

Write Mentor: Unguided Rhyming Picture Book Course
By Catherine Emmett

SESSION 1 – What Picture Book Are You Writing?

What makes picture books special?

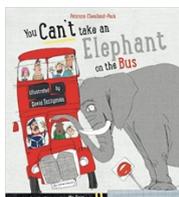
- They must be easy to read aloud as they are designed to be read out to another person.
- The need to have a story that is simple enough for a young child to understand, but also satisfying enough to be read over and over again by an adult.
- They must leave room for the pictures, as 50% of the package will come from the illustrator.
- They must have a strong concept – the story may be short, but it must be ‘big enough to merit its telling’.

Which books are good examples of a strong concept?

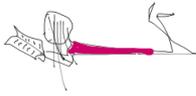


‘Stuck’ by Olivier Jeffers

Floyd gets his kite stuck up a tree. He tries to throw things up there to shift it, but they also get ...STUCK



‘You can’t take an Elephant on a Bus’ by Patricia Cleveland Peck and David Tazzyman
Animals cause total disaster as they try to travel in the most unsuitable vehicles.



'I want my Hat Back' by Jon Klassen

This book tells the story of a bear whose hat has gone. And he wants it back.



'The Runaway Pea' by Kjartan Poskitt and Alex Wilmore

It's time for tea, but one pesky pea has decided to ping himself off the plate in search of a party.

What do all of these books have in common?

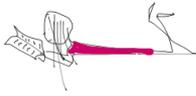
- 1 – A concept that appeals to very young children
- 2 – Originality and / or a unique voice
- 3 – They have a clear PURPOSE
- 4 – they have a simple idea distilled to its CORE.

1 – Does your concept appeal to very young children?

- **Toys stuck in a tree** - every child has had a frisbee, ball or a kite stuck in a tree at some point, or at least they can relate to the frustration that this would cause.
- **Large animals going on different types of transport** – children are familiar with different types of animals from a very young age and can easily imagine the issues that might arise.
- **A bear who wants his hat back** – children wanting their belongings back is playground fodder all over the world.
- **A pea who runs away for the dinner plate** – every child has seen a pea ping off the plate and could easily imagine where it might end up.

2 – How can you make your story more original?

- Put a twist on an existing tale Eg 'Rapunzel to the Rescue' by Lucy May Rowland and Katy Halford where a prince with magical hair is saved by the gutsy Rapunzel.
- Use a different point of view



- Reverse your thinking

- Look at current events

- Hone your Voice.

3 – What is the purpose of your story?

A book with a really clear purpose is something like ‘Ruby’s Worry’ by Tom Percival.

How can Ruby get rid of her worry and feel like herself again?



You can easily see exactly why a parent would buy this book and imagine the conversations that might be started around it.

4 - Have you found your CORE?

Ann Whitford Paul:

“A picture book isn’t just a story about **one thing** – it is a story about **one element of one thing.**”

HOMEWORK:

Figure out what sort of picture book you are writing. Use the EXAMPLES sheet to help you. Think about what the ingredients are for that sort of book.

Make sure that your concept is:

- Child friendly
- Original
- Has a clear purpose
- Is distilled to its core

Try and drill down into exactly what it is your book is going to be about and express it in just one sentence.

Happy writing!