

Another way to get a closer look at publishers is through their print catalogues. Barbara Sueling explains in her book How to Write a Children's Book and Get it Published, "Write to publishers requesting their latest catalogues and ask to be put on their mailing lists.

Children's librarians" she added "often have a collection of catalogs on hand that you can look at."

Sueling further explained that trends like "which publishing house introduces new authors, which seeks the new and different and which is hanging on to the traditional fiction or non-fiction" are also determined by studying the catalogues (36).

In addition to publishers and editors, librarians, teachers and employees of children's bookstores are valuable sources of information.

Children's librarian Patty Carlton notes, "Writer's can often learn a lot just by browsing through children's book departments and noticing what books look tattered.

The tattered books," the St. Louis public librarian added, "are what kids are picking up and reading.

Bookstore employees," she added, "will also tell you what books sell first" (interview).

Expert information is also found in many resources such as the 1993 Children's Book Market published by the Institute of Children's Literature. This writer's handbook lists 381 publishers with details of their current interests, a submissions guide and specific advice on writing and successfully selling juvenile fiction, science fiction and nature books.

Similar resources are: The Literary Marketplace, Writer's Digest and Publishers Weekly found at reference (or related) desks of local libraries.

In summary, a writer's commitment depends on if he or she is willing to invest the time it takes to learn how to write well and thoroughly research the children's market before submitting manuscripts to publishers. The next step writer's must take is learning what their ambitions are.

Ambition

Perhaps one of the most plaguing arguments would-be writers moan about is time.

Their cry, "I don't have time to write!" echoes in the land of excusitus and their award winning ideas fizzle into thin air.

My retort is usually, "So who has enough time to do anything anymore? But wait a minute," I add. "What about the time you squeezed your aerobics and computer class into your impossible schedule?

And," I continue, "what about the time you got up fifteen minutes early each day just to enjoy a few quiet

moments before the kids turned the house into Grand Central Station?

The point is," I explain, "you made the time for something new. Writing is no different" I conclude, "writers don't find time - they make time to write!"

Regardless of writers' ambitions to author a few magazine articles or an award winning book, they can find fifteen minute "time pockets" in their schedules. day. Furthermore, it doesn't make any difference if that time pocket is midnight or four in the afternoon.

For example, author Amy Macdonald reports, "Sue Alexander 'made hers' at 4:30 A.M."

Amy Macdonald also explained she began writing with "a teenager in the house and two children in diapers" (250).

Another consideration is schedules. Regardless of how much time writers slate for their schedules, sticking to it is as important as the writing itself.

Author and instructor William Wagner explains, "I used to plan ahead of time, on a calendar, which days and hours I would write in a given week. Schedule your writing" adds Wagner, "as you would a doctor's appointment or sporting event.

If your writing is important to you" Wagner continued, "you'll set time aside for it" (The Institute Newsline 12).

Another important element contributing to a writer's success is the environment. In other words, is a writer's surroundings conducive to his or her productivity or frustrations?

The best spot for writing is generally inaccessible to everyone else. A place where there is room for a computer, files and books -- a place that can be left, and returned to with things left undisturbed.

In addition, if windows with panoramic views or a favorite music interrupts a writer's concentration, then the desk must be moved to a bare wall and the radio turned off.

Finally, every writer has different ambitions. Knowing what they are and understanding what works for other people may not necessarily work for each person. Meanwhile, perhaps Amy Macdonald's suggestion "Just Do It" will encourage writers as they begin thinking about their creativity - a vital link to their writing success.

Creativity

Imagine for a moment, you are a writer in the following scenario. It's Monday morning. The kids are at school. Your recorder is taking your messages. Grabbing another steamy cup of coffee, you plop yourself in front of your computer, determined that today you will start writing fifteen minutes each day without distractions.

The blue-grey blank screen stares back at you while

three minutes, then five and finally ten minutes roll by.

With your jaw set like flint, you feel your frustration mounting. Through pursed lips you suddenly grumble, "Ideas, why aren't they coming? I'm not a creative person anyway!" almost expecting your computer to answer you.

At one time or another, scores of writers have had similar experiences as previously described. Surprisingly, there is a vast amount of people who don't consider themselves creative.

Regardless of whether peers have crushed writers' creative sparks or they have by telling themselves they are not creative, there are are countless ways to rekindle their flame.

Personally, I believe everyone is born with perpetual amounts of creativity. Their potential just hasn't been unleashed. And people unleash their potential with exercise -- or brain workouts.

Nevertheless, as writers practice doing what they want to do, their creative juices will unlock their think tank.

And to help writers get started free-lance writer Leslie Jaffe suggests writers must, "Start thinking about topics that interest them, beginning with their own family members. Are they involved with projects that might furnish good article material? Do they ski, sail or backpack?" Jaffe continued (15).

Author and instructor Lois Atkinson adds that "Ideas are under one's nose." Atkinson explains, "Children's remarks, attitudes, problems and activities reveal their concerns in a specific way" and suggests writers should be alert observers and listeners and write down what kids are saying and want to know about (5). Author of more than fifty children's books, Lee Wyndham recommends writers must "explore the world around them. Around the corner, downtown or to the zoo, but do so with a mind open to ideas. A word, a name, a background, a picture, any and all of these" comments Wyndham, "can be the seeds that sprout into stories."

The accomplished writer and lecturer also suggests to use 3-by-5 file cards to jot down names for characters, pets, streets, towns, places and titles. Wyndam warns when writing down ideas for titles to "keep titles simple, writers will catch more readers that way." She further urges that they should never count on remembering ideas but write them down -- "they vanish all too quickly" (29, 30).

Another unique way writers can get ideas is to let their minds drift while falling asleep. Before their thoughts vanish into thin air, they can scratch them down in a notebook beside their bed.

Author and illustrator Barbara Seuling recalls how one author solved the idea problem but created another.

"I know someone who had great ideas falling asleep each

night but found she had lost them all by the time she awoke in the morning. She put a pencil by her side," Seuling related, "and in the dark, without disturbing her thoughts, scribbled a few words in tiny script on the wall over her bed as the ideas came to her. It was fiendish on her walls, and she may have had to paint more often than most people," added Seuling, "but she had the right idea about hanging on to those good ideas."

Seuling suggests that as writers cultivate their ideas they should also "let their notes run free and to use all forms of writing -- dialogue, prose, sayings, -- whatever helps writers remember" (36).

Starting collections is yet another way to stir your creative juices. History and biography author Nancy Whitelaw recommends to "collect quotes. I quote generals, parents, and participants" she says.

Collecting interesting magazine or newspaper articles also provides ideas. Award winning writer James Giblin relates, "Eve Bunting opens her morning paper each day with one eye cocked for a news story that might provide the basis for a novel.

When she read a piece about a center in Southern California devoted to the rehabilitation of injured birds," explained Giblin, "she immediately became intrigued.

Giblin further reiterated that after Bunting visited

the center she acted on her idea and wrote her prize winning novel One More Flight (37).

Giblin also commented that ideas often "come along when an author least expects it." Using his own experience as an example, Giblin related how, during a business flight to Oklahoma City, a unique opportunity occurred. "A tall rangy young man carrying what I thought was a musical instrument case took the seat next to me." Giblin explained that the man was a "chimney sweep, on his way to Oklahoma to conduct a seminar for local sweeps on how to clean chimneys more efficiently." After learning about the history of chimney sweeping, Giblin followed up on his idea and collaborated with the chimney sweep which resulted in a non-fiction book titled Chimney Sweeps: Yesterday and Today (16).

Regardless of how writers get their ideas, the following tips from author Lois Atkinson will keep their think tanks well stocked with possibilities.

- Start an idea file collecting everything from newspaper clippings, quotes and dialogue.
- Read children's books, magazines and publications to gain insight about current trends, appropriate markets, and language and length for various age levels.
- Visit places of interest to children such as manufacturing (toy, clothing, candy, dairy) plants,

parks, circuses, carnivals, recreational centers or special summer camps involving music, dance etc., historical sites, handicraft, hobby, sports, and pet shops, children's hospitals and local airports. Ask questions like: What's being produced and why? What ancient hobbies or new trends are there? Why is one hospital or program different from another? Where are families flying and why?

- Interview local celebrities, museum curators, young or old heroic people or pets, and artists such as musicians, dancers or painters. Find out how they became famous, who influenced them and why and or what children's books they read as a child and why (17 - 26).

As much as writers depend on their commitment, ambition and creativity for their success, their sensitivity to the market is just as important. In other words, writers must be aware that as technology advances, literature and readership changes.

Sensitivity

Because kids today have access to every kind of electronic gadget imagined, they are more sophisticated than they were a decade ago. In other words, technology has made kids more knowledgeable and curious about the world around them.

As a result, what kids are watching, hearing and listening to has dramatically affected market demands. And if writers intend to be successful, they must be sensitive to children's needs.

Consider that according to editor, author and instructor, Olga Litowinsky, "nearly five thousand books for children were published in 1990." The editor attributes this record publication to the fact that "more children are being born. Schools are crowded with mini-baby boomers," reports Litowinsky, "and many yuppies are teaching their kids to read in the crib." She further explains that "parents who care about their children's minds" are eliminating the junk from the TV, VCR and movies and "turning toward books" (19). Consequently, much of the media trash has indirectly fueled the explosion of the literary market.

With children's exposure to violence, drugs and sex, Litowinsy reports that "the challenge to today's writers is to reach these children, to inform without being dull or didactic. In many ways," continued Litowinsky, "they are not so different from the way we once were, but they lose their innocence at a younger age than we did" (21). Author and teacher Jane Yolen drives Litowinsky's innocence issue home with her comment, "It is not all Peter Rabbit" but that children's books "also embrace nitty-gritty, raw,

down-to-the bone realism."

She adds that many children need relevant books because they have to learn to cope in an adult world. Citing author Julius Lester as an example, Yolen reports that "he grew up in a ghetto where Winnie the Pooh or Cinderella" was non-existent and "had no meaning in the context of the...slum." Yolen added that books about drugs, death and divorce often help "solve some of the child's own problems" as well as lead other children "to an understanding of other worlds, other people, other problems, other styles" (91, 97). For example, Barbara Shook Hazen's Tight Times - a book about how one family deals with unemployment in the nineties, helps readers experience and better understand unemployment.

And associate editor Pamela Gerloff explains that the thousands of letters that kids send in to Highlights magazine reveals "their problems, concerns, hopes and fears. "Our letters," she added "show that children are especially interested in the day-to day-problems of their lives; in particular, learning how to relate to others, and understanding how the world works and where they fit in it..." (40). Consequently, in order for books to sell, they must cater to the modern child. And for writers to sell books, they must understand what modern kids are like.

Consider how modern technology has affected kids

via their television, computers and movie screens. Technology has taken them to the ocean floor, on archeological digs and in space, fueling their curiosity and demand for more.

For example, Pennsylvania teacher and librarian Sandy Meagher explains, "children are more specific in their needs. They want to know the world, and they want to know the people, the places, the things, everything about it" reported Meager. The librarian continued, "A third-grader came in to the library and said, "Mrs. Meagher, I need a book on coelacanths." She noted that kids from the first grade up want to know "how does it all work. They want understanding" (31).

Perhaps one of the best series to quench kid's thirst for understanding is Joanna Cole's - The Magic School Bus. Cole makes science come alive as her class travels in their school bus to the ocean floor, the waterworks, inside the earth, inside the human body and yes -- the magic school bus even gets lost in the solar system.

The New York Times Book Review praises Cole's 1992 series, "...the freshest, most amusing approach to science for children! Just as 'Seasame Street' revolutionized the teaching of letters and numbers...so the Magic School Bus books make science so much fun that the information is almost incidental."

Just as Cole's book illustrates an innovative approach

to what might have been a boring topic for kids, writers must also become sensitive to technology, global information systems and societal problems to achieve success.

But even after budding authors commit themselves to writing hours a day, rack their brains for ideas, and stay informed of what kids want to know - all of their efforts can go down the tubes if they don't understand how to market their work. Their expertise or lack thereof will show in their cover letters or manuscripts.

Expertise

Regardless of whether stories are put in proper format before or after they are written is irrelevant. The key is getting them in professional format before they are mailed to editors.

Furthermore, the majority of experts agree that each article or manuscript should be accompanied by a cover letter.

The way work is submitted reflects the writer's expertise. When they submit articles or manuscripts without typos and in professional form it suggests to editors that writers care about them and helps prevent their work from ending up in the slush pile.

The editors of the 1993 Children's Magazine Market recommend writers should "put their best foot forward" when preparing their manuscript and cover letter. "Double-spaced, typewritten originals or letter-quality

computer printouts are recommended on high-quality 8½ x 11 white bond paper. The first page of a manuscript," they report, should have the writer's "name, address, phone number and social security number in the upper left hand corner with the word count in the upper right hand corner. "Halfway down the page," the editors continue, "is the title with a byline below it. The manuscript text begins four lines below the byline." The editors recommend that writers should type their "last name, the page number, and a portion of the title in the upper left hand corner with the manuscript text beginning about four lines under the title (See Exhibit I) (26.)

In discussing their sample cover letter (see Exhibit II), the editors explain the importance of cover letters as brief introductions of a writer's work, indicating how or why it suits the editor's needs.

Other essential information included in cover letters is the manuscript title, word length, publishing credits and notation of enclosures such as the manuscript and a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Regardless of how great a story is, the phrase heard echoing through editorial halls is "Submit with professionalism!" Editor Litowinsky's example is why and how many manuscripts end up in slush piles. She explains, "The average publishing house receives three to five

thousand manuscripts a year with about 80 percent coming from people who have never written a children's book. Sometimes" she says, "the stationery has birds and flowers on it, and sometimes it has a letterhead with a name followed by the word 'writer'." The editor also added that people often send letters that read: "I've never written a children's book before"; or "Kindly note that this material is copyrighted. All of the above," adds Litowinsky, tips off whoever is opening the mail and that she's got another one from an amateur" (5).

Submitting with professionalism also entails proofreading, proofreading, proofreading! Computers or writers will ever catch all of the errors. But editors will.

Therefore, if possible, writers must enlist the aid of another proofreader. Then, when all corrections are made, they can reprint the necessary pages and again review for overall readability, page order and neatness, always keeping a copy for their records.

Finally, the purpose for addressing this issue is to emphasize that there are tried and true methods to writing for children in the nineties.

Even though market needs have changed, for the most part, the rules haven't.

