

10 ELEMENTS OF A GOOD PICTURE BOOK

STORY & PLOT

What do you want to tell? Can you distill it to 500 - 700 words?

Original Idea/Original Approach: it's probably not a new idea but find a new way to tell it.



ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations help convey the tone (mood) of the text and the intent of the story.

Always consider the read aloud factor.

STRONG CHARACTER

Is your main character relatable? Believable? Endearing? Are they the agent of change and do they drive the story?

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

There needs to be some emotional connection for the reader.

And it needs to present itself in the character, story line, writing & illustrations.

WRITING & STRUCTURE GO TOGETHER

There's a musicality to words and writing. Are you choosing lyrical, rhyme, word play?

It should be enjoyable for the reader & for the audience.

Structure is the blueprint for your story. It organizes your thoughts.

- free verse
- non-conflict
- rhyme
- lyrical
- dialogue
- dual POV
- cumulative
- circular

BE AUTHENTIC

THEMES & LAYERS

What themes will drive your story, or look for a theme that presents itself as you write. From there, look for layers you can enhance to enrich the story.

Structure is the blueprint of your story.

PACING

Does the story move along?
Does it drag in spots?
Too much narrative?
Too much dialogue?
Where do the climax & resolution fall?

**ELEMENTS OF A GOOD
PICTURE BOOK**

HERE'S WHAT WE DISCUSS

**FIRST LINES
LAST LINES
STORY ARC
CHARACTER
PAGE TURNS
LAYERS
READ ALOUD FACTOR
ILLUSTRATIONS
WORD CHOICE
WORD COUNT
EDITING
STORY STRUCTURES
ENGAGING THE READER
THEMES
LINE LEVEL WRITING
REFRAINS
STORY/PLOT
ENTRY TO THE STORY
(WHERE DOES THE STORY
START?)**

**CONFLICT / TENSION
DIALOGUE & TAGS
LAYERS
EMOTIONAL CONNECTION
(EMOTIONAL RESONANCE)
PACING
SATISFYING ENDINGS
RHYME
WHAT IS VOICE?
SUBMISSIONS
THE PITCH
THE HOOK
(IDEA/CONCEPT)**

PICTURE BOOK STORY STRUCTURES



Can you incorporate The Rule of Three?

Classic Picture Book Plot Structure:

Step 1 – Introduction. This is the beginning of your story.

Step 2 – Introduce the Problem.

Step 3 – Solution Attempt #1.

Step 4 – Solution Attempt #2.

Step 5 – Solution Attempt #3.

Step 6 – Climax/Sense of Failure or Doubt.

Step 7 – Solution/Ending

The rule of 7 and 12 are also great, if you have a lot of problems, like in THE RABBIT LISTENED

List - 17 THINGS I'M NOT ALLOWED TO DO ANYMORE, 100 THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY and TEN RULES OF THE BIRTHDAY WISH.

How-To - HOW TO READ A BOOK, HOW TO PUT YOUR PARENTS TO BED and HOW TO BABYSIT A GRANDMA.

Cumulative - OHANA MEANS FAMILY, THERE WAS AN OLD DRAGON and THE CAZUELA THAT THE FARM MAIDEN STIRRED.

Dialogue-driven - ALMA, CLAYMATES and SNAPPSY THE ALLIGATOR.

Lyrical - No main plot. Quiet, contemplative Such as, BLUE ON BLUE, LAYLA'S HAPPINESS and A PORTRAIT IN POEMS.

Variety of viewpoints/Dual POV - BORIS AND BELLA, DEAR DRAGON and SAME, SAME BUT DIFFERENT.

Circular (where the story starts and ends in the same place)

Poetic - A New School Year, JUST LIKE ME

Breaking Rules - RESPECT

Epistolary - a story told through letters, diary or emails. DEAR PRIMO, MY SCHOOL STINKS

Meta - A story that refers to itself. BLOB, WALL IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS BOOK, THIS BOOK HAS NO PICTURES

But then...Rules are gatekeepers. Know them. Practice. Then Break them.

Is your story a **Story** or an **Account**?

Is your story entertaining, enlightening, enchanting or educating the reader (or a blend of all). The Four Es.

A story about a bear who gets up in the morning, makes breakfast, goes shopping, meets a friend for lunch, hangs out the washing, feeds the chicks, reads a book, makes dinner and goes to bed is NOT a story. It's an account. Many, many, many stories are just an account.

A story DOES something to the reader. It makes them feel, smile, cry, understand, learn.

<http://taniamccartney.blogspot.com/2016/08/ask-tania-picture-book-structure.html>

