**You Can Write for Children with Chris Eboch, email chriseboch@gmail.com**

For **homework**, revise your story/article, or revise your outline and write a first chapter of a novel. Participants who have signed up for personal feedback can send in up to ten pages of one piece, and receive an individual critique after the class. There is no strict deadline, but try to get it in before the end of the year!

**Editing**

Writing your first draft is only the beginning. Many manuscripts go through multiple revisions – 10, 20, or more! Before you start editing, think about what you need to do. After the first draft, write a one or two sentence synopsis. Define your goal. What is your story about, and why did you want to write it?

Then make a scene list, describing what each scene does.

* Does each scene fulfill the synopsis goal? Does it advance plot, reveal character or both?
* Does each scene build and lead to the next? Are any redundant? If you cut the scene, would you lose anything? Can any secondary characters be combined or eliminated?
* Can you increase the complications, so that at each step, more is at stake, there’s greater risk or a better reward?

(For detailed editing questions, see the Plot Outline Exercise in Chris Eboch’s book [*Advanced Plotting*](http://bookShow.me/1463739303), or available for download on her website: <http://www.chriseboch.com/newsletter.htm>)

Don’t try to edit everything at once. Make several passes, looking for different problems. Start big, then focus in on details:

 Do you need to make major changes to the plot, characters, setting or theme (fiction) or the focus of the topic (nonfiction.)

 Does anything need to be cut, added or moved? Do you have a length limit or target?

 Check for accuracy. Are your facts correct? Are your characters and setting consistent?

 Does each scene (fiction) or paragraph (NF) follow a logical order and stick to the topic?

 Is your point of view consistent?

 Do you have dynamic language: Strong, active verbs? A variety of sentence lengths (but mostly short and to the point)? No clichés? Multiple senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch)?

 Finally, edit for spelling and punctuation.

**Editing Description**

For each detail, ask:

* Does it make the story more believable?
* Does it help readers picture or understand a character or place better?
* Does it answer questions that readers might want answered?
* Does it distract from the action?
* Could it be removed without confusing readers or weakening the story?
* For illustrated work, could the description be replaced by illustrations?

Use more details for unusual/unfamiliar settings. Try using multiple senses—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and the feeling of touch. Especially in picture books, use senses other than sight, which can be shown through the illustrations.

**Critiques**

It’s hard to judge your own work. A critique group can give helpful feedback, offer support, and be an incentive to write on a deadline. Find writing groups through local organizations or classes. Put up notices in library, bookstores, and cafes. Look into online groups – check the discussion boards from SCBWI.

See the separate handout on critiques. If you’re asking a non-writer for a reader’s opinion, ask your readers to mark any place they:

* Are bored
* Are confused
* Don’t believe it

**Submissions**

Direct all queries and submissions to the right person. Print them in the proper format. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) if they ask for it. Query early for timely material.

* Queries letters – stand alone
* Cover letters – introduce included work
* Proposals – mainly for nonfiction books, may include a cover letter, a summary, a chapter-by-chapter outline, an author bio, marketing information, and sample chapters.
* Synopses – mainly for fiction books, one to ten pages of plot summary. Think situation, problem and solution.

Basic Formatting of Your Manuscript (Formatting 101), by Jodie Renner Editing: <http://crimefictioncollective.blogspot.com/2013/04/basic-formatting-of-your-manuscript.html>

A great overview on writing query letters from Wordy Birdie: <http://cleverbirdy.blogspot.com/2010/05/query-letter-basics.html>

Former agent Nathan Bransford has a lot of information on querying agents. Start here with “how to find a literary agent” and follow the links <http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2008/04/how-to-find-literary-agent.html>

[5 Tips for Writing a Novel/Memoir Synopsis](http://writerunboxed.com/2012/02/27/untitled-2-27/), by [Chuck Sambuchino](http://writerunboxed.com/author/csambuchino/):  <http://writerunboxed.com/2012/02/27/untitled-2-27/>

Lots of examples of queries with analysis: <http://queryshark.blogspot.com/>

Query Letter FAQs (Part II): 10 More Questions Answered (and link to Part I in the post): <http://writerunboxed.com/2013/02/25/column/>

There’s e-book on the entire agent-getting process, called From the Query to the Call: <http://elanajohnson.blogspot.com/p/books.html> Scroll down the page until you see that title, and there’s a link to download it.