The following editors' advice sums up how would-be authors can begin scooping the kid's market. Helen Chetin,

editor of New Seed Press warns, "Do not send inappropriate manuscripts to us - or any publisher for that matter. Writers must think before dropping a manuscript in the mailbox." Grace Allred, editor of Broadman Publishing advises, "Write in clear, concise, informal English and reflect an awareness of the developmental stage of the intended reader." And Nina Kooji, editor of Pelican Publishing points to the importance of market awareness. "We turn down thousands of adequate proposals every year just because they have no clear "hooks" or well defined audiences. Present a strong case as to why we should take the book and who would buy it" (1993 Children's Book Market 22).

In addition to sending manuscripts appropriate for the publisher; writing in clear, concise and informal English and completing market research, budding writers will increase their chances of success if they analyze the work of current and previous accomplished authors and editors in order to understand how their solutions met market needs.

Toward that end, the Review of Literature Chapter discusses the work of various authors whose accounts explore the history of literature of the last forty years and the market trends.

Chapter three discusses the work of the most important children's authors and editors from the Review of Literature

The Results Chapter presents my personal contributions to children's literature as examples of writing including discussion of how they were developed and their purposes served.

And finally, the Discussion Chapter introduces an expert in children's literature to evaluate and comment on the Results chapter.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Because of the many vast cultural environmental and social changes that children experience, juvenile authors and editors must also adapt to what their young audience wants to learn about. Under analysis is the following authors' work reflecting the history of children's literature during the last five decades, changes in biographical, religious, science, and social literature and writing tips from some of the most important editors in children's literature.

- **Children and Books, Zena Zutherland and May Hill Arbuthnot, 1991**
- **Essentials of Children's Literature, Carol Lynch Brown and Carl M. Tomlinson, 1992**
- **A History of Children's Reading and Literature, Alec Ellis, 1968**
- **"The Modern Biography; A Study in Three Dimensions" James Cross Giblin for Children's Writer, 1993**
- **"Poppa, Don't Preach" Michelle Bearden, Publisher's Weekly, 1993**

- **"So You Want to Write a Children's Science Book?" Marc Gave, 1993 Children's Book Market, 1992**

- **"Through Grandpa's Eyes - Kids' books spiff up old views of older people," Melinda Beck for Newsweek, 1992**

- **"Where Real Life Sells," Louanne Lang for Children's Writer, 1993**

- **"Getting Kids to Talk: Conducting Interviews with Children" Janet Thomas for The Institute Newsline, 1991**

- **"Beating the Odds; Magazine Editors Speak to Today's Writers," Karen O'Connor for the 1992 Children's Magazine Market, 1991**

Sutherland and Arbuthnot (Children and Books)

An annual publication since 1947, Children and Books 700 plus pages is divided into four distinct comprehensive parts: "Knowing Children and Books;" "Exploring the Types of Literature;" "Bringing Children and Books Together;" and "Areas and Issues-Children and Books."

This culminating project focuses on part one (Knowing Children and Books), chapter three, "The History of Children's Books" because when writers understand where children's literature has evolved from, they are more likely to better understand how to write for the present.

Authors Sutherland and Arbuthnot report that since their first publication of Children and Books the recognition of children's literature is greater and more books are being published than ever before. This current popularity, they suggest is not without its own unique set of problems. The authors discuss how since the advent of television the media has increasingly dominated children's lives. Books must be attractive and up-to-date enough to compete with television for children's time. Other concerns of contemporary children's publishers that they discuss include "financing, censorship and appropriate materials for reading levels, sex roles and children's access to these materials" (5).

Sutherland and Arbuthnot suggest that while some of the reflections of our changing times have stimulated debate (awareness of crime, violence and other societal elements), children's literature has greatly improved in the last several decades (8). They support this conclusion by pointing out:

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Sutherland and Arbuthnot suggest that while some of the reflections of our changing times have stimulated debate about a declining trend in areas of our culture (awareness of crime, violence and other societal elements), children's literature has greatly improved in the last several decades (8). They support this conclusion by pointing out:

> books cover more subjects in which children have an interest; informational books are more accurate and candid; art in books today includes every medium and style; death is treated with frankness; disabilities are factually and descriptively addressed from such novels as Jan Sleipian's The Alfred Summer and Margot Marek's Different Not Dumb; there are more women's biographies reflecting their careers realistically paralleling today's society; books about child abuse and children's rights are being published; since the 1960s a spate of long overdue books that faced the problems of black people are being produced by black authors and illustrators; books about minority groups are published - where today the demand still exceeds the supply; and nonfiction subjects (of formerly adult interest) involving pollution, international relations, AIDS, and controversy over nuclear power plants are now published for children (8, 13).

Sutherland and Arbuthnot further drive their conclusions home by addressing the changing view of children in illustration. They explain how the 1950s ushered in big business for children's books and audiences demanded books that entertained and taught simultaneously. In Hello Mrs. Piggle Wiggle (1957), for instance, mischief is the focus and the source of the entertaining humor that marks the whole series (see exhibit III). The 1970s introduced a societal awakening regarding children's problems and negative elements of their lives. Children were no longer perceived as "cheerful products of a righteous world" as in Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day (1972) (see exhibit III) (11). They further add

that the importance of the father--rather than the child's reliance on the mother--became more recognized in the 1970s as in Ramona and Her Father (1977) (see exhibit III). According to the authors, the 1980s ushered in social concerns like nuclear holocaust as depicted in Hiroshima No Pika (1980) (exhibit III), or new lifestyle concepts as in Ten, Nine, Eight (1983) where a father assumes the caregivers role (see exhibit IV). Similarly, problems of immigrant families acclimating to new countries are depicted in I Hate English (1989) where a young girl overcomes her fear of learning a new language (see exhibit IV) (12).

Just as each decade introduced new interests and concerns about children and books, Sutherland and Arbuthnot note that children's books are consistently shaped by the following elements: "what we know about children and their needs and expectations; economic publishing realities; and by the culture (consciously or unconsciously) in which we all live" (14).

Relating to the economic factors that all publishers must face, they explain that children's book editors know that their books must sell. When books don't sell, publication halts resulting in takeovers of children's book departments. They add that even though there has been an increase in bookstore sales and the establishment of

children's bookstores, "federal subsidies for the purchase of books evaporated in the 1970s and 1980's." As a result, publishers stopped carrying old titles and many favorites are no longer available (14).

Another economic factor publishers must consider is production costs. The authors note that as production costs rise, book prices also increase. As a result publishers are reluctant to risk producing books without the potential for high profits (14).

While economic pressure affects publishing, significantly, Sutherland and Arbuthnot assert that "perhaps above all, children's books are affected by society's concept of the roles of children." In other words, what and how children should learn are shaped by societal standards and philosophies. For example, during the colonial era, the authors report, "the sternly pietistic attitude of the culture and its belief that human beings trembled at the brink of corruption and damnation was forcefully conveyed" in children's written material. Furthermore, children's books during the Victorian period, mirrored the era's "ornate language patterns, the sanctity of the home and the near sanctity of the parent," as well as the emphasis of

children's manners and morals (15).

Just as in the past, contemporary attitudes and values exhort a tremendous impact on the content of children's literature. The last few decades of the twentieth century have been underscored by equality demands as in the civil rights movement involving women, homosexuals, senior citizens, ethnic minorities and the disabled. The Vietnam War protest and "televised Watergate and Iran-Contra hearings have given a new tone to our political dialogue as well as the divorce, illegitimacy and drug addiction rates" (16).

Sutherland and Arbuthnot state that even though some children are not directly affected by every issue, most kids know about them. As a result, during the late 1960s, "one taboo after another was broken" in the subjects explored in children's literature (16).

As a result of Sutherland and Arbuthnot's exploration of "The History of Children's Books" writers are better equipped to write articles and books kids are interested in. In other words, their comprehension of prior publishing demands in comparison to current publishing demands becomes clearer. Therefore, writers are able to pinpoint specific issues, topics and trends relative to children's current interests.

Carol Lynch Brown and Carl M. Tomlinson

(Essentials of Children's Literature)

Carol Lynch Brown and Carl M. Tomlinson provide the reader with an extensive and comprehensive textbook on children's literature. This culminating project focuses on their discussion of:

- **Early Books and Trends in Historical Fiction**
- **Historical Overview of Realistic Fiction**
- **Historical Overview of Nonfiction**
- **Historical Overview of Modern Fantasy**
- **Historical Overview of Multicultural Literature**

Early Books and Trends in Historical Fiction

According to Brown and Tomlinson, after World War II well developed characters portrayed in realistic events flourished, which were a far cry from "idealized, legends and heroic characters" of the 1800s (140). From English and American literature such works as The Door in the Wall by Marguerite deAngeli (1949), The Buffalo Knife by William O. Steele (1952), Clyde Robert Bulla's The Sword in the Tree (1956) and Rosemary Sutcliff's The Lantern Bearer's (1959) graced schools and libraries everywhere.

One of the contributing factors to the establishment of historical fiction of the 1960s was the institution of

the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award in 1954. Awarded first to Laura Ingalls Wilder (an author of historical fiction) for her Little House Series, this "Hall of Fame" award continues to honor authors and illustrators making substantial contributions to children's historical fiction (141).

Historical Overview of Realistic Fiction

A far cry from the didactic stories of the 1700 and 1800s, "regional stories and stories about children of minority groups began appearing more frequently in the 1940s," report Brown and Tomlinson. However, books like Bright April by Marguerite De Angeli (1946) and other works written by minorities did not begin to acquire national recognition until the 1960s and 1970s, the authors add. Brown and Tomlinson assert that Louise Fitzhugh's Harriet the Spy (1964) introduced a new era in realistic fiction portraying life as more graphic and truthful which is prevalent today. Examples of this new realism's subject matter might be topics about death, divorce and handicaps. Brown and Tomlinson further explain that families began to be depicted as less than perfect and report that "this newer, franker brand of realism, sometimes referred to as the new realism, changed the world" of children's literature (125 - 127).

Historical Overview of Nonfiction

Brown and Tomlinson conclude that the growth of United States and Canadian public school and library systems, coupled with the curricular demand of nonfiction trade books during the second half of the twentieth century, promoted the writing of the most significant nonfiction work. Fueling the demand of nonfiction genres was the American commitment to win the space and technology race during the late 50s. Because federal funds poured into science education publishers flooded the market with "improved science trade books on every conceivable topic through most of the 1960s" add Brown and Tomlinson (157). For the first time, many of the improved books "delivered science concepts to preschool and elementary children using numerous, large, high quality illustrations and less text" (158). This trend of quality illustrations and less text has evolved into the photo essay, a popular format among children accustomed to viewing television, the authors report.

The new energy poured into the nonfiction children's market resulted in a major surge of quality nonfiction works. "The inaccuracies of fictionalizing, dullness of lengthy and stiff or overly sentimental prose, and the incidental nature of infrequent and colorless illustrations" common during the

1950s were no longer permitted, write Brown and Tomlinson Furthermore, they add, "by the mid 1960s Russell Freedman pointed out in his 1988 Newbery Award Speech, 'the hero worship of the past has given way to a more realistic approach, which recognizes the warts and weakness that humanize the great'." As the nineties began, Brown and Tomlinson observe that the hot topic among the young was nonfiction and was promoted by parents and librarians supplying their kids with the best learning materials available.

Historical Overview of Modern Fantasy

Modern fantasy authors are challenged with "persuading readers to open themselves up to believing what is real, strange, whimsical or magical with internal logic and consistency," observe Brown and Tomlinson. A successful work in this field provokes the child reading it to defer disbelief and consider the impossible as real (105). Such works can have long periods of popularity like Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking (1945). The fantasy evolves around "Pippi, a lively rambunctious, and very strong heroine who throws caution to the wind and lives an independent life of escapes envied by children the world over" explain Brown and Tomlinson (106).

United States authors also produced such outstanding

fantasy works as E.B. White's Charlotte's Web (1952) and A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle (1962). Considered the most recent fantasy development, science fiction was recognized as a "legitimate literary form" around the late 1920s. Then in 1947, Robert Heinlein's Rocket Ship Galileo, (a tale of three teenagers' journey to the moon on an atomic-powered rocket ship") was published. Brown and Tomlinson conclude that because of its great success it paved the way in Great Britain and other English speaking countries for continued success of the genre (107).

Historical Overview of Multicultural Fiction

During the 1940s and 1950s, minorities still appeared in children's books as "crudely stereotyped characters, objects of ridicule, or shadowy secondary characters," contend Brown and Tomlinson. Then in 1949, Arne Bontemps' Story of a Negro, marked a turning point in the treatment of minorities in children's literature. The African-American author and Newbery Honor Awardee changed the stigma because of his work and because he was the first minority member to receive the Newbery. Following the turning point in the treatment of minorities in children's literature, Brown and Tomlinson observe that a "more sympathetic attitude toward American minorities in literature was evidenced in Elizabeth Yates'

Fortune, Free Man (1950) and Joseph Krumgold's And Now Miguel (1953)" and many other works since (176).

With the minority barrier in children's literature broken in the 1950s, the 1960s paved the way for even more opportunities for authors (minority and majority) to write books with "minority protagonists," Brown and Tomlinson report. The spirit of the Civil Rights movement "focused attention on the social inequities and racial injustices prevailing in the United States" (176). Jack Ezra Keats' The Snowy Day (1962) was one of the first landmark publications of multicultural publishing. The other publication, note Brown and Tomilson, was Nancy Larrics' "powerful article - 'The All-White World of Children's Books' appearing in the September 11, 1965 issue of Saturday Review." Larric's historical analysis demonstrated that the "African American was either omitted or scarcely mentioned in nearly all U.S. children's books" up to that time (63). Following Larric's critique, "book publishers, the education and public library system were called upon to fill this void," write Brown and Tomlinson (176).

The authors report how the "social consciousness of the 1960s, the Council on Interracial Books, was founded and helped to promote young, African-American Authors" (176). Furthermore, the Coretta Scott King Award was

established in 1969 and several books with minority themes such as Sounder by William H. Armstrong (1970) and Paula Fox's The Slave Dancer (1974) won Newbery awards. After the succession of minority authors' recognition for their outstanding work, "the prevailing opinion among U.S. children's book publishers was that minority members were the ones most able to write authoritatively about the minority experience" (177).

Even though the "politically conservative" 1980s did not see a wave of multicultural literature in the U.S., the authors report that the climate improved by the end of the decade. They add that because of the founding and sole dedication of various small presses to this genre a renewed interest in multicultural literature is building (177).

Brown and Tomlinson's overview of the various categories of children's literature offers writers, teachers and students historical overviews pinpointing past and current genre trends. When writers explore such works as Brown and Tomlinson's, they often find story ideas relative to current and future market needs. Because, Essentials of Children's Literaure describes the categories and historical overviews of the various genres and recommends literary works relative to each genre, its information is invaluable to every would-be writer.

