

Tips for Writing a Children's Picture Storybook

Definition

Children's Picture Storybook—A work written for children that uses both text and illustrations to present a simple plot.

Format

Most picture books average 30 pages, consisting of 14 to 16 two-page spreads. A spread is the two pages of an open book.

Text

- The text of a children's book should be organized into simple sentences and short paragraphs.
- The use of active verbs will keep the story vivid in the reader's mind.
- Children's book authors employ literary tools to help make the story more vivid in the reader's mind. Rhythm, alliteration, repetition, refrains, onomatopoeia, simile, personification, rhyme, and imagery are commonly used devices.
- Consider ending each page with a question or other method that sparks the reader's curiosity for what will happen next.
- Repeating a phrase throughout the story will help hold your reader's attention.
- Use a question at the end of the page to help move your reader to the next page.

Illustrations

- Some picture books have an illustration on the front cover that presents the main conflict or point of the story.
- The illustrations are usually created after the text has been written.
- Illustrations serve as a partner to the text.

Characterization

- The main character should have one or two easily identifiable dominant traits.
- Present the traits of your characters through both the illustrations and text.
- Young children should be able to easily identify with the dominant traits.
- Avoid using text to present detailed descriptions of what the characters look like. Let the illustrations present the physical details of the character.

Conflict

- Limit your story to just one conflict that the main character must overcome.
- The main character should be able to deal with the main conflict in concrete terms.
- The main character should resolve the conflict him- or herself.
- Four of the most common types of conflict are individual vs. individual, individual vs. society, individual vs. nature, and individual vs. self.
- Some of the most common concerns of children include acceptance by others, family dynamics, physical growth (especially size and looks), and fear of the unknown (e.g., learning something new, participating in a new activity, going to a new place, getting lost).

Plot

- A solid, well-developed plot is essential to creating a good children's book.
- The resolution of the conflict should teach a lesson. However, the lesson should not be told in a didactic way but instead be presented indirectly through the plot.
- Jump right into the main conflict of the story.
- Flashbacks should be used with great caution. They can confuse younger children.