**Thank you for signing up for the “You Can Write for Children” webinar Boot Camp series.**

As with many things, you will get out of this course what you put into it. If you want to simply watch the presentations – or even save the recordings for later – that’s fine. If you can devote a couple of extra hours each week, you’ll make faster progress and likely understand the content better. If you signed up for personal feedback, you’ll get my input on your ideas and eventually a critique of your story or article.

**Contact Me**

I’d like to know more about who’s in this class – your experience level, your specific interests, and what you hope to get out of the class. This will help me direct the material to the group, and skip things that don’t interest anyone. So please send me an e-mail at [ChrisEboch@Gmail.com](mailto:ChrisEboch@Gmail.com) to let me know what’s going on. If you feel confused, scared, or frustrated after going through these instructions, let me know that as well. Depending on how many responses I get on what schedule, I may not be able to reply to everyone individually, but your input will make the course better.

**Get Ready for Session 1**

In our first session, we’ll start with a detailed look at the markets. These include both fiction and nonfiction, in books, magazines, and more. I’ll explain some of the specific requirements when writing in different genres and for different age ranges. This will help you decide where you feel comfortable – or give you many areas to explore! (If you watched the “Five Myths about Writing for Children” presentation, you got a quick overview of this, but we’ll be going into much more detail.)

To prepare for this first session, brainstorm 5 to 10 possible ideas for stories, articles, or novels for young people. If you already have a list of ideas, or projects in development, you can use that, or read through the rest of this sheet and see if anything inspires you.

**Not sure where to find ideas? See below, “Finding Ideas.”**

Another key to coming up with ideas – especially ones that are appropriate for today’s children’s book/magazine markets – is understanding what publishers want. Maybe you are already an avid reader of recent children’s literature. If so, great! Try keeping notes on what you read, if you don’t already. If you read books you love, or ones that seem similar to your work, make a note of the publisher. You may also be able to identify the author’s agent in the acknowledgments, or from the author’s website. This will help you identify which publishers are producing what type of books. Plus, it will give you something to mention in your query letters!

If you are fairly new to modern children’s lit, start with magazines for a good overview (more on writing picture books or novels below). The Cricket Magazine Group is a great place to start. They publish 14 magazines. Some are fiction and some are nonfiction, and they cover age ranges from birth to teen. You can read an online sample of each magazine here: <http://www.cricketmag.com/534-Online-Samples>

You may have a good idea of where you want to start – maybe you are primarily interested in fiction for ages 4-6. But give the other magazines a look anyway. Many people find nonfiction more interesting once they try it, and you may have a great idea that would be better for a different age range.

There are many other magazines out there as well. *Magazine Markets for Children’s Writers* and *Children’s Writers and Illustrators Market* have listings. (I find the former a little easier to use, but you’re more likely to find the latter at your local library.) A search for “children’s magazines” will also bring up lots of links. Many are sites selling magazines, but they give you an overview of what’s out there. If you are interested in writing about a particular sport or hobby, there may be a children’s magazine that addresses it. Most religious groups also have their own magazines for children.

Once you identify a couple of magazines that interest you, check out their writer’s guidelines. Searching for the magazine’s name and “writers guidelines” or “submission guidelines” usually does the trick. Here’s the link for the Cricket Magazine guidelines: <http://www.cricketmag.com/6-Submission-Guidelines-for-kids-magazines-for-children-from-toddlers-to-teens>

Study the magazines and writers guidelines, making a note of the type of content and target audience. Here are some questions to ask:

* What is the target age level?
* Do they use both fiction and nonfiction? If so, what is the rough percentage of each?
* What is their maximum word count? Do most of the stories/articles seem to be at the longer end of the range or at the shorter end?
* Are they open to submissions? What do they want (e.g., a query letter, a proposal, the complete manuscript, a writing sample)?
* Do they list any topics or genres they DON’T want? (e.g., no talking animals, true stories only, etc. Note that some magazines may use their own staff for certain items. For example, they may publish puzzles, but do them all “in house” so they don’t take submissions of puzzles.)

Are you more interested in **picture books**? One of the things I’ll discuss during the first session is the difference between a picture book and a short story, so you know which you are really writing and all the elements a PB needs! To prepare, you might review several of your favorite picture books, or see what’s new at the library/bookstore. It wouldn’t hurt to check out some of those magazines as well. They’re still a good source for understanding the interests and reading abilities of children at different ages. Plus, you might try comparing some magazine stories and some picture books and seeing if you can identify the differences.

If you want to write **novels**, maybe you already have ideas, a work in progress, or finished manuscripts. Don’t worry, we’ll be talking about novels as well! If you feel comfortable with your understanding of the children’s book market, and you already have a project in the works, you can skip this pre-class work. If you are less confident, you might review some recent children’s novels you’ve read and try to identify what made them successful or not successful for you. Reviewing magazines for middle grade and young adult readers can also be a way to tune into the differences between these groups – an important step in knowing what you are writing. Plus, maybe you'll get a new idea for an article or story – maybe even one that uses the themes or research you did for your novel. Finally, if you don’t have specific ideas, take a look at the “Finding Ideas” section below.

**“Finding Ideas”**

Find story and article ideas based on your childhood experiences, fears, dreams, etc.

* What’s the scariest thing that happened to you as a child? The most exciting? The funniest?
* What’s the most fun you ever had as a child? What were your favorite activities?
* What was the hardest thing you had to do as a child?
* What interested you as a child?
* When you were a child, what did you wish would happen?

Find story and article ideas based on the experiences of your children, grandchildren, students, etc.

* What interests them?
* What frightens them?
* What do they enjoy?
* What challenges do they face?
* What does their life involve—school, sports, family, religion, clubs?

What hobbies or interests do you have that might interest child? What jobs or experiences have you had that could be a good starting point for an article or story? Do you know about other cultures, or a particular time period?

What genres do you like? Would it be fun to write in that genre? As a child, did you love mysteries, ghost stories, fantasies or science fiction? What were your favorite books? Why?

Look for inspiration in other stories, books or TV shows. Can you take the premise and write a completely different story? Do you want to write something like that (a clever mystery, or whatever)? Do you want to retell a folktale or fable as a modern version, or with a cultural twist?

What do you see in the news? Is there a timely topic that could make a good article? If you read about kids doing something special, could you turn it into a profile for a children’s magazine? Could you base fiction on a story about someone surviving danger or overcoming great odds?

Even the phonebook can provide inspiration. Could you interview an automotive painter, animal trainer or architect for an article? What would life be like for a child to have parents in that field? How about a teenager who dreams of entering the profession?

Look for things that are scary, exciting or funny—strong emotion makes a strong story.

**Some types of articles:**

Informational

Profile/Interview

Q&A

How-to

Craft/ Recipe

Puzzle

Personal Experience

Self-Help

**Some types of fiction:**

Adventure, mystery

Fairy tales/folktales

Fantasy, science fiction

Historical fiction

Horror

Religious

Romance

Sports