Alex Ellis (A History of Children's Reading and Literature)

Published in 1968 in London, Alec Ellis describes many of the factors contributing or harmful to the growth of literacy in Britain related to children's reading and literature.

In his chapter "A Second Golden Age in Children's Literature," (1945-1965) Ellis focuses on the trends occurring in children's literature during the post-war era in Britain.

He notes that because of the paper shortage after the war, the annual publication of children's books did not rapidly increase until the 1950s, and 1960s, with annual publications reaching 2,500 by 1965. Besides the paper shortage, Ellis reports "the advent of television after 1945 exercised an influence over the reading of children, resulting in an initial reduction in reading" (192). Sometime after, however, Ellis observed that television often urged children to read because children were often introduced to books through this medium (193).

After World War II, Ellis notes that in society generally a "greater degree of communication between countries was emphasized." As a result, the author reports that the number of translations (generally

focusing on family and adventure stories) rose from 18 in 1950 to a record 91 in 1961. Furthermore, he observes that authors from the United States continued to influence British children. He cites Laura Ingalls Wilder for her family stories, Harold Keith for his historicals, and geographical and animal stories by Meindert Dejong and Nicholas Kalashnikoff (198).

Ellis writes that even though well written books were more available than in previous decades, this didn't mean they were read by a vast amount of British children. He cites that the Westfield Training College survey in 1950 revealed that 'many of the 15 to 18 year old members of our society are little more than barely literate...'. Perhaps one of the reasons was that "there was a complete absence of authors who began to write (for adolescents) after 1945" (199). As a result, adolescents stated their interest in adult authors like Agatha Christie and C. S. Forester because there were so few who wrote for the teenage group. Ellis notes that many experts in the 1960s observed a trend in teenagers reading adult books at an earlier age than before. During this period, "it was" said Ellis, "almost as if writers were inhibited by teenage problems" (200).

Ellis identifies another trend during the 1960s. The increase of information periodicals for young people, such works as Purnells Knowledge 1961, Sampson Low's Understanding Science and Look and Learn 1962, and Discovering Art 1964 helped fulfill the demand for nonfiction by schools and public libraries (202).

As much as the the information periodicals were welcomed, American horror comics like Tales from the Crypt, and Ghost Gallery, readily available as children literature in the United States, were banned by the Harmful Publications Act in 1954 (203).

In sum, as improved as the British publishing industry became throughout the 60s, Ellis writes that "an adequate availability of books for all ages, interests and intelligences has not yet been achieved. Once more," he continues, "there is an urgent need for closer co-operation between all who are concerned with the production and use of children's books" where the children's viewpoint is directly represented rather than what adults think children should read (218).

Even though Ellis's commentary discusses children's literature in Britain, it is important for United States writers to note that American authors like Laura Ingalls Wilder and Harold Keith influenced British children and paved the way for other writers to follow suit. Even

more important is that global information systems of the 80s and 90s have promoted a desire for children to learn about people from other countries. Therefore, American authors have greater opportunities than before, to write for other markets besides their own.

James Cross Giblin ("The Modern Biography; A Study in Three Dimensions")

Contributing Editor at Clarion Books, James Cross Giblin introduces his modern biographical study in three dimensions, as "old standards, new methods and a better chance."

Giblin's "old standards" refer to biographical works published in the 1950s and before, which "usually emphasized the youth of their subjects, were filled with unsubstantiated passages of dialogue, and avoided painful aspects of the lives depicted." Giblin cites D'Aulaires' picture book biography of George Washington as an example. He explains that it misrepresented the facts that Washington was a slaveowner. He adds that many heroes and heroines rarely passed adolescence in many of the "Childhoods of Famous Americans" biographical

series and that what was true or false dialogue in the text was difficult to discern (3).

The "new methods" Giblin describes are a far cry from the expectations of the 1950s. He explains that school and public librarians expect to have quotations documented, in footnotes or in a list of sources. He adds that "fictionalized dialogue" is no longer accepted and that librarians expect "biographies for all age groups to be well-designed and illustrated" (3).

Giblin further reiterates that authors of juvenile biographies acquiring book contracts have greater chances of success if they avoid inventing dialogues. He also suggests that authors should "use extracts from letters, speeches, recollections and other documents along with noting where each quotation was found." In sum, Giblin's primary message to juvenile biographical authors is to bury "old standards" and use the "new methods" (3).

Giblin's article is especially important for authors thinking about or currently writing juvenile biographies for several reasons. First, what the market defines as an acceptable biography has totally changed from what was printed several decades ago. In other words, editors almost always demand character dialogue taken from actual quotes. Second, any sources used must be

documented. Overall Giblin's message to juvenile authors is research current biographical demands and write accordingly.

Michelle Bearden ("Poppa, Don't Preach!")

A frequent religious writer for Publisher's Weekly, Michelle Bearden cautions authors that religious fiction for young adults must be realistic, topical and if possible an ongoing series: This advice suggests that the genre has come a long way from preachy, didactic works of the 1700 and 1800s. She explains that the rule of thumb is "don't preach" (52).

Bearden also reports that according to Ross Zettersten, executive vice-president of Colorado based Focus on the Family, "entertainment is first, and teaching values is second." The vice-president of the nonprofit publisher adds, "You've got to make the topic relevant and simple resolutions to complicated problems must be avoided." Bearden notes Zettersten's comment that kids of the nineties realize there are no easy answers to tough problems (52).

Bearden's other observations are that publishers are offering Christian alternatives to the current secular smashes. For example, she notes author Judy Baer's

Cedar River Daydreams as an alternative to the secular marketplace's Sweet Valley High (Bantam), and that it "combines contemporary themes with a moral perspective." Bearden's also says the 21 book series success speaks for itself with sales nearing one-million (52).

Another issue Bearden notes is that social problems are being addressed--but with a humorous spin. A good example cited by Bearden is Bill Myers's series about "Wally, a 14-year old 'dorkoid' who invents wild stories on his computer and finds himself involved in wild calamities with his two sidekicks, a heavy set boy called Opera and a Hispanic girl named Wall Street" (53).

Perhaps the most surprising twist that Bearden notes is that "the 36 titles in Paul Hutchens' Sugar Creek Gang series written in the 1940s and 50s have recently sold 2.5 million copies with no sign of slowing down." She explains that the series is "based on the writer's growing-up experiences in central Indiana..., teaching strong morals and values." Bearden comments that Greg Thornton's explanation might offer some merit. The vice-president and executive director at Moody Publishing suggests, "maybe kids like to escape to a time when life was simpler and less dangerous" (54).

The popularity of religious fiction offers children's writers a prime opportunity for an open marketplace.

However, Bearden cautions about refraining from preachy tones and keeping entertainment as the writer's focus are imperative for any writer of juvenile religious fiction to remember.

Marc Gave ("So You Want to Write A Children's Science Book?")

Publisher of Scientific American Books, Marc Gave offers advice relative to the current nonfiction trends of the 1990s, such as what kids can do to save the planet, or how teens "can build lasers in their basements" (13).

Gave observes that librarians, teachers and salespeople say there is definitely a need for more science books that relate to everyday life. "Stats show," adds Gave, "there were 45 million kids between the ages of five and seventeen in the US in 1990" and that by 1995 the number will reach 48 million. So what do the numbers mean? Gave answers, "15,000 public libraries , and almost 100,000 elementary and secondary schools" that have libraries or "media centers" serve these children. He continues "23,000 bookstores, including almost 400 children's only stores with a growing number of museum stores" also serve kids. In essence, Gave's message is that as the

numbers continue to rise, the market demands will increase giving writers many more opportunities to write science books (14).

Gave also discusses what's in and out for the 1990s. He cites that the Scientific American Books' survey revealed that hot topics among "elementary and middle schoolers are animals, with snakes and sharks balancing out pet care; dinosaurs and fossils; space; experiments, activities and projects for school science fairs; computer technology" and others. He adds that librarians want more of biographies of current scientists and current works involving activities that kids can understand and do. (17).

On the other hand, Gave notes that science book buyers deplore "clones of superficial approaches to a subject, biographies with fictional dialogue, anything that reads like a textbook and experiments that are too hard for their intended audience" (18).

In the past, science for many kids was not fun. However, with the onslaught of technology and innovative teaching methods, children today have better opportunities to become engagingly involved with science topics like saving the earth or science experimentation with lasers. Science writers have a responsibility to adhere to market demands and in order to help them, and Gave's article "So

You Want to Write a Children's Science Book" offers useful information and tips to help any would-be author break into the field.

Melinda Beck ("Through Grandpa's Eyes")

Writer Melinda Beck discusses where the "awful stereotypes of old people come from" and what is occurring in children's literature to "spiff up old views of older people" in the 1990s.

First, Beck says that the stereotypes have been right under our noses since we were kids. "Just pick up a collection of children's fairy tales," she suggests. "There's the old witch who tries to bake and eat Hansel and Gretel and the hag who lures Sleeping Beauty to the poisoned spindle." Beck concedes there are a few exceptions like the kind grandfather in Heidi but that "in the vast majority of classics, old equals ugly and evil" (54).

These old patterns, however are dying. Beck notes that older people are being depicted in more appealing ways. She quotes poet and gerontologist Beclee Newcomer Wilson: "New images of aging are being built in children's literature!" Wilson further mentions that many of the new books "span cultures and generations" and that "warm, approachable"

methods are being used to discuss death and disability. (54).

Regarding the disappearing stereotypes of past decades, Nancy Carlson's A Visit to Grandma's, depicts Grandma living in her new Florida condo, preparing for Thanksgiving after her aerobics class and driving in her red sports car to buy holiday pies. Another example is Amy Hest's The Midnight Eaters where "a girl and her grandmother share a bunk bed, a sleepless night, and raid the kitchen for ice cream, flouting the doctor's advice," reports Beck. Still another example of the new image of the elderly has a cross-cultural spin. Patricia Polacco's Mrs. Katz and Tush portrays a black boy," says Beck, "giving a scrawny kitten to a lonely widow." Beck adds that both characters "discover blacks and Jews have much in common" (54).

Beck sums up by saying, "there is more love and respect" passed across cultures and down through generations than ever before in children's literature - "a vast improvement since Hansel and Gretel" (54).

Beck's commentary about the new image of older people is important because it opens up a fresh new market for children's writers. Not only can crusty stereotypes of the

elderly be broken, but writers have prime opportunity to promote love and respect among generations and cultures.

Louanne Lang ("Where Real Life Sells")

Writer Louanne Lang begins her discussion of special interest works by saying that "experience sells, especially to special interest publications." For example, what are simpler ways to travel with a disabled daughter or how do you get to sleep with newborn twins? She adds that "blind students are reading about the professional successes of other blind people and southpaws are discovering what makes them different. America's subcultures," she notes, consist of individuals with particular, common needs and problems" (1).

Lang supports her discussion by citing the following statistics. She notes, "The 1990 census numbers four million stepchildren in the U.S. and that by the year 2000 half of America's population will be involved in a stepfamily." Lang mentions other topics added to the special interest group, are "adoptive families, the non-availability of health insurance for non-biological children, and corporate policies allowing companies to fire parents" when

they are in another country adopting a child (6).

Since special interest groups are being addressed more than ever before, Lang concludes by saying, "Those workable, humorous solutions writers find to big and little real-life problems have an eager audience of editors and readers" (1).

Janet Thomas ("Getting Kids to Talk: Conducting Interviews with Children")

Sooner or later all juvenile writers get an opportunity to interview children. Whether they are trying to acquire printable quotes or get a child to describe an event, editor Janet Thomas offers sound advice on how to get children to talk with enough detail and depth for a story.

Thomas suggests first that when writers arrange to interview the child they should select a quiet place without distractions such as other kids or parents. Even though parents are often delighted that writers are interested in their children, they typically dominate the conversation instead of letting their child talk, reports Thomas. She adds that "parents can stay within eyesight of the child, but they should be far enough away to be uninvolved in the conversation" (9).

Thomas recommends that when interviewing children writers need to be prepared with concrete open-ended questions. In other words, getting children to talk about something in detail rather than answering yes or no is a writer's main objective. In addition, when writers push for detail, Thomas writes, "a child's unique and sometimes outrageous way of looking at things makes great quotes" (12).

In sum, the Associate Editor of New Era magazine says that interviewing children is rewarding and often surprising because "children are remarkably patient and willing to talk at length to someone they sense is interested in them" (12).

Thomas's article about conducting interviews with children is important because every juvenile writer's source is kids. Therefore, if writers don't know how to get children to talk to them they are not as likely to make children's literature come alive.

Karen O'Connor ("Beating the Odds: Magazine Editors Speak to Today's Writers")

Author of over 30 books for young people, and recognized speaker, instructor and seminar leader in the writing field, Karen O'Connor reports that writing

effectively doesn't mean you'll win a byline. She adds, that managing editor, Dr. Jennifer Stevenson (Highlights for Children) says, "We are looking for good stories and articles that demonstrate worthy ways of living--with a twist or angle in order to engage the reader" (7).

O'Connor's observations also include various comments from religious editors. She quotes Associate Editor Susan Thompson (Wee Wisdom): "We promote spiritual values, not doctrine" (7). O'Connor also writes that issues like homelessness and the environment are in great demand and adds that editors often reflect popular social and educational issues in their publications. For example, "Scholastic Choices' editor Glenn," says O'Connor, "seeks writers who give encouragement" while grappling tough topics like "teen alcoholism, pregnancy and fractured families" (9).

In sum, O'Connor reports that the "straight scoop" from the editor's desk is that writers must "consider a magazine's purpose and philosophy, note how readership affects style and content, examine editorial interests and trends, study layout and design and tailor their submissions" in order to be competitive in the 90s (10). When children's writers understand O'Connor's

competitive components, chances are they will land a contract sooner than expected.

Consider for a moment what is currently demanded in children's literature from this Review of Literature Chapter. Historical fiction involving authentic events, realistic fiction about death, divorce and handicaps, quality nonfiction recognizing the human weakness, yet emphasizing greatness, or multicultural or religious works. Regardless of the topic, editors and authors offer specific advice for today's writer's about increasing their chances of publication. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all would-be children's authors, as well as in their self-interest, to learn, understand and practice what the veterans of the children's market suggest.

SELECTIVE REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH

Perhaps the most important research discussed in the previous chapter is Zena Sutherland and May Hill Arbuthnot's work--**Children and Books**, **A History of Children's Reading and Literature** by Alec Ellis following with Karen O'Connor's article, **"Beating the Odds: Magazine Editors Speak to Today's Writers."**

Children and Books is an extensive reference work necessary for any would-be writer, educator, editor and parent who wants to learn about children and books. It explores children's literature, categorizing it into component types. It discusses methods to bring children's concerns and books together.

