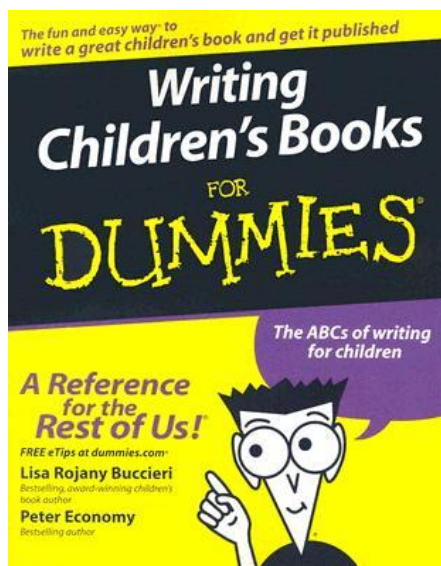




Writing Children's Books for Dummies

Lisa Rojany Buccieri , Peter Economy

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Everyone loves a children's book. And many dream about writing one. But is it actually possible for an unpublished writer--armed with a good story idea and a love of kids--to write, sell, publish, and promote a book? Yes, it is! Veteran children's book publishing executive and author Lisa Rojany Buccieri and author Peter Economy show you how, in their incredibly useful 2005 first edition of ***Writing Children's Books For Dummies(R)*** . Buccieri and Economy begin by explaining the basics of the children's book business, from the nuts and bolts of the various formats and genres--with helpful illustrations to aid you--to the intricacies of the book publishing market, a list of recent award-winning books, and a first peek into the particular mind set that writing children's books requires. (Hint: Throw out the adult rules, and think like a kid!)

Then the authors dive into the actual writing process itself, with tips on setting up a workspace, brainstorming great book ideas, researching the subject you decide on, even speaking with the sorts of kids you hope will eventually read the book. They show you how to create compelling characters and develop them in the manuscript; how to outline and write a plot "arc" of conflict, change, and resolution; how to master the difficult art of writing dialogue; and how to use active (rather than passive) language to keep your story moving along and interesting to young minds.

Or, if you're planning to write a creative nonfiction children's book--on a topic such as science, nature, or a historical figure, for example--the authors include a chapter on this, too. Ready, set, go... it's time to sit down and write!

Once you've finished your book, however, the process has only begun. Now you will refine, submit, and hopefully sell your manuscript. Here again, the authors of ***Writing Children's Books For Dummies*** come through for you. They deliver solid advice on hiring an illustrator--or not; participating in workshops and conferences to learn the business and hone a story; finding an agent; and, finally, submitting the manuscript to publishers and--if you are successful--signing a contract.

Along the way, the authors also include tips on handling rejection; a quick primer on the various editors in publishing houses (and how they work to make your book its best); and making a plan to publicize the book, including hiring a publicist if necessary.

Like all For Dummies(R) books, ***Writing Children's Books For Dummies*** highlights "The Part of Tens," which includes the Ten Best Ways to Promote Your Story and More Than Ten Great Sources for Storylines. And the ever-helpful Cheat Sheet includes Tips for Editing your Children's Book Manuscript, Children's Book No-No's, Twelve Commandments for Writing Younger Children's Books, and Tips on Promotion.

From setting down that first word on paper to doing a successful publicity tour, ***Writing Children's Books For Dummies*** gives you the confidence and the insiders' know-how to write and sell the story you've always wanted to write.

Writing Children's Books for Dummies Details

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From Reader Review Writing Children's Books for Dummies for online ebook

Lance Greenfield says

Yet another great "... for Dummies" book.

If it wasn't for the fact that I have so many other things to do, I'd sit right down and write myself a children's book. I have plenty of ideas. Maybe sometime soon.

Reeds says

I'm to chapter 6 in this book, and so far I'm hearing violins playing, "Beautiful Dreamer."

It sounds like if you aren't already known in the industry, you can hang it up.

I hope it becomes more encouraging than this as you go along.

Now that I'm done with the book my impression is that writing and selling a book is basically starting your own small business, a very time and money consuming small business that may or may not ever make a profit. They make it sound like you pretty much have to be at the right place at the right time, and just sort of accidently fall into the opportunity by accident.

Lear says

Great Resource

Leanne Beadle says

Great book for aspiring authors of children's books.

Julie says

I found this really helpful

Tracy says

Only time will tell if this book is actually helpful.

