

ILLUSTRATOR PRESENTATIONS AUGUST 23RD SCBWI MEETING

Chapter Illustrators chair, Bobbie Dacus presented the meeting's three panelists. Their presentations were followed by an open discussion. The meeting was well attended by both illustrators and authors, both of whom, because of the need to coordinate their work, benefit from a better understanding of each other's jobs and what editors expect from both.

ALAN STACY

Alan's presentation was about several elements of illustration. As he talked, he demonstrated his points on a flit chart for better understanding.

His first topic had to do with the five acts or scenes needed for breaking a story into illustrative form. Next he presented ways of breaking down individual scenes into the most important elements of the story, i.e. character, setting and action. This was followed by a discussion of the necessary association and collaboration between the writer of a story, the illustrator and ultimately the reader, which an understanding of can make things easier for all. The next topic was about the rollercoaster analogy (which he opined can make one throw-up) of building a story. He supplemented the talk with hand drawn examples, animated films and mythology, along with a few pointers, about his personal working methods.

JANEE TRASLER

Janee also made a number of important points in her presentation. Her basic points, which she fully expanded on were:

- Illustration as a business and the need to use whatever tools you need to get the job done before a deadline.
- There is no *perfect* immutable way to do things. Do whatever works best for you to produce your illustrations.
- Putting up a website isn't enough. You need to market your work through various channels.
- If you don't send your work to publishers, they can't hire you.
- Aim high
- Whether to use an illustration representative is a personal choice. Do what's best for you.
- Listen to your gut. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.
- Art directors can't always see your vision. Make sketches or a dummy to show what you're trying to do.
- Sometimes a narrow focus will get you further than being a jack-of-all-trades.
- Don't let your inner critique keep you from trying.
- Don't burn bridges in this business. Today's overworked assistant, could be tomorrow's hiring art director.

- You may never be satisfied with your work, but that's okay. It keeps you growing and reaching.

SUE WARD

Sue added a great deal to the preceding presentations. Her points were:

- Developing your portfolio is the most important thing you can do. Your cover letter is not.
- Your knowledge of books and familiarity with how stories are developed is supremely important.
- Trends can pass you up while you try to imitate them. This means, *be yourself*. Work your own style and be consistent with it. Art Agent Christine Tugeau says selecting an artist is like trying on clothes. Some are right for the event, others are not. But...they might be right for the next event.
- The shelf life of a book for large publishers, in today's market, is approximately a year to a year and a half, unless it is paying for itself big time. The result is, in most cases, there will be no royalties beyond the advance.
- Small, regional publishers give less of an advance and sell fewer books but the shelf life of their products can be 5-10 years. They are also supportive of their illustrators and more likely to use them than take on a new artist.
- Educational art can be a filler for artists waiting for a picture book to come along, working on a picture book or waiting for an AD to send corrections.
- Ways of getting attention:
 - Include older children (10-12 YOA). Chapter and series books are a growing market.
 - Try some black and white illustrations for chapter books.
 - Every page should be designed as a poster on its own (Jody Taylor)
 - Board books and pre-K are a shrinking market.
 - Send 12-15 pieces with your name and address on each.
 - Put them in a pocket folder or such.
 - Some suggest making cute art on the folder or use clear envelopes. That's fine, but many ADs don't open their own mail so they never see the envelope.
 - Post cards. Not my favorite way. The P.O. runs the stamp machine over the front and back. Visual is what you're selling and it may get lined out.
 - Envelopes are relatively cheap. A box of 4"x5" to fit your post cards in, a few pennies for postage and your art will be at its visual best.
 - Check SCBWI National's list for agents who invite you to send a short note and your web address. If you want to show more than one style, include several of each to illustrate that you are at ease with all of them.
 - Send several illustrations a year to those that respond well, but always send something different.