Carol Lynch Brown's and Carl M. Tomilinson's Essentials of Children's Literature is a straightforward and more focused text, also involving many categories of children's literature. It is a must for people desiring a quick study in children's literature.

After learning almost everything writers want to know about kids and their literature from the previous works, Karen O'Connor's article "Beating the Odds: Magazine Editors Speak to Today's Writers," offers a compilation of tips from some of the most important children's editors today about breaking into children's literature.
In other words, the article offers common sense advice

relative to current trends, needs and demands of children's publications in the 90s.

First, **Children and Books**. Sutherland and Arbuthnot make a definitive statement about what children's literature really is. After analyzing their chapter involving the history of children's books and combing through the balance of their 743 pages, I found myself drawn back to the beginning where they discuss the definition of children's literature. Perhaps they said it best by concluding, "Is there a way to define children's literature other than specifying what it is not? There are no absolute definitions" they add, "and many differences of opinion are common among the experts." However, the authors do define children's literature as "consisting of books that are read and enjoyed while meeting high literary and artistic standards" (5).

Another point driven home by Sutherland and Arbuthnot is that children's literature "(those books specifically written for children) has had a comparatively short history." They add that "few children of the seventeenth or eighteenth century could read" and those that did read adult classics like Aesop's Fables, Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels (5-6). Children's literature then, has come a long way, thanks to librarians, publishers, writers, educators and concerned citizens. The results are that

children's literature, perhaps readers can obtain a a clearer understanding of where children's literature has been and better sense where it's going.

Just as Sutherland and Arbuthnot discussed the history of children's literature, Carol Lynch Brown and Carl M. Tomilson followed suit in **Essentials of Literature**. Brown and Tomlinson's work provides a stronger historical focus on a variety of fields of children's literature rather than a comprehensive overview as in Children and Books.

Both works assert the importance of understanding the definition of children's literature. Brown and Tomlinson declare that "children's literature is good-quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages" (1). They add that there are several key concepts that assist people to "find their way around the over 50,000 children's current titles and the 4,000 or more new titles being published annually in the United States (2).

Perhaps two of the most important concepts that Brown and Tomlinson discuss are the content of children's books and their quality. For example, they state that "children's books are about the good and bad experiences of childhood." Regardless, if these experiences are "in the past, present

or future, they should be relevant to the child of today." Examples of current relevancies are "birthday parties, losing a first tooth, anticipating adulthood, adventurous risks and thrills, a new pet, sibling rivalries and family problems representative of children's current experiences." On the other hand, Brown and Tomlinson report that "children's books also include amazingly diverse topics" void of childhood, like dinosaurs, Egyptians mummies or fighter planes, that may be interesting to children (2). The authors add that the way content is treated often defines children's books. Brown and Tomlinson illustrate the difference between the way an adult treatment might differ from children's by saying, "stories showing children as victims of natural disasters should emphasize the hope for a better future rather than the despair of the moment" (2).

Carrying as much weight as content is the quality in books, which has an excellent to poor range. The authors note that "quality in writing involves originality, importance of ideas, imaginative use of language and beauty of literary and artistic style, enabling a work to remain fresh and meaningful" for many years. They add that even though "quality is never easy to define," books possessing the previous quality components possess "permanent value." However, the authors are not disputing that "books of good-but-not-great quality have no

value." They explain that kids have liked "fast-moving, adventure-filled stories from the 'penny-dreadfuls' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the serial adventures like the Babysitters Club of the twentieth century. The worth of such books, according to Brown and Tomlinson is to get readers to read more. The authors warn, however, that "many of the current children's books are nothing more than ads for television cartoon characters, selling clothing, candy or toys and represent the low end of the quality spectrum" (3).

Just as Brown and Tomlinson point to the importance of content and quality in children's literature they also discuss the personal value of literature to children. Furthermore, Sutherland and Arbuthnot note that a majority of children read for pleasure, Brown and Tomilson make the same point: "children read for enjoyment, good books open the doors of our imaginations, which in itself is valuable." They also detail other valuable results "of children interacting with literature." For example, they explain that when readers are taken to "places and times they could never visit," it is a positive mental exercise for them, because they are seeing conditions from perspectives other than their own. The result is that children often gain a capacity to appreciate others. The authors cite another example of the value of literature

as children's ability to know the literary and artistic styles of authors and illustrators. And "literary awareness" begins by recognizing the different styles of writers and illustrators. The authors note that "good teachers and librarians understand that the more children read and the greater variety of literature they read, the more discerning readers they become" (4).

Brown and Tomlinson conclude that when "children know about their world, the more they discover about themselves and what they stand for" (4).

The more adults understand what kids and their literature is all about, the better chance they have in knowing how to successfully apply their knowledge towards publication purposes. Graduate and instructor of the Institute for Children's Literature, Karen O'Connor has proven that putting into practice what editors preach works. Beginning by writing for YM, Seventeen, Wee Wisdom, and The Friend, Ms. O'Connor has published over 30 books for children. Her article, **Beating the Odds: Magazine Editors Speak to Today's Writers,"** is valuable because children's writers can save themselves many hours at the computer if they first understand what editors are demanding. On the other hand, when writer's don't take the time to find out editor's expectations they waste their own time, the editor's time and their work ends up in the

slush pile. Therefore, when budding children's writers read the suggestions from many of the leading editors O'Connor discusses, they are more likely to realize success.

O'Connor understands that competition is stiff and gives would-be authors solid advice about increasing their chances for breaking into children's literature. Based on expert advice from editors-in-chief from the largest children's and young adult publications, O'Connor offers five steps writers can implement for publication purposes.

Just as writers must consider their purpose for writing a book or article, O'Connor reports that a "potential contributor should also consider a magazine's purpose." However, she points out that according to editor-in-chief of Cricket and Ladybug, "kids want the best in poetry, fiction and fantasy." Regardless of these children's magazine's mission of fostering spiritual, ethical or moral values, O'Connor says the publication's "tone of the writing reflected in the choice of language" also reflects its purpose (7).

The second step O'Connor recommends for publication success is learning how readership affects style or knowing that "editors want writers who understand the readers' point of view." O'Connor quotes editor of

3-2-1 Contact, Jonathon Rosenbloom, on this subject: "Writers should ask this questions: 'What can I offer Contact and its readers that will fit in terms of style and content?'" Rosenbloom also suggests that "interviews and news" rather than "research reports" will get writers in their door. In other words, he says that "an interview with the elephant keeper of a major zoo" will more than likely catch our attention as long as it has "some odd facts that would appeal to his readers" (8).

According to O'Connor, the third positioning step is reviewing editorial interests. She adds that many of the editorial needs are perpetual, whereas others change every year, season or month. Furthermore, O'Connor notes that "many publications specialize" and it is up to the writer to find out what the specialty is. For example, "Primary Treasure prefers religious fiction: Ranger Rick wants nonfiction about nature and the environment and Scholastic Choices publishes timely articles fostering personal development." Regardless of when the trends occur or disappear, warns O'Conner, "when writers are aware of timely topics and know which editors want them," their chances of getting published increases (7-8).

Studying a magazine's layout and design is another step O'Conner suggests as a must for writers, because "it affects

the amount and type of material it accepts." She explains that more "illustrations, sidebars, and graphs are used to attract readers" adding that "as a result editors have cut back on the length of stories and articles they publish." She emphasizes that editors prefer writers who know how design changes influence editorial needs (8).

According to O'Connor, "tailoring your submissions" for the appropriate publisher will help increase a writer's success. She quotes an editor from CBHI: "The most common reason for rejection is that a story is too long and that nearly every piece can be improved by cutting." Hence, writers must study many issues to determine the purpose, style, editorial interest and layout of the publication. Other than appropriate story length, O'Connor says that "another reason for studying back issues is to avoid duplicating topics" already covered. O'Connor notes that, in addition to all of the previous "musts," writers should read the magazine's guidelines in the Children's Magazine Market to determine editor's requirements. She adds that "editors have less time these days to read unsolicited queries," particularly those that don't follow the editor's guidelines (10).

O'Connor sums up by challenging writers to understand that even though all of the previous suggestions may be "tall orders for new writers, it is within the reach of the beginning or veteran writer committed to develop fresh, well written stories that speak to today's young people" (10).

Regardless of whether a writer is a novice or veteran, pouring through Sutherland and Arbuthnot's annual reference publication, Children and Books is a sure bet to help them stay abreast of children's literature and current trends that affect the market. In addition, Brown and Tomlinson's straightforward text, Essentials of Children's Literature, is also a must when writers need quick data about children and their literature. Then, if children's writer's intend to publish--O'Connor's article, "Beating the Odds: Magazine Editors Speak to Today's Writers" is guaranteed to help them hook the editor and land a publishing contract.

RESULTS

The results portion of this culminating project will exhibit my creative writing samples for children, including my discoveries about writing for the senses, the nonfiction market and modern folktales.

Since most writers begin by finding ways of stimulating their creativity, this chapter begins with a sample of my first creative exercise as a student with the Institute of Children's Literature. Following the creative exercise is a chapter from a nonfiction book I wrote to demonstrate how I developed a topic that was "close to home"--gardening. The third exhibit is another nonfiction work, a science book titled Weather Words, prepared under the direction of Bauhaus pioneer, master architect and Professor Myron Kozman. The final exhibits are modern folktales, one of which was written under the direction of author and professor, Dr. Michael Castro. Each project includes discussion and analysis of its purpose and audience.

This chapter introduces the following works:

- **"Camp Memories"**

- **Chapter One; "January" from Kid's Year-Round Indoor Gardening Adventures**

- **Weather Words**

- **"The Golden Bird, Twas The Eve of Christmas" and "There Was An Old Lady"**

My first and one of my most difficult but memorable assignments was an exercise to write for a reader's senses. As a student-writer of the Institute of Children's Literature in West Redding, Connecticut, I was fortunate to work under the tutelage of noted author Dorothy Von Woerkhom. She asked me to describe a place or environment from my childhood by writing so readers could see, hear, taste, smell and or feel what was being described. No storyline--just a description of something was required. Since writing for the senses involves the reader in a myriad of emotions and imaginations, writers must choose words or phrases triggering those emotions or imaginations. This assignment was difficult because I had never written before--much less for anyone's senses. However, before I began, I read many samples of sensory writing, which helped me better understand the assignment, which is what follows:

Camp Memories

Deep in the thick green woods of Southern Missouri, it was a cool moist gray morning when Katie quickly walked down the stony path to the mirrored lake. It was hard to leave the warmth and quiet of her cabin which would soon be bustling with the giggles of her seven cabinmates. Katie always looked forward to the week at Pilot Knob Camp, especially since this was her last year to attend. Enjoying the morning alone with nature, she approached the lush, mossy banks of the lake and noticed how the blue, calm water seemed clearer than normal as the gray mist rose and disappeared in the early morning sunlight.

The blanket of dew left the moss covered in silvery droplets and Katie thought it looked like a glassy fantasy land. As the warm sunshine covered the rich green banks, her wonderland suddenly disappeared. A bullfrog's low, deep foghorn voice announced daybreak interrupting Katie's tranquility.

Aware of the suddenly active chirping bluebirds and chattering squirrels jumping and flying from tree limb to tree limb, Katie knew she would miss the warmth of the woods once she went back to the city. Even the shade trees seemed to stretch their majestic branches toward the sun as if to say thank you for the early morning light.

Slowly stepping up the mossy bank, she heard the sound of the crystal blue water rush over the thirty-foot drop of the dam. The puffy white clouds drifted lazily across the clear blue sky. Everything sparkled in the sunlight and smelled fresh and green. Pausing to soak up the sunshine, Katie mentally photographed this picture of God's beauty, not wanting to forget any of it.

Suddenly Katie heard the first clanging of the familiar breakfast bell and bolted down a much more stony hill than she remembered. Running toward the showers, she didn't look forward to the icy droplets hitting her back.

Just once she longed for warm water.

"Hey Katie, last one to the breakfast table is a rotten egg!" shouted Nancy as they both dashed to the showers, their bare feet hitting the cold concrete floor.

Pulling the chain to release the icy water, Katie shivered at the shock of the cold water on her back. Grabbing the soap, she quickly washed while listening to the screaming girls under the icy showers. Because these were the fastest showers in the whole world, Katie wondered if anyone really got clean.

Nancy is nowhere in sight, she thought. while dashing through the gigantic screen door of the expansive dining hall. Suddenly, the familiar aroma of maple syrup and light fluffy pancakes blasted her nostrils.

Suddenly Nancy bolted in behind her and they both scrambled to the table filled with giggling girls. Aware of the noise around her, she knew that the hustle and bustle of the cooks, the boys and camp leaders making their daily plans, and the shared secrets of her cabinmates would be remembered for years to come.

The last clang of the breakfast bell silenced the noise and everyone bowed their heads for the morning prayer.

Even though I exerted much energy on the assignment, Dorothy's words, "A lovely word picture," scribbled across the top of my paper made it all worthwhile.

When completing the exercise, I attempted to base it on what the experts suggest, "Write what you know!" Furthermore, I wanted to describe the event by using words and phrases the assignment called for--those that allowed readers to see, touch, taste smell and hear what I described. Hence, the words and phrases: cool, moist, gray morning; stony path, lush mossy banks; chirping bluebirds and chattering squirrels; clanging of the breakfast bell, aroma of maple syrup and so on. Even though the experience occurred over thirty years ago, writing about it intensified the memory, which is what the writer hopes it does for the reader. In other words, the writer's purpose is to choose words and phrases so the reader is experiencing what is described.

My next work evolved from my final project with the Institute of Children's Literature. The assignment was to develop an article for publication. After I wrote the article "Geraniums for Mom," I decided to develop a "how-to" piece about growing geranium plants from geranium cuttings into an indoor, year-round gardening book for children five to thirteen years old. The purpose of the book was to bring children and parents or guardians together for family fun through gardening while simultaneously teaching kids about plants through simple gardening projects. Furthermore, I wanted each child to be able to open the book to any

chapter and work on a project indoors because many children don't have access to a plot of ground. Even though the manuscript is still circulating, I've received many positive remarks about it, which encourages me to continue submitting the manuscript.

The first chapter begins in the month of January, when, in many parts of the country, the earth is still cracked and frozen, the trees bleak and barren and the streets are glazed with sheets of ice.

Kid's Year-Round Indoor Gardening Adventures

Chapter One

January

In many parts of the country, the earth is still cracked and frozen, the trees are bleak and barren and the streets are glazed with ice. Yet with each sunrise, the promise of spring is only a few months away. Because springtime is the busiest time of the year for most gardeners, January is a good month to organize a workshop for your gardening projects and force a few bulbs for color and fun.

