

Improve Writing with an Author Focus Group

by Bobbie Hinman -

<http://greatstorybook.com/improve-writing-author-focus-group/>

This entry is part 6 of 6 in the series [Editing Refined](#)

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- Improve Writing with an Author Focus Group

This is about how to become a better writer, how to improve your writing with an Author Focus Group. It's a Focus Group that helps the author hone a story and get it ready for publication.

If you are one of the thousands of people choosing to self-publish their books, who will assist you? Without the guidance of a traditional publisher, who will tell you if your idea is one that children will love? Your parents? Your Facebook friends?

Artwork by Pexels.

Before you delve into the writing process, you will need to determine both your idea and your audience. For example, if you already have your idea and your goal is to write a story about dinosaurs, you can then decide on your audience and write it specifically for them.

A dinosaur story for three-year-olds will be much different than one geared to first graders. Or, if you choose your audience first, such as second grade, you can talk to second graders. See what they are reading and where their interests lie; let their answers help lead you to an idea.

You need to know who you are writing for before you write a book so the story can be carefully tailored to the specific age range.

Once you have narrowed down your audience, read all the books you can find that were written for that particular age group. Take note of the ideas, vocabulary and approximate number of words on each page.

As soon as your story has been written, the absolute, very best feedback you can get is from a focus group. Create a focus group of nieces, nephews, neighbors, etc. Ask kindergarten teachers if they will allow you to visit their classrooms to read your story. I have done this on numerous occasions and have been welcomed each time. With each of my books, I organized several decidedly unorganized focus groups consisting of all the children in my daughter's neighborhood.

I can now tell you from experience that children are honest, maybe brutally so.

What did I learn?

I learned that the ending to my book (an ending that I thought made perfect sense) didn't make sense to the ones who would be reading (or hearing) it. Luckily, these little Einsteins had wonderful ideas for what the ending should have been. I can now say with pride that the last line in *The Knot Fairy* was actually written by a seven-year-old! Read your stories to kids and listen carefully to what they have to say.

The message here is simple: Don't skimp on research; it's free! Find out what the audience you are trying to capture is actually reading. Ask librarians and bookstore employees what parents are reading to their children. Find out what children love. Once you know what the best-selling books all have in common, all you need to do is make yours better.

Books by Bobbie Hinman

The Knot Fairy, *The Sock Fairy*, *The Belly Button Fairy*, *The Fart Fairy* and *The Freckle Fairy*. Also: *How to Create a Successful Children's Picture Book*.

This entry is part of the series

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