**Agents:** The Writers Guild of America, west (<http://www.wga.org>) provides an online version of its Agency List. Agencies that will consider new writers are noted. Beware of scams – See Preditors & Editors (<http://pred-ed.com/>) or do an Internet search for the agent or publisher’s name, plus “scam” or “complaints.”

**Self-Publishing**

Download my “Indie Publishing Worksheet” from my Kris Bock website: <http://www.krisbock.com/blog.htm>

Chris Eboch on [Author Choices: Traditional, Self-Publishing, or Hybrid](http://project-middle-grade-mayhem.blogspot.com/2013/03/author-choices-traditional-self.html) and [Self-Publishing and Middle Grade Novels](http://project-middle-grade-mayhem.blogspot.com/2013/03/chris-eboch-on-self-publishing-and.html): Should You or Shouldn’t You? (At Project Mayhem blog)

**Resources**

The **Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators** provides publications on the art and business of writing for young people. SCBWI also publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, and offers awards and grants for published works and works in progress. SCBWI members can join discussion boards covering a wide variety craft and business topics. Many parts of the world have local branches with regular activities, including conferences and/or retreats: [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org).

**Print Resources:**

[*Advanced Plotting*](http://bookShow.me/1463739303): a tool for analyzing your plot, articles on fast starts, developing middles, plot points, cliffhangers, and more advice on making your work stronger.

*The Idiot’s Guide to Children’s Book Publishing,* by Harold Underdown, is an excellent overview of the industry. It explains the different genres, the difference between a magazine story and a picture book manuscript, how to find a publisher, etc.

*Manuscript Makeover,* by Elizabeth Lyon

*Novel Metamorp*hosis, by Darcy Pattison’s

*Second Sight*, by Scholastic editor Cheryl Klein

*Writing Irresistible Kidlit*, by Mary Kole

*Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*, by Renni Browne and Dave King: highly recommended for advice and exercises on improving your style

*Anatomy of Nonfiction*, by Margery Facklam, Peggy Thomas

*Writing It Right! How Successful Children’s Authors Revise and Sell Their Stories*, by Sandy Asher, studies 21 manuscripts (picture books, magazine stories, novels and more) from early drafts to revisions. Great insight into the editing process.

*Yes! You Can Learn How to Write Children’s Books, Get Them Published, and Build a Successful Writing Career*, by Nancy I. Sanders: info on finding work for hire, writing proposals.

*The Writers Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, Christopher Vogler (based on Hero's Journey)

**Web Resources:**

Children’s magazines w/links to websites**:** <http://www.monroe.lib.in.us/childrens/kidsmags.html>

Chris’s Plot Arc Exercise as a free Word download: <http://www.krisbock.com/blog.htm>

Chris’s Write Like a Pro! blog at <http://chriseboch.blogspot.com/> has writing craft tips.

Harold Underdown’s FAQs about the industry: <http://www.underdown.org/basic-articles.htm>

Cheryl Klein and James Monohan’s Narrative Breakdown podcast series: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/narrative-breakdown-podcast/id430791642>

Blockbuster Plots for Writers, <http://www.blockbusterplots.com/resc/plot_test.html> has a test that shows whether your writing is more character driven or plot driven.

Joseph Campbell’s Hero's Journey: [http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's\_journey.htm](http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero%27s_journey.htm)

Story analysis at Doug Eboch’s blog on Screenwriting: http://letsschmooze.blogspot.com

Story Skeletons: Plot Structure with Picture Books: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/22242>

Plot Maps by Lee Wardlaw, Project Mayhem: <http://tinyurl.com/bv66ozf>

Example of plot mapping via Caroline Starr Rose: <http://tinyurl.com/kb2tyod>

The Blake Snyder Beat Sheet <http://www.blakesnyder.com/tools/>

Links to cool plot tools: <http://mollyblaisdell.blogspot.com/2013/05/blooming-plot.html>

Janet Fox’s Diagram of Plot Points for different systems: <http://tinyurl.com/lscpqfl>

Dianne K. Salerni shares her plotting technique <http://tinyurl.com/kq4qxsq>

Strong starts, by Keith Cronin: <http://tinyurl.com/lzuac8l>

Janice Hardy has a fantastic blog of craft tips, Fiction University <http://blog.janicehardy.com/>

When to stop revising: <http://www.adventuresinagentland.com/2014/05/a-bad-case-of-revisionitis.html>

Chris offers novel **critiques** for $1.50 per page (standard manuscript format; minimum $100). Picture books/short stories/articles up to 1500 words are $40. Get details and recommendations at [www.chriseboch.com/newsletter.htm](http://www.chriseboch.com/newsletter.htm) or email chriseboch@gmail.com to arrange a critique.