David Roberts says

The book I read to research this post was *Writing Children's Books For Dummies* by Lisa Rojany Buccieri et al which is a very good book which I bought from Kindle. I personally don't think I would ever write a children's book and if I wrote a book it would be non fiction and probably computing although this book is very interesting nonetheless. One rule in children's fiction is the baddies can't inflict any harm on the hero. The hero is usually a regular boy or girl who does extraordinary things. There are many different children's genres for books and James Patterson & J K Rowling have shown you can make a lot of money doing it. I often enjoy reading teen fiction although I am an adult. This does give you lots of advice on writing these kinds of books and also getting a publishing deal. They recommend reading *Negotiating For Dummies* for dealing with people like agents. There have been cases where authors have self published and been successful but it is very hard work. One thing that particularly attracts children to a book is it should look at issues that the potential reader is concerned with. This is done really well in the Harry Potter series which at the end of the day is about problems at school and with guardians. When writing a book your first task usually is to define some of your key characters and look at how they will interact and try and work that into a story. The great authors will often rewrite a paragraph many times before getting it just right and you should be prepared to do that. I enjoyed reading this book and it's a decent length.

Robert Kent says

The book is wonderfully organized and indexed. I've been a big fan of the For Dummies books for years and I've got six of them already in my home on topics I've been interested in. Among my favorites are *English Grammar For Dummies* (not that you'd know it if you read this blog) and *Conspiracy Theories and Secret Societies For Dummies*, both equally useful in their own ways. I've even taken a shot at editing them as Wiley Publishing has a hub I pass every morning on my way to my day job.

If you've read a For Dummies book previously, you have a pretty good idea what to expect already and *Writing Children's Books For Dummies* doesn't disappoint. It gives us a concise overview of both writing a book and publishing it and features an interview with our old friend Peggy Tierney as well as cover shots of Ashfall and Ashen Winter, which made Mike Mullin happy when I told him.

Between the interviews and the advice sprinkled throughout, this book is valuable to a hardened Ninja as well as a newbie. But much of the book is dedicated to the basics, which is as it should be. These portions may not be of interest to you, Esteemed Reader. As you're reading a blog called *Middle Grade Ninja*, you presumably know what middle grade is. But everyone has to start somewhere and this book is great for a new-comer. Still, whether veteran or newbie, you have to love this definition of middle grade:

Middle-grade fiction and nonfiction books are what many of us remember reading from our childhoods. These are the first books we read that were long and detailed and complex and dealt with subject matter that was much more intriguing (and potentially much more divisive) than most children's picture books.

And if you're curious how that differs from young adult, this book's got you covered:

Young adult books fall into two main age groups: YA appropriate for children ages 12 and up, and YA for children 14 and up. While each YA novel differs from the next, we can attribute the split in age ranges most of the time to five issues: sexual intercourse, foul language, drug use, extreme physical violence, and graphic abuse. Those YA novels that overtly and unashamedly deal with these topics are usually saved for the older kids.

If you lack the funds to attend a writer's conference, pick up a copy of this book. Better yet, read this book, then go to a conference. If you've been writing for years, you might not expect there to be anything in this book for you, but you'd be wrong. There are plenty of fresh ideas sprinkled in among the basics:

If you haven't recently spent any time around children, why not head back to school? You could be there in an official capacity, perhaps as the coach at a community center or a nearby school, or even as a teacher at your local church or synagogue. Many volunteers give their time and expertise for altruistic reasons, and you can say you do, too, while secretly gathering material from children by hanging out with them in a way benefiting both of you. They get an adult to oversee and guide activities, and you get to observe them on the sly, mercilessly using them for the material and ideas they contribute to your idea notebook.

If the ideas won't do it for you, surely the advice of experts will. I love this quote from an interview with book buyer Jennifer Christopher Randle:

Middle-grade fiction has little to no illustration to support it. I always ask myself, "Can I see it?" If I can't picture my protagonist in the story he's starring in, then I would pass. I have a very active imagination, so if I can't picture your world, what chance does a ten-year-old have?

I'd recommend Writing Children's Books For Dummies to anyone and I'm glad to have a copy on my shelf. Do yourself a favor, Esteemed Reader, and get your own copy. As always, I'll leave you with some of my favorite passages from Writing Children's Books For Dummies:

Although we wish the world of literary agents was all fluffy bunnies, sweetness, and light, we're here to tell you that it can sometimes be ugly. Although many children's book agents and agencies are completely reputable, ethical, and honest, there are some whose primary goal is to devise efficient and effective ways to separate you from your hard-earned cash.