Organizing Your Space: When choosing a work-surface, remember that you will be handling soil, sand and water. An old sturdy table or sheet of plywood supported by a table, will provide the durability you'll need when handling your plants.

After you ask your parents or adult helper where to put your plant workshop, you can begin collecting different containers and pots.

Other supplies you'll need for your workshop are ordinary potting soil, sand, one spray bottle, lead pencils, popsicle sticks, pruner, scissors, standard fertilizer and garden gloves.

Each visit to your local nursery is like tromping through the jungle. You'll be busy inspecting all sorts of colorful flowers, twisting vines and rich green leaves. Just so you don't forget what to buy during your jungle expedition, make a supply list before you leave home. When you have questions you can't answer, your local nursery-operators will be glad to help. So it's a good idea to get to know their names.

Paper-white narcissus are clusters of three to four fragrant white flowers perched at the top of graceful, slender stems about twelve to eighteen inches tall. They grow in shallow dishes filled with water and pebbles or soil.

Remember, placing a bulb in water forces it to draw on its own nutrients rather than on nutrients from the soil. You can grow stronger, healthier plants by planting your bulbs in soil.

Using pebbles or potting mixture for your growing medium makes no difference. Choose a container for your pot about four to six inches wide and three to four inches deep. Fill the pot with pebbles or soil, about one inch below the top. Making three to five holes in the soil or pebbles, plant as many bulbs as there are holes. Keep the bulb tips pointed up and slightly above the pebbles, or about even with the soil line.

Pack the pebbles and/or soil around the bulbs for support. Fill up the dish (with pebbles) with water, or water the bulbs (planted in soil) immediately. A bright sunny window, away from heat or direct drafts, makes a good growing spot for your potted bulbs.

In six to eight weeks look for fragrant, pale-white blooms. Paper-white narcissus grow best in cool temperatures of 38 to 55 degrees. If you move the flowering bulbs out of the bright sunlight to indirect light, the blooms will last for two to three weeks.

Questions and Answers:

Q: After the blooms have died on my paper-white narcissus, can I plant the bulbs again?

A: No, although you can plant them directly outside in the areas where the ground doesn't freeze if you don't force them first.

Q: Do the bulbs need plant food? How often should I feed them?

A: Yes, you can use any commercially available plant food, once a month during the growing period. Ask your local nursery-operator which kind is the best to use.

Following the twelfth or "December Chapter" is a glossary page defining words and phrases like forced bulbs, nursery-operator or pruner found in the text which might be unfamiliar to readers. Including a glossary page will help parents and teachers explain the term to readers who don't understand them.

Since my first submission of the previous work and this culminating project, I've learned several things. First, the type of writing called for in this assignment had to be clear and straightforward so the reader could understand and perform the activities described. Second, most publishers don't want to take chances on unknown authors, particularly those submitting lengthy children's books Third, publishers seek nonfiction work with interesting twists like books or articles with interviews about unusual people or things. Even though I've received positive

feedback in my rejection letters, I've concluded that perhaps a different approach to writing and marketing the same topic is what's needed. For example, each month of the book might be submitted as a separate magazine article appropriate to the season and publisher since it's easier for unknown authors to break into the magazine market. Included in each article might be a few tips from outside sources such as a nursery operator or horticulturist. Another idea is to submit the articles as a series to a magazine publisher since series publication is the current current trend in periodicals. Since my goal as an unknown writer is to acquire publication in the children's field, submitting any of the previous ideas to magazine publishers offers more promise because they are more likely to publish work of unknown authors than book publishers.

The third exhibit is another nonfiction piece created under the direction of Bauhaus pioneer, master architect and professor Myron Kozman. To begin to address my insatiable desire to learn more about art concepts in children's literature, my project was to develop a children's book that emphasized the visuals rather than the text. Because of Professor Kozman's unique background in visual communications, and the unique educational approaches of the Bauhaus, I felt confident that with his guidance, my ideas

would blossom into something distinct and productive. Since I felt comfortable writing nonfiction I decided to stay with it and began by brainstorming about topics interesting to kids. After spending hours at the library, the idea of developing something relating to weather stuck with me, particularly since I found few interesting books about weather.

After meeting with Professor Kozman to discuss the project, I settled on a book title called Weather Words. Professor Kozman agreed that the book should be brief and that the text should be written first, since it is difficult to illustrate without one. After brainstorming for copy ideas, the following words became the basis for my topic:

sun, rain, wind, cloud, thunder, lightning, snow, and ice.

The next step was writing the text using as few words as possible while explaining each weather concept to readers three to nine years old. Before I attempted it, I decided to approach my objective of stimulating children to think about weather appealing as much as possible to the young reader's senses. In other words, when children read the weather book, I wanted them to seem hear, feel and think

about the experience - (as earlier illustrated with the sensory experience at the beginning of this chapter). After more hours of brainstorming and editing, the following 160 word text was birthed.

Weather Words

Do you know what weather is? Weather is all around you. You see it when you squint at the sun beaming bright light; or hear it when thunder rumbles as you tremble with fright!

When you romp through gushing rivers spilling down city street gutters you feel the weather. Weather makes you happy; like seeing the first snow blanket your lawn...or sliding across the shimmery ice that once was your pond.

Weather changes things from dark to light or light to dark. And makes things bend and sway like the trees in the park. Weather happens when puffy clouds skim blue skies, or when the wind is howling on a dark stormy night. Weather is the kerplunk of the first drop of rain, or swirling snow slapping your face.

If it booms, flashes, rumbles or rolls, weather is all around you in sunshine and storms. Do you know what the weather is like today? Is it sunny, raining or blowing cold snow? Point to the weather word you now know. Who knows? You might even see a rainbow.

My next step was to approach the art concepts integrating visuals with the text so that children could easily identify the relationship between the two. In addition, I had to decide how to break up the text and decided that sequencial and topical order was the best approach. For example, since the text introduced the sun

before the thunder, the visual should be introduced in the same order. In addition the "sun beaming bright light" was to be separated from rumbling thunder because they were both different topics. Since I had no formal art training, Professor Kozman and I agreed that the illustrations should be non-objective (art that doesn't look like the object), but art representing objects and sounds. Hence, the sentences I chose to illustrate are:

- **"weather is all around you"**
- **"sun beaming bright light"**
- **"thunder rumbles"**
- **"gushing rivers spilling down city street gutters"**
- **"snow blanket your lawn"**
- **"sliding across shimmery ice"**
- **"weather changes things from dark to light..."**
- **"things bend and sway like the trees in the park"**

- **"puffy clouds skim blue skies, wind howling on a dark stormy night"**
- **"kerplunk of the first drop of rain"**
- **"swirling snow"**
- **"booms, flashes, rumbles or rolls"**
- **"sunny, raining or blowing cold snow"**
- **"rainbow"**

Because Weather Words is comprised of art concepts encouraging children to see, hear, feel and think about the weather and--in turn motivating them to think about and learn from their other experiences, the next phase was selecting color and shapes symbolic of the text.

Professor Kozman's leading again helped stimulate my efforts. "First," he suggested, "sketch (in pencil) your drawing on each page." Then," he added, "jot down notes about the color relationships you'd like to use on each page. Keep in mind," Kozman continued, "that space along with typography and color play an integral

part in the design of each page."

Even though Professor Kozman discussed many other important art issues relating to this project, I remained focused on the key points indicated above. The end result was a crude pencil sketch scrawled with notes about color and design somewhere on each page.

Because the entire project was so challenging and rewarding it's difficult to say which of the resulting pages are my favorites. And since I want the readers of this culminating project to buy the book when its published, I refrain from exhibiting the entire work. However, I will include several pages that were particularly enjoyable to work on.

The first page for discussion is page two (see exhibits V and VI) which reads, "You see it when you squint at the sun beaming bright light." Even though the sentence refers to "it" as the weather, the key phrase I focused on was "beaming bright light." First, I imagined myself as a child running outside into the bright morning sun. I kept imagining my own experience--the times the light was so bright, I could hardly keep my eyes open. And finally, I tried mentally storing the images and colors I was seeing so I could transfer them to paper. Since my mental image was bright yellow and white shafts,

I ventured to translate it first in pencil (exhibit V) then in color using tempera paint (exhibit VI) onto paper. I chose tempera paint over oil, or water color because of its value, or retainment of brightness, on paper. Thus, each time I look at page two, I'm reminded of my childhood and the dazzling sun. My hope is that each child has a different weather experience they remember when they look at the "yellow page" as well as the balance of the book.

The next page exhibited here I especially enjoyed designing reads, "When you romp through gushing rivers spilling down city street gutters you feel the weather" (exhibits VII, VIII). When I wrote the text I recalled the torrential summer downpours we had in the city. Whenever it rained, the neighborhood kids would race for their swimsuits, and dash back out into the summer downpours, tromping up and down the overflowing street gutters. What I had to do next was convert my memory to paper--so I asked myself what would gushing rivers spilling down city street gutters look like? Spirals flooded my mind. Thus, I began sketching continuous circles moving down the page (in the shape of a slide) and placed the text (representative of children) rolling down and through the spirals (exhibit VII). Next, I noted

the colors I wanted to experiment with and transferred the final idea (using tempera paint) to another sheet of paper (exhibit VIII). My ultimate hope for readers looking at the "gushing rivers of water" page, was that they would hear and feel the gushing rivers of water spilling down city street gutters as I did over thirty years ago.

The final page I've included in this exhibit is the page which reads, "Do you know what the weather is like today? Is it sunny, raining or blowing cold snow? Point to the weather word you now know." Before I offer the explanation, it is important to understand that I wanted to get readers involved in weather using their own experiences stimulated by the text they were reading and the images they were seeing. In addition, I wanted to further the literacy cause. Therefore, I imagined the readers actively involved with a page by pointing to words they recognized through previous repetitious viewing and reading. Hence, exhibits IX and X.

Originally, the text was written as viewed in exhibit IX, which is slightly different that the final draft (exhibit X) in that the sun is placed parallel to rain. Since Professor Kozman reminded me that the images should be placed in the order that the reader is reading them, I placed the visuals so the reader would

first see the sun, then the rain and finally the snow (see exhibit X). In addition, I wanted the typography to remain simple on this page (and throughout the book) so it could be easily recognized by the reader.

Another area to note on my first sketch (exhibit IX), is that the cloud and rain was placed across from one another. However, after thinking about the order that the reader was introduced to each weather word, I remembered they would view the sun first, the rain next, and the snow last. Since the images on page twelve (exhibit IX) needed to follow the same sequence, I changed the placement of the sun, rain and snow to the same pattern the reader was orginally introduced to as depicted in exhibit IX.

In concluding this project, I learned more about book design than I ever hoped. For example, even though readers see the finished products in bookstores everywhere, I discovered that there is more thought than I had imagined about every trivial detail hidden in the wonderful images on each page. Those images are also the results of hours and hours of editing and design. Regardless of the many hours of midnight oil I burned translating thoughts, images and color to paper, the end result was worth it. Even though I don't expect the art from my untrained hand to be purchased, I have confidence

the concept will be purchased. My conclusion is reinforced by the feedback I've gotten from several publishers and librarians who are receptive to this type of nonfiction book. Their comments like, "I'd buy this book" encourage me to keep submitting because I've discovered that persistence is also important to a writer's success.

The final portion of this chapter is three exhibitions of modern folktales written in poetry. The first in exhibit is **"The Golden Bird,"** the second work is **"Twas The Eve of Christmas"** and the third work is **"There Was An Old Woman."**

The first work, **"The Golden Bird"** was a written project involving children's folktales. Dr. Michael Castro, my professor for this project, suggested I first study and compare the various genres of children's folktales to better understand their differences, similarities, as well as to analyze the nature of their appeal (those qualities that enabled them to endure over long periods of time), and purposes. In other words, I was to ask myself "what in the human spirit is being addressed in each tale?" I kept Dr. Castro's suggestion in mind as I began thinking about the tale I wanted to rework. In other words, when I was reading the many folktales I consistently asked myself what was being addressed in each tale. Was it greed,

or generosity, compassion or hatred, or was it a combination of many human elements? Doing so helped me decide what to address in my tale. During my reading, I remained interested in Howard Schwartz's s book, Elijah's Violin & Other Jewish Folktales. As I read through his book, I directed my attention to "The Golden Bird," a parable of man's spiritual quest through prayers and dreams. The main character is a Jewish Rabbi who searches for the answers to life and finds them in his dreams. Through his dreams he learns that peace is found by reading the Holy Scriptures. Since the conclusion of the parable emphasizes that the people who knew him marveled at how peaceful he was, the indication is that the Rabbi had previously been troubled. In my modern version, I wanted to retain some of the core elements such as the troubled main character, the dream, and the bird in a contemporary adaptation written in verse.

Before I put my fingers to the computer, questions like, "What is the message of the story and what in the human spirit is this story addressing" needed answers. The answer to the first question was that every human being thirsts for inner peace, joy and love during some point in their life. Therefore, man's search for all of those elements can be found in his spiritual fulfillment. The

second question took more thought. The answers for the question, "What elements of the human spirit are being addressed were: struggle between flesh and spirit; thirst for spirituality; the value of peace, joy or love and fulfillment of spiritual thirst in a person's life. Finally, I began thinking about what prevents modern man from achieving or falling away from inner peace or life's joy. A few of my answers were: greed, jealousy; workaholism, hatred, preconceptions. For my tale, I focused on workaholism because of how widespread, of necessity, it is in contemporary times and how blinding it can be. This deduction led me to another key word--family. Workaholism can blind people to the value of families, the very families work so hard to physically maintain. Hence, I incorporated a family in my adaptation of "The Golden Bird" which is absent in the Jewish version.

The resulting story is quite different from Howard Schwartz's version of the "Golden Bird." In his version a Rabbi begins searching for the answers to life. The Rabbi discovers a mysterious melody of a bird along with its golden feather and returns home to begin his search in his dreams for the bird. Through his dreams he discovers a Holy man in a garden and learns that the golden bird is the Holy

Spirit who sings to the Messiah. Desiring to always return to the beautiful kingdom or garden, the Holy man tells the Rabbi that if he reads the Psalms in the Holy Scriptures, he will always have the key to the kingdom. Thus, from that day forward, the Rabbi reads the Holy Scriptures and enjoys the peace and joy of living.

The only two similarities between Howard Schwartz's version and my version are:

- the golden bird (representative of the Holy Spirit) sings and loses or drops its feather.
- the main characters (Rabbi in the Jewish version, father in my version) fulfill their quest or struggle between spirit and flesh through a dream.