Chris is the author of 30 books for kids. Learn more or read excerpts at [www.chriseboch.com](http://www.chriseboch.com) or [her Amazon page](http://www.amazon.com/Chris-Eboch/e/B001JS25VE/).

[*The Genie’s Gift*](http://bookShow.me/0615905374)is a lighthearted action novel set in the fifteenth-century Middle East, drawing on the mythology of *The Arabian Nights*. Shy and timid Anise determines to find the Genie Shakayak and claim the Gift of Sweet Speech. But the way is barred by a series of challenges, both ordinary and magical. How will Anise get past a vicious she-ghoul, a sorceress who turns people to stone, and mysterious sea monsters, when she can’t even speak in front of strangers?

[*The Eyes of Pharaoh*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/1460959434)*,* set in Egypt in 1177 BC, brings an ancient world to life. When Reya hints that Egypt is in danger from foreign nomads, Seshta and Horus don’t take him seriously. How could anyone challenge Egypt? Then Reya disappears. To save their friend, Seshta and Horus spy on merchants, soldiers, and royalty, and start to suspect even The Eyes of Pharaoh, the powerful head of the secret police. Will Seshta and Horus escape the traps set for them, rescue Reya, and stop the plot against Egypt in time? For ages nine and up.

In [*The Well of Sacrifice*](http://bookShow.me/0395903742), a Mayan girl in ninth-century Guatemala rebels against the High Priest who sacrifices anyone challenging his power. Kirkus Reviews called *The Well of Sacrifice*, “[An] engrossing first novel….Eboch crafts an exciting narrative with a richly textured depiction of ancient Mayan society….The novel shines not only for a faithful recreation of an unfamiliar, ancient world, but also for the introduction of a brave, likable and determined heroine.”

Chris’s *Haunted* series follows a brother and sister who travel with their parents’ ghost hunter TV show. The kids try to help the ghosts, while keeping their activities secret from meddling grownups. [*The Ghost on the Stairs*](http://bookShow.me/1416975489)is set at a Colorado hotel haunted by a ghost bride from the 1880s who is waiting for her missing husband to return. [*The Riverboat Phantom*](http://bookShow.me/1416975497) features a steamboat pilot still trying to prevent a long-ago disaster. In [*The Knight in the Shadows*](http://bookShow.me/1416975500)*—*winner ofthe 2010 New Mexico Book Awards in the category Juvenile Book***—***a Renaissance French squire protects a sword on display at a New York City museum. During [*The Ghost Miner’s Treasure*](http://bookShow.me/B009M8T33Q)*,* Jon and Tania help a dead man find his lost gold mine—but they’re not the only ones looking for it.

[J*esse Owens: Young Record Breaker*](http://bookshow.me/1416939229) and[*Milton Hershey: Young Chocolatier*](http://bookShow.me/1416955690) are inspirational biographies in Simon & Schuster’s Childhood of Famous Americans series, written under the name M.M. Eboch. J*esse Owens* would be especially suitable for young athletes, while *Milton Hershey* might appeal to kids who struggle in school, as Milton did. They are full-length books at a middle grade interest level, but written at a third-grade reading level.

Chris also writes for adults under the name Kris Bock. Kris Bock writes novels of suspense and romance involving outdoor adventures and Southwestern landscapes. [*Counterfeits*](http://bookShow.me/B00GQOEE9M) starts a new series about stolen Rembrandt paintings that may be hidden in a small New Mexico art camp. [*Whispers in the Dark*](http://bookShow.me/0615582230)features archaeology and intrigue among ancient Southwest ruins.[*What We Found*](http://bookShow.me/B0094V0OD4) is a suspense with romantic elements about a young woman who finds a murder victim in the woods. [*Rattled*](http://bookShow.me/0615462472) follows the hunt for a long-lost treasure in the New Mexico desert. Read excerpts at [www.krisbock.com](http://www.krisbock.com) or visit her [Amazon page](http://www.amazon.com/Kris-Bock/e/B006WV4I5O/).