Of the many grown-ups who stand between you and your audience (children), agents and acquisitions editors or publishers are the first ones you must impress. An agent serves as the eyes and ears for the publishers and acquisitions editors—and all three are looking for the same qualities: a unique, well written, absolutely worth-the-effort, gotcha! manuscript.

A great way to understand how children in your target age group think is to read them and then have a question-and-answer session. You can do this with children who are as young as three or four years of age, depending on how verbal they are and how accustomed they are to speaking in front of other kids (preschoolers are ideal for this kind of exercise because they love to raise their hands, give their opinions—often in great and meandering detail—and listen to themselves speak to an adult who actually cares what they have to say).

Don't overuse the passive voice ("to be" verbs). If you want to keep your characters interesting, your plots active, and your writing strong, avoid overusing the passive voice.

According to the Association of American Publishers, children's and young adult e-book titles surged 475.1 percent from January 2011 to January 2012, to a total of \$22.6 million. Long story short, if you've been thinking of self publishing your own e-book, we would say that you are at the right place at just the right time.

Rebekah says

Clear and interesting. Understandable. Practical. A lot good stuff to think about and try out.

The authors had what they called a "character bible" which is a list of questions about the physical, circumstantial, mental, and emotion characteristics of a character. I tried it out on some of my already developed characters and was pleasantly surprised how individual their answers were. Then I tried it on the main character of a new story I'm starting, and I watched her fill out into three dimensions in my mind as I figured out the answers for her.

There's also good publishing tips – a whole section about publishing. I suppose two years ago that wouldn't have interested me that much, but now that I'm at that stage it was a major plus to the book.

Elaine Phillips says

A must read for anyone writing a children book. Very informative and helpful about promoting and writing techniques! A must buy for new writers!

Mary says

I use as reference book.

Ms. Yingling says

The only thing wrong with books in this series is that they should really be call "The Definitive Guide to..." The "dummies" designation is needlessly self-deprecating for books that offer huge amounts of invaluable information. The recently updated version of this book is no exception.

It would be helpful if every aspiring children's author read this book. Part I is devoted to understanding children's literature and the market for it. I especially liked that this outlined not only what kind of books publishers are looking for, but also addressed that librarians, parents and teachers need to be taken into consideration because we are often the ones who provide books to children. Very keen insights into what all the various subgroups want to see in a book.

Part II addresses setting up a writing space, and talks about the process of writing, including researching your audience and subject. Again, this is something authors really need to do. Part III and IV concentrate on the writing process, and were extremely helpful. I intend to work through many of the exercises, such as creating a character Bible, and outlining character arcs. Even though many of the writing techniques could be used for different types of writing, it was great that everything is geared for writing for children.

The last part is invaluable-- step by step guide to the convoluted process of bringing your book to the attention of agents and, eventually, publishers. This book is certainly an indispensable tool for writers, and should be kept on the writer's desk right next to a copy of the real Roget's Thesaurus.

Joanne E. Insull says

Excellent resource!

A complete guide to writing, selling, promoting a children's book. Everything you wanted to know and also things you never thought of asking. I really like the way it is organized. Everything is clearly written and interviews with those in the field are extremely helpful.

Kirsti Call says

This book focuses more on writing itself than the mechanics of publishing, although publishing is covered. I really like the interviews of successful children's book writers that pepper the book.

Jena says

I don't typically read "Dummies" books for writing advice. However, I'd heard such good reviews of this book that I was willing to give it a shot and see if there was any additional information I could glean from it in regards to writing picture books. Unfortunately, this is not the book to do that with.

This book is a general look at the entire world of Children's books. And while I was able to find a few new nuggets of information (mostly at the end about the publishing or post-publishing process), it wasn't what I was hoping for. (Though to be fair, I didn't expect it to be entirely what I was looking for given that the title does say "Children's books" not "picture books.")

However, what I found most offensive was the tone of the book. This was written by two different authors who would trade off on sections. Peter would write one section, Lisa another and they would both refer to each other. This was not what I found offensive. What I found offensive was the "talking down" to the reader approach.

Don't get me wrong. I know "DUMMIES" books are supposed to be simple and cover all the bases for someone who is a complete noob to whatever the particular topic at hand is in each volume. THAT was not the problem I had either. The tone was ever so slightly condescending. I've read many writers books over the years addressed to complete novices that have managed to NOT be condescending. It was the one thing that drove me completely nuts about this book and frustrated me. It is the one thing that makes me dislike it and makes me not want to recommend it to others.