On the other hand, the major difference in my tale is that its main character, a father and family man, previously knew God, but somewhere along the line got caught up in his work and began neglecting his family and God, suffering the consequences--thus the absence of peace and joy. Furthermore, I humanized my character by giving him a wife, children, and exposing his feelings (as depicted during his conviction of wrongdoing in heaven). The other major difference is that Jesus takes an active role accompanied

by the Holy Spirit. In contrast, in Schwartz's version of the traditional tale, the bird or Holy Spirit sings to the Messiah, who is never seen. Because I wanted the ending to take an unusual twist, I gave the children a significant part in the conclusion which their mother (and wife of the father) tells in simple detail--thus another difference in my tale and Schwartz's. Since fantasy plays a major role in much of children's literature, I included a part where the father is taken into heaven in a funnel of wind with confirmation that this incident really occurred revealed by the children's interaction with the bird.

Finally, the lesson that I wanted to convey is that peace, joy and love are not found in riches or wealth but with the people who are most important to us--our families. And after several rewrites along with Dr. Castro's guidance and editing, the final draft follows.

"The Golden Bird"

One late night in an office dreary,
A father sat who was ever so weary,
Working hard from dawn till dusk,
To give his family what he thought he
must.

Riches and modern gadgets galore,
Working harder and harder to give
them more.
Forgetting their laughter and hugs at
night,
Even forgetting what his kids looked like.

Then late one night as the office light
grew dim,
The clock lurched forward and then struck
ten.
Suddenly the room was blacker than ebony,
"Surely," thought the man, "I'm not going
crazy."

His heart pounded faster, as he rose from his
chair,
Then a funnel of wind swept him high in
the air.
In the blink of an eye the clock bonged eleven,
And the man suddenly knew he was standing in
heaven.

There was one who approached him brighter
than light,
And a bird that was golden followed in flight.
The song from the bird pierced the man's soul,
As the figure approached him, beckoning him on.

Not a word was exchanged between the two,
Yet the one in white seemed like He knew
The thoughts that raced through the man's head,
"Am I dreaming, hallucinating or possibly
dead?"

Suddenly the man burst into tears,
He realized he had wasted many, many years.
Working for riches and neglecting his home,
Where his wife and children wanted him all along.

He realized he'd lost what he possessed long
before,
And questioned if God would help him restore
The things more precious than silver or gold,
His wife and his children he now longed to hold.

As the man slowly turned around to the light,
The golden bird sang and soared out of sight.
Watching the brilliance until there was no more,
The man experienced a peace he had never felt before.

Glancing again to where the bird had flown,
The man saw a feather, glistening like gold.
Then suddenly he felt a nudge on his arm,
And looked up to see his wife, appearing quite
alarmed.

"Honey," she said, "as the hour grew late,
I was worried and decided to investigate.
I called," she continued, "but you didn't
answer,
I jumped in the van, and left the kids with
the sitter."

Her husband, yet startled, exclaimed with a
sigh,
"I'm glad you came, Whew! What a night.
This dream I had, opened my eyes.
Let's go home to the kids," he promptly
replied.

As the man and his wife walked to the street,
His wife turned and said, "Oh one last thing.
The kids, they insisted I give you this present
And that somehow you would know what it meant.

They said they saw a bird engulfed in bright
light,
And that it dropped a golden feather and flew
far out of sight."
As she gave him the feather that glistened like
gold,
The man smiled as he heard the bird's song once
more.

After finishing the previous assignment, I reflected upon several things I learned from researching folktales. However, perhaps the most important thing that Dr. Castro helped me understand is that every tale has a moral, lesson, or theme addressing something in the human spirit. It may be an obvious or hidden lesson but if we study it long enough, it often sheds new light on thoughts or ideas that perhaps had been deeply buried and forgotten.

Another tale that I enjoyed contemporizing was one of my favorites that I read and re-read as a child and still reading and hearing today.

Prior to my studies with the Institute of Children's Literature I enjoyed dabbling in poetry and got the idea to rewrite the classic Christmas tale, "Twas the Night Before Christmas" to insert in my Christmas cards that year. About four years later, my creative writing teacher assigned us the job of rewriting a children's fairy or folktale. Pulling out my original work, I made a few minor changes and waited for my instructor's response. Professor Lyle's comment "Excellent re-working, great coherence and fine logic" made my day.

The major difference between my tale and the original Christmas classic is that I substituted angels conveying the Christmas message of Jesus rather than Santa Claus's simpler message of "Happy Christmas to all." Both tales involve a family. However, "The Eve of Christmas" focuses on a family without children, perhaps a career couple, caught up in life's fast track. Even so, both tales have messages of peace. The Christmas classic ends with the verse we've all come to recognize and love, "Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night." "The Eve of Christmas" begins

its conclusion with, "Will give new life, joy and love to anyone who wants it."

What follows is a modern folktale about any family, anywhere in the western world.

'Twas The Eve of Christmas

'Twas the eve of Christmas and throughout our
home,
Not a sound was heard except for a groan
From the dog, Ben curled up by the fire,
As he patiently waited for me to retire.

"Busy week," I murmured fighting the sleep,
Which would soon overtake me if I didn't keep
Moving around, as I fumbled at the stove,
For a cup of hot tea and wondered why Kate
wasn't home.

Suddenly, out on the lawn I heard a loud
trumpeter.
I ran to the window to investigate the clatter.
The moonlight shone on the new falling snow,
Illuminating the rolling lawn below.

When, what to my peering eyes did I see,
But a golden cloud with eight angels singing
gloriously!
I wondered who he was, the one glowing in
white,
"Why, that must be Gabriel," I thought, "in
all of his might."

"Hallelujah, hallelujah!" they sang, "He is
King!"
With Gabriel playing his horn, the sound through
the earth did ring.
"Now Michael, and John, and Mark and Paul,
And Titus and Judith and Jeremiah and Saul."

"At the top of your voices proclaim the
chorus,
Hallelujah, hallelujah, a Savior is born!"
The trumpet sounded with a heavenly blast,
The cymbal proclaimed Christ's coming at
last!

The light shone so brightly I couldn't help
think,
This might be the result of the hot toddy I
drank.
As I pulled my head in, I jerked and I lurched,
There they were right next to me, proclaiming
His birth.

"I must be dreaming, the neighbors will think
I'm nuts.
This is unbelievable," I thought, "and a real
big fuss."
But the peace I saw and felt with the joy
they proclaimed;
This King, I sensed, He must be great.

Gabriel stopped short,
And sounded his trumpet -
"Peace on earth to you Jim,
You certainly deserve it!"

"Our King," Gabriel proclaimed on his
golden trumpet,
"Will give new life, joy and love to anyone
who wants it.
A gift more precious than money or jewels,
Personally from Him, especially for you."

A blast of his trumpet and they all disappeared,
Then I heard Kate enter, and rushed down the
stairs.
I couldn't wait to tell her what I had seen,
But would she believe me or think I was
deranged?

I dashed over to hug her, and anxiously
mumbled,
"You'll never believe what happened tonight,
right here, in our home.
A peace overwhelms me this Christmas eve night,
Something never felt before--but first, how
was your flight?"

Kate smiled and then hugged me, and quickly
replied,
"Jim, I met someone interesting on my return
flight.
He specifically told me to give you this
token,
And said he was Gabriel--and that you'd
know him,
By his trumpet...here it is--it's golden."

In addition to submitting a previously written work for my creative writing class, I included an adaptation of the nursery rhyme, "There Was An Old

Woman Who Lived in a Shoe." However, my purpose was to convey a message of compassion and love rather than one of hopelessness like the original version. For example, in the first few lines of the original version, the reader is introduced to an old woman who has a heap of kids and doesn't know what to do with them. Thus, the reader immediately gets the idea that this person is facing despair and hopelessness. However, in my work, I introduced a compassionate, level-headed old woman who demonstrated God's love with her cider, cookies, sweets and stories throughout the year.

Before, Dr. Castro's guidance, I hadn't clearly analyzed what issue in the human spirit each tale addressed. During the development of "There Was An Old Woman," I knew the message I wanted to convey, but hadn't realized (until later) what specific issues my work addressed. After reviewing the tale, it became evident that its issues were compassion, love and the importance of family traditions. What follows is the first version of "There Was An Old Woman."

"There Was An Old Woman"

There was an old woman who lived near the glen,
Who sang to the children and baked cookies for them.
And when the cold wind snapped through the trees,
The children would sit by the fire at her knees.

And drink hot chocolate and listen to her tell,
About Noah and Moses and the woman at the well.
And when the snow piled high on the ground,
The old woman would smile and gather them 'round.

And pass around cider and cookies and sweets
As the children took off their mittens and warmed their cheeks.
The plump gray dog gazed up from the rug,
He knew the old woman would not budge

From the spot among her circle of children,
While she softly spoke of God's greatest miracle.
And when the blue crocus foretold of spring,
The children again heard the old woman sing.

She'd invite them down to sit by the stream,
To listen to the robins and laugh at sunbeams.
And when the children tired of the afternoon sun,
She'd pass out apples and tell them one by one,

That God loved each of them in a special way,
Then the old woman would hug them and ask them back the next day.
And when the summer sun scorched everything in sight,
The old woman walked in the morn's early light.

With her weathered face tilted towards His
kingdom,
She would boldly ask God for special wisdom.
To help her children stand tall and strong,
And deliver the message of love from her songs.

As she walked through her garden, her face to
the light,
The old woman remembered cool, brisk nights;
When the trees glowed in crimson, yellow and
gold,
And the children welcomed the stories her
father told.

His hands were worn, much like his Holy book,
But his face lit up each time he took
The Word in his palms as he carefully spoke
Of God's miraculous love to the little folk.

Then her mother would serve warm cookies and
tea,
And her father would wink and they'd all agree
To return the next day for a tromp through
the leaves,
And exchange smiles and hugs and cookies and tea.

Since the above version, I have edited and retitled it "Robins, Sunbeams and Songs" for a children's (all ages) religious magazine. The rewrite is about twelve lines shorter, according to the publisher's guidelines. As well as making the piece shorter, I had to rework several

lines so the piece would make sense.

Often when I write I sometimes get titles and ideas not knowing how or when I can use them, which is what occurred when I wrote the previous two works. I store them in an idea file, then when the occasion arises, such as a writing assignment or a publisher's need, I will develop the idea or edit the complete work and submit according to the publisher's guidelines.

Whatever the needs of publishers, writers must understand that their success depends on their commitment. Commitment to complete and submit an exercise or article with professionalism which includes hours of research, brainstorming and editing. For example, research might be exploring the markets of children's literature, writing publishers for their guidelines and or acquiring sample publications of articles or books. Brainstorming, for ideas is also important. When I wrote Weather Words I had no idea how I was going to develop the book until I starting researching what had previously been written and determining what my purpose for the book was. Another important element to a writer's success is editing. My writing experiences have taught me that text is always clearer and stronger by editing--not once but many times! Another important aspect to a writer's success is that what one publisher

rejects, another welcomes. For example, when I wrote Kid's Year-Round Indoor Gardening Adventures, I was determined to submit it as a book. Because, I've learned that magazine publishers are more inclined to welcome new authors, there is a strong possibility I'll submit the book as separate articles.

In other words, if children's writers intend to be successful, they must be willing to research the markets, brainstorm for ideas and edit their work accordingly.

DISCUSSION

Regional youth services librarian Sarah Ashworth shared her insights involving trends of children's literature. Her comments regarding the work presented in chapter four were welcomed. Serving as youth services librarian for four St. Louis city based libraries, Ms. Ashworth reviews books from myriads of publishers while also considering patrons' requests. Because her role (along with two other regional librarians) in the selection process for St. Louis city exposed her to a broad range of children's literature and gave her a unique perspective and expertise, I was very pleased that she agreed to participate in these discussions. Our discussions included:

- **nonfiction trends**
- **fiction series**
- **horror genres**
- **picture books**

- **review of exhibits in chapter four**

- **future trends in children's literature.**

Nonfiction trends. "Over the last several years," explains Ashworth, "there has been a vast improvement in nonfiction books. Science books in particular," she added, "are much more visually appealing." She also noted that the "variety of science books for specific grade levels" has dramatically expanded. Preschoolers through twelfth graders have many more choices for interesting and "appealing science genres" than in previous decades," said Ashworth. "Furthermore," Ashworth said, "technology has enabled the usage of colorful graphics along with capacity to create unusually shaped pages or cutouts."

Since I plan to write nonfiction, Ms. Ashworth's comments about how science books have improved encouraged me. Her conclusions indicate there is more room for creativity in this field than in previous decades. Asworth's comments also coincided with what many other experts, such as science publisher Marc Gave, have observed.

Fiction series. "Another important aspect that I believe started with the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys" said Ashworth, "is an increase in the young adult fiction series books." Spin-offs of spin-offs is what we're seeing, she explained. Ashworth noted the series spin-offs began after the Nancy Drew series evolved into what is titled the Baby Sitters Club, followed by the Baby Sitters Little Sisters. Even though these paperback series are marketed towards young adults, they have become so popular that the latter Baby Sitters Little Sisters is targeted towards second graders. Perhaps one of the marketing strategies of the publisher is to hook the younger reader so they will continue reading the series targeted for the older age group. Ashworth commented, "the series for second graders is in big print, the words are easy to read and they are age appropriate." Sweet Valley High and the Sweet Valley High Twins are another series young female adults consistently request, she added. Perhaps the popularity of the series is that each girl is working on their own set of problems that are concerns of young females today. In addition, these series include positive solutions and promote theories like, "it's ok to be different."

Even though there are no claims about whether

these books are literature, their success is undeniable. Ashworth proposed that the series popularity is based on sheer economics because the paperback series is easy to produce and inexpensive. However, authors Brown and Tomlinson cautioned that according to a 1987 Literary Trend report, the Sweet Valley High series incorporates stereotyped characters reflective of "white, middle-class, suburban life" in which boys often measure a girl's popularity which is an undermining message for today's young women (130). Whether or not this analysis is correct, I question the supposed negative impact of the message of Sweet Valley High's alleged stereotyped characters ("white, middle class"). If females want to read about such characters, what harm is there? I'm convinced there is as much harm in emulating these characters as there is in emulating Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty.

