

## **My Storybook Process (Part 4): creating the manuscript for a children's book**

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/my-storybook-process-part-4-creating-the-manuscript/>

This entry is part 4 of 10 in the series [My Storybook Process](#)

[My Storybook Process](#)

- [My Storybook Process \(Part 1\): creating a new thing](#)
- [My Storybook Process \(Part 2\): creating new characters](#)
- [My Storybook Process \(Part 3\): creating the story](#)
- My Storybook Process (Part 4): creating the manuscript for a children's book
- [My Storybook Process \(Part 5\): creating rising action](#)
- [My Storybook Process \(Part 6\): um... now I'm a procrastinating writer \\*ahem](#)
- [My Storybook Process \(Part 7\): creating an ending](#)
- [How to Stay Motivated to Finish Your Story: 7 ways](#)
- [How to Procrastinate \(yes, there IS a right way!\)](#)
- [Falling Hard and Writing Anyway](#)

I'm now into week four of creating the first Bunny and Witch story, and I've worked my way through a few manuscript drafts. What I'm able to share right now are the first 9 pages of the storybook. This is the manuscript version I currently have to work with, but that doesn't necessarily mean it is the FINAL draft.

As I start now to get more serious about creating the images for each page [noted and described in the manuscript with [carrot brackets](#): <PANEL #: And then a description. >], there's still the possibility that I'll realize something is missing – or that something needs to be cut.

**The reason for this (and the reason I need to keep an open mind about it – since I'm both writer and illustrator with this project) is because the images will add another layer to the telling of the story.**

Going through the process of creating more artwork with the characters will reveal to me – quite literally SHOW me – what it is I need to really make the story click and flow.

I've decided to create the images in Adobe Illustrator because I want a crisp look. This is a still-too-early image of Witch with Bunny. I like Bunny, but for Witch I've completely changed her hair and face

shape. Also ditched the hat. See new Witch below.

## Working Through