Horror genres. Still another genre Ashworth discussed was that young adults have in the last several years demonstrated an increasing interest in horror. She explained that perhaps its popularity was because "kids see adults watching and reading it and consider it a grown-up thing." Another possible factor that Ashworth proposed was that perhaps because modern technology

permeates most living rooms, movie theatres and malls "kids have this need for a thrill." She explained that kids are titillated by every conceivable gadget like television or video technology to excite or thrill them and reasoned that horror books might offer them the excitement they have grown accustomed to when playing video games or watching television violence or horror movies. She continued that young adults come into the library requesting "Stephen King novels which are extremely violent and lengthy. There were no alternatives to give them until recently," Ashworth added. "Now," she continued, "there are a few "suspense books that are scary but contain a minimum of violence and no sex." She added that for whatever reason the kids can "fill their need for a thrill" without the sadistic guts and gore.

Even though I have not made the same observations as Ms. Ashworth, I have discovered other librarians have made similar conclusions. My hope is that if the demand for horror increases perhaps there might be more mystery or thrillers written for young adults as a more intellectually stimulating alternative to the hard core guts and gore.

Picture books. Ashworth was pleased to comment that picture books are more "realistic to life's

aspects, especially since the 40's and 50's. Recently," she recalled, "I noticed a book published sometime in the 50s that discussed what women do as nurses, using extremely elementary language and illustrations. I found it amusing," said Ashworth, "that the author noted one of the important jobs nurses perform is cooking foods that are good for sick people." She continued that the illustration exhibited a woman in a nurses uniform. "In the nurse's pocket," she added, "you could see a box of jello." Ashworth continued, "As if to say that's all or the most important thing a girl had to do to become a nurse - cook jello for sick people! On the other hand," she added, "you have the books from the same era telling boys that in order to be bus drivers, they had to be big and strong! What is currently popular" she added, in contrast are picture books "discussing and illustrating families and cultures realistically."

Ashworth's comments again coincided with what other publishers and editors have said. For instance, Sutherland notes "that there is much to be achieved from realistic stories that help children increase their self-confidence by working through problems. Such books can range from the humorous to serious, such as Mary Stolz's Storm in the Night in which a child conquers his fear with the help

of his grandmother (105). In sum, Ashworth noted that even though the changes have been obvious, she would like to see more books incorporating real-life experiences.

Since nonfiction picture books are one of my main areas of interest, I was encouraged to learn that Ms. Ashworth hoped there would be more of such books incorporating real-life experiences. My own pursuits involve stories about survivors of natural disasters like the great 1993 midwest flood or modern heroes like people who rescue human beings or animals. My other ideas involve children and people who have achieved massive success in spite of the obstacles they encounter. In other words, my energy is devoted to articles and books that realistically reflect life in the nineties, and thus fortunately in tune with current publishing trends.

Review of exhibits. After reviewing Kid's Year-Round Indoor Gardening Adventures, Weather Words and the modern folk and fairy tales in the previous chapter Ms. Ashworth's comments were similar to many that have been previously received from other experts and publishers. She noted that chapter one from Kid's Year-Round Indoor Gardening Adventures was "clear, concise and well organized" and added that she

had not seen this type of gardening book before. For these reasons she thought that there was a good possibility it would be published. When I spoke about the idea of submitting the book as a twelve article series to magazine publishers, Ms. Ashworth thought that the idea also held promise because series books are currently popular among many publishers.

Because Ms. Ashworth develops and presents planned activities for preschoolers through young adults visiting the library, she particularly enjoyed the work Weather Words. "After reading this type of book to preschoolers, said Ashworth, "I would turn back to the beginning and have each child discuss what kind of weather does what they are seeing on each page." For example," she said, "where the text reads 'bend and sway' I would ask the children what kind of weather makes things bend or sway as they were observing the illustration." Ashworth further commented, "I'd buy this book!"

After commenting on the nonfiction exhibits, Ms. Ashworth reviewed the modern folktales written in verse. She reported that since original fairy and many folktales were "gruesome and extremely violent" she enjoyed those that dealt with societal problems or issues by using non-violent methods as those exhibited in the previous chapter.

Finally, I concluded our discussion by asking

Ms. Ashworth what current or new trends might continue to have an impact upon children's literature. She remarked that nonfiction, with an emphasis in science, would continue to be popular. She further explained that she would like to see more attention given to humanities and art. "In addition," she added, "we can use more books that incorporate the "whole language approach. For example," said Ashworth, "a craft book teaching kids how to make pirate ships, with a sidebar of the history of pirates, would be interesting." Regarding the arts and or crafts, she noted that "more unique and creative topics are always welcomed." On this same subject she observed that we have all been "macramed to death." Ashworth also expressed her concern for the need for books promoting family interaction. She concluded our discussion by declaring, "The more we can provide materials for learning and family interaction, the better educated and happier we would all be."

Ms. Ashworth's comments along with all the other suggestions from authors, editors and publishers have reinforced my enthusiasm and commitment to children's writing. Their commands, "make time to write, explore the world around you for ideas, write what you know and include characters that reflect modern thinking" resound in my mind, heart and spirit, echoing what are perhaps the most profound personal conclusions resulting from this investigation of children's literature.

In the future, I look forward to writing the stories that need to be written, helping children see, feel hear, taste, smell and understand the world around them. This task requires developing characters that reflect their problems, dreams and lives--not what we, as adults, think their world should reflect. This direction of increasing realism is one I intend to follow so children will better understand themselves and the world they live in.

And after meditating on the volume of tips from the field experts, I would challenge all would-be writers to consider what they specifically want to write (articles or books--fiction or nonfiction) and not think in broad terms like winning the coveted Caldecott award. Writers must also understand that regardless of the article, book or topic, there are tasks like taking writing classes, attending writer's workshops, researching and defining target markets, acquiring publishers' guidelines and submitting professional manuscripts, that they must perform in order to achieve success.

This culminating project has provided many answers to questions writers ask like, "How will I find the time, or how do I know what to write about?" when they start thinking about breaking into the children's market. Thus, I pass on the advice that was given to me several years back--which is that writers should start small and think about what they want to accomplish in a year. For me, this approach meant

going back to school and absorbing everything I could learn about writing and critical thinking while I developed my skills. For others, it might be taking a few writing courses or attend writing workshops. In concluding this culminating project I take the opportunity to answer that same question, "What is it that I want to accomplish in a year?" My goal is to write and publish several nonfiction magazine articles and a nonfiction picture book for young listeners and readers four to ten years old. However, perhaps a better conclusion is to answer the question that many people have about writers, and that is, "Why do writers write?" The best answer I know comes from author, editor and publisher Howard Greenfield who says:

> But the true writer writes--out of a need to express himself or herself or to inform or educate the public. It is this passion, and it is no less than that, that drives most writers to undertake the difficult task of writing (12).

EXHIBIT I

mple Cover Letter

March 21, 1990

Beth Wood Thomas, Editor
Turtle Magazine for Preschool Kids
P.O. Box 567
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Dear Ms. Thomas:

I'm hopeful you'll find the enclosed manuscript "BOO!" appropriate for inclusion in Turtle. It runs 164 words and is aimed at the youngest reader.

In this story, Pete (the boy) and Java (the dog) play a game of hide-and-seek. While it's straight from my boyhood, I know children often play such games with their pets.

My writing background includes eight books for children and articles and stories in various magazines, including Jack and Jill, Listen, and English Journal. Before turning my attention to writing, I was a teacher at the elementary, junior, and senior high levels, as well as at the college level.

I've enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your reply. I look forward to your reaction and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Larry Dane Brimner

Enc.: ms/SASE

Body: How the story meets the magazine's editorial needs.

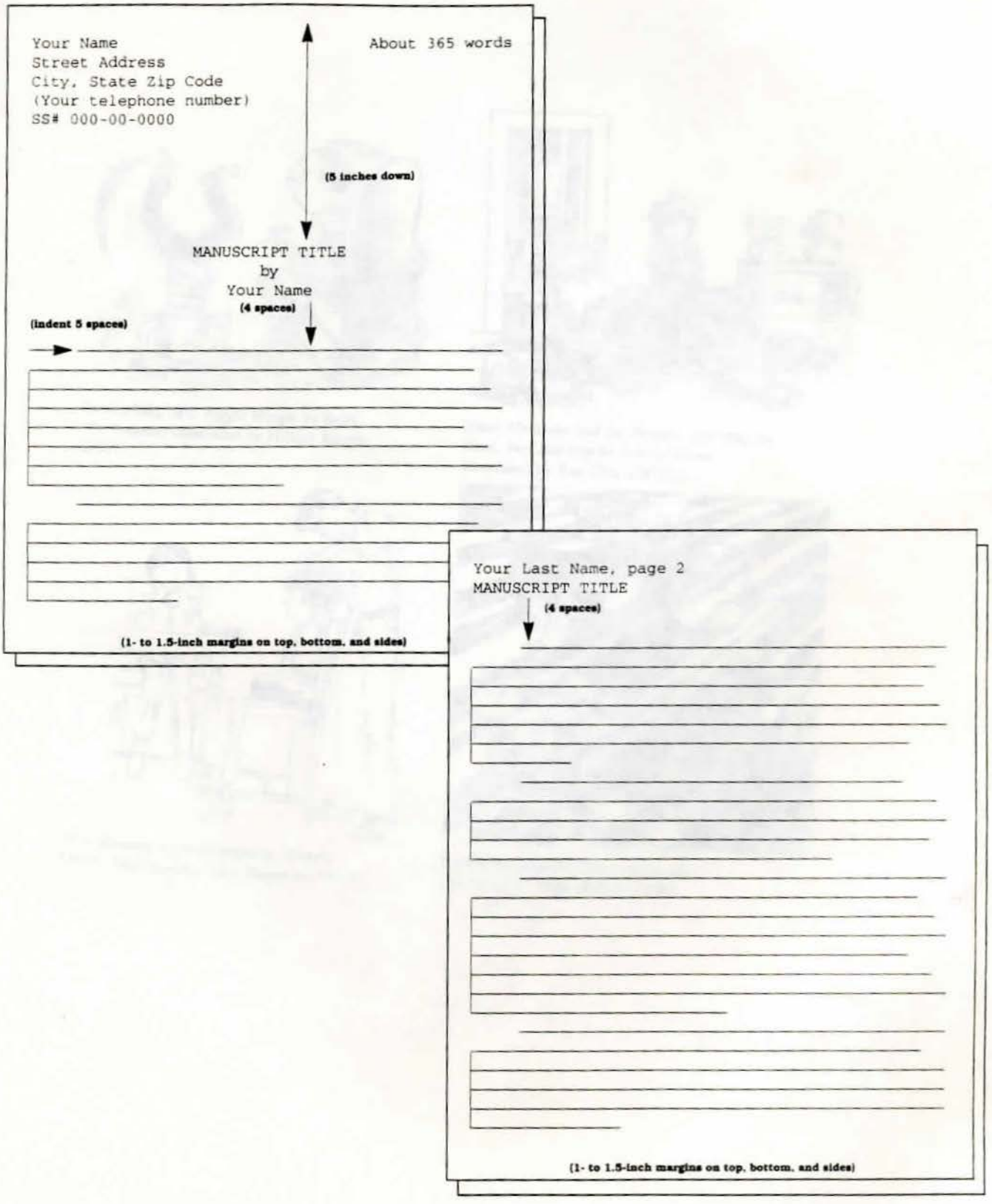
Opener: Direct, brief indication that a story is enclosed, with title. Include word length, and identify readers.

Credits: Brief mention of other publishing credits, if any.

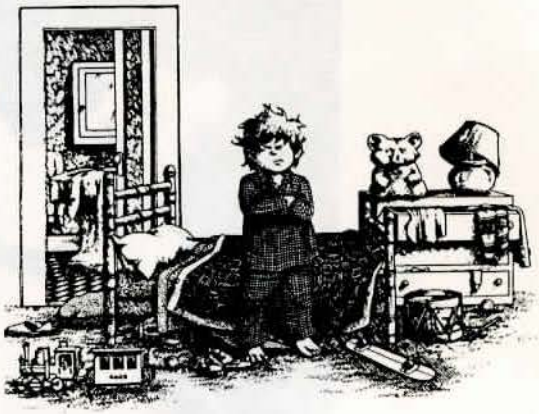
Closing: Mention enclosure of SASE. Be formal and direct throughout.

EXHIBIT II

Sample Manuscript Pages

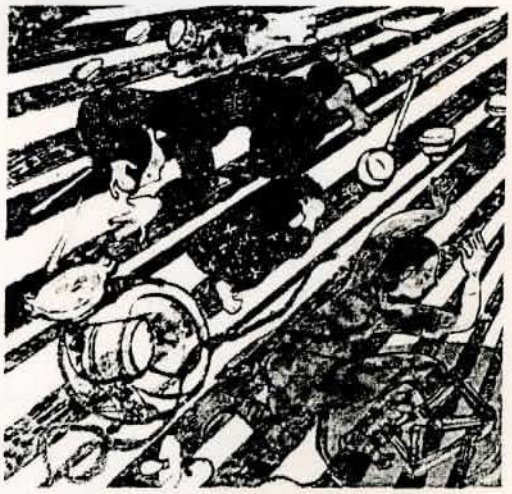


From *Hello, Mrs. Piggle Wiggle* by Betty MacDonald, illustrated by Hillary Knight (1957).



From *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Ray Cruz (1972).

From *Ramona and Her Father* by Beverly Cleary, illustrated by Alan Tiegreen (1977).

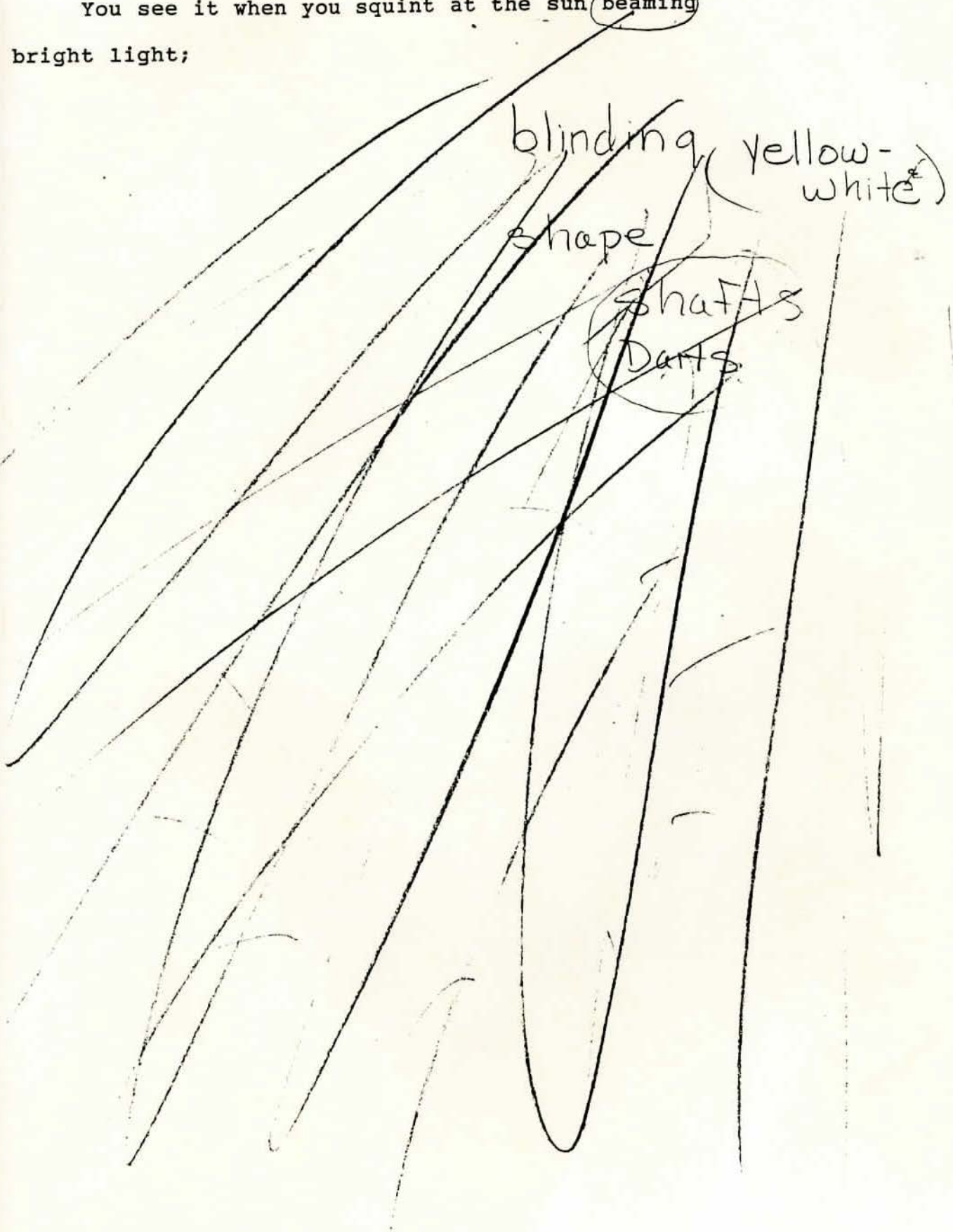


From *Hiroshima No Pika*, written and illustrated by Toshi Maruki (1980).

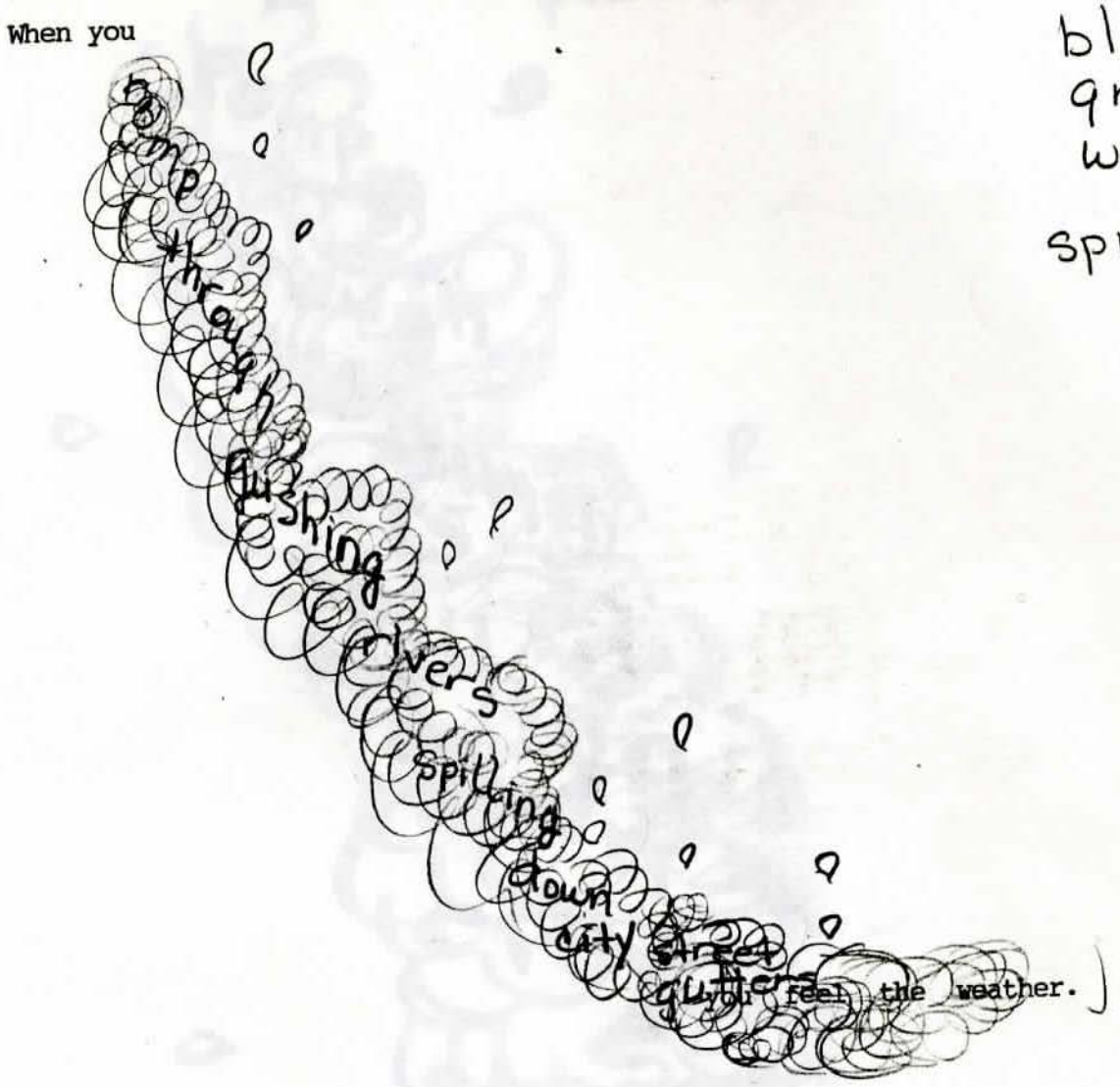
From *Ten, Nine, Eight*, written and illustrated by Molly Garrett Bang (1983).

From *I Hate English!* by Ellen Levine, illustrated by Steve Björkman (1989).

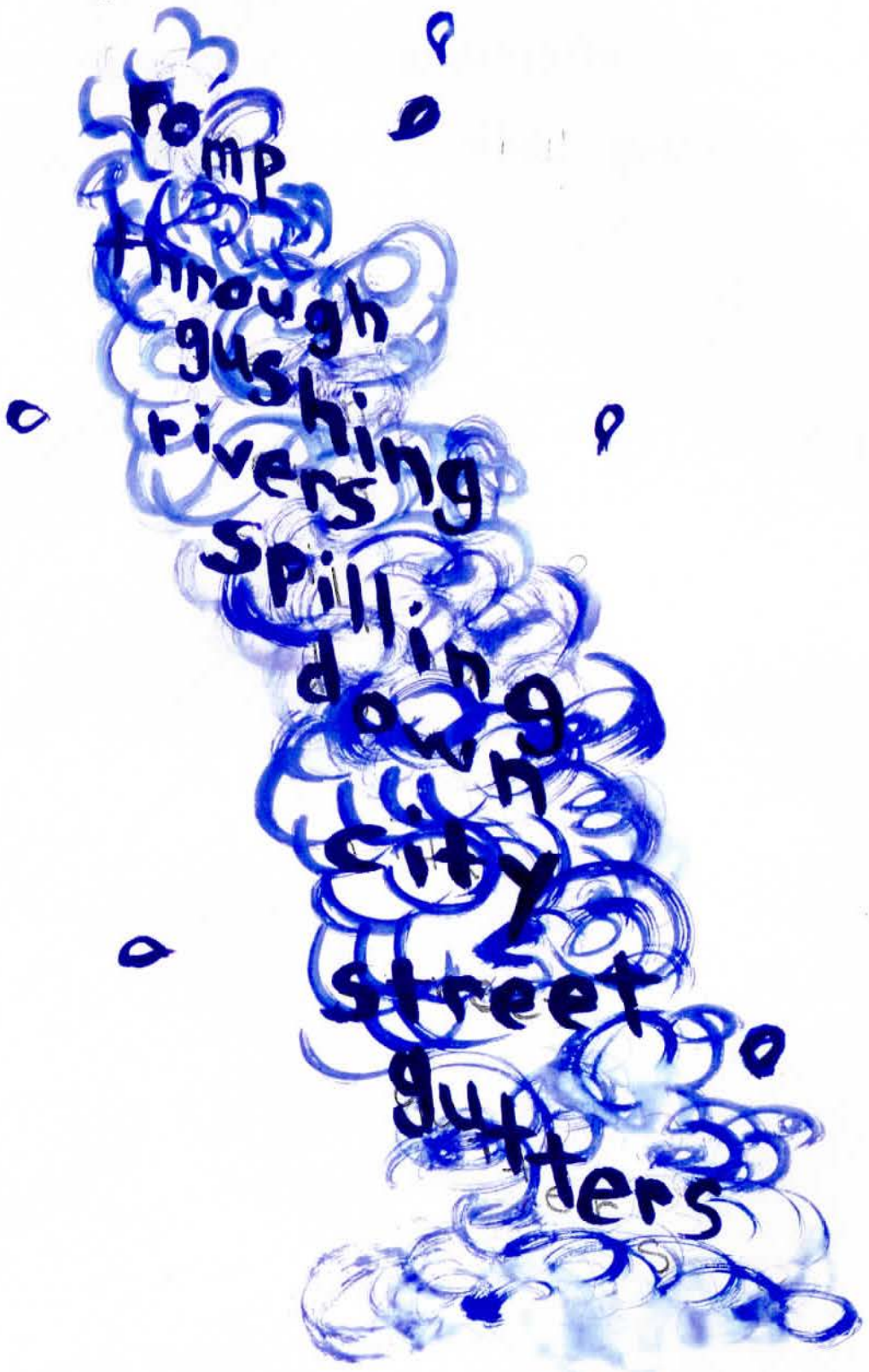
You see it when you squint at the sun beaming bright light;



You see it when you squint at the sun
beaming bright light;

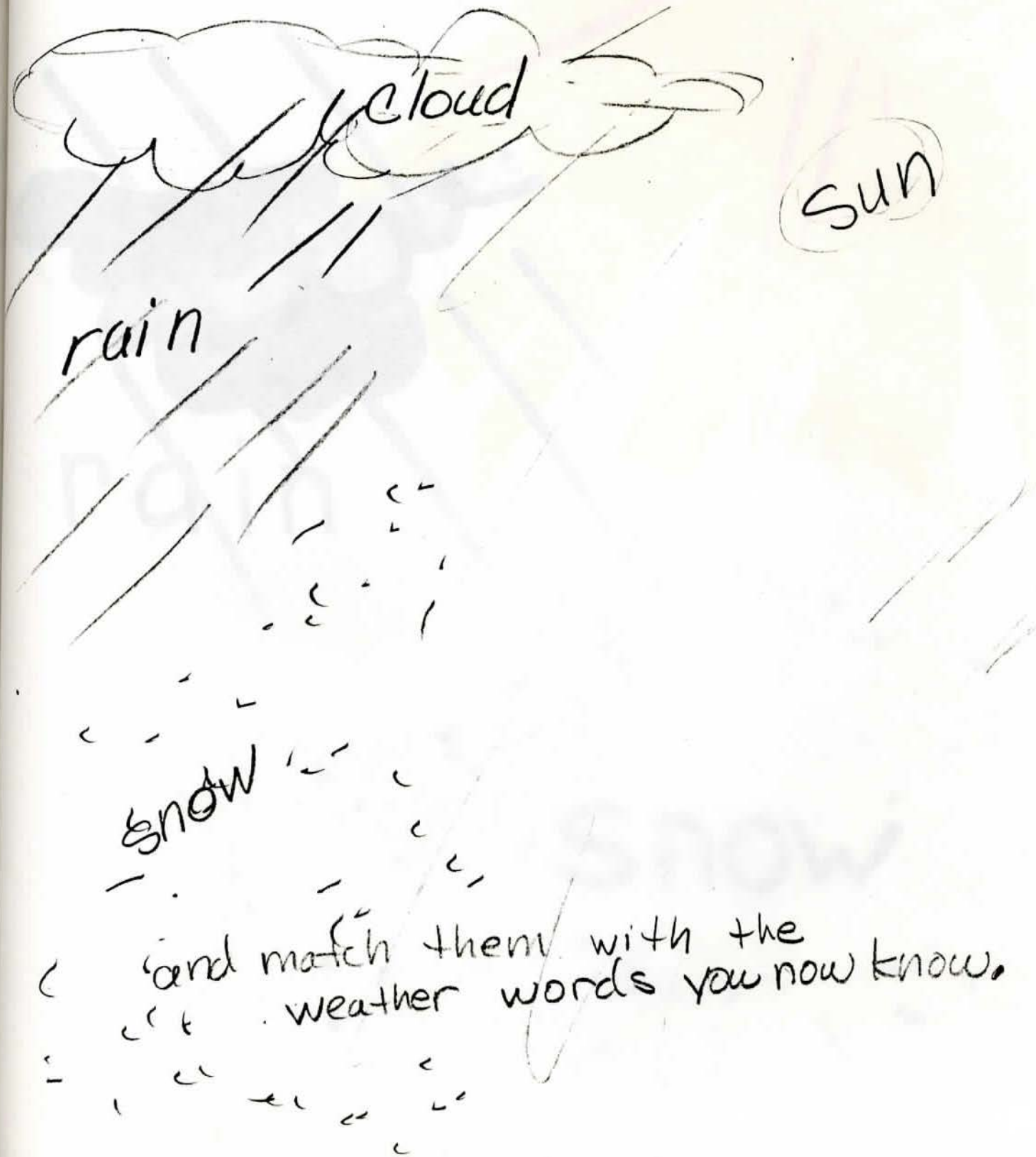

When you
drop
through
gushing
rivers
spilling
down
city
gutters
feel the weather.
blues
greys
white
spiral
motions

When you



you feel the weather.

Now go to your window + tell what you see
Is there, rain, snow or is the sun shining brightly?
Then point to the pictures right below



and match them with the weather words you now know.

EXHIBIT X

Do you know what the weather is like today?

Is it sunny, raining or blowing cold snow?

Point to the weather word you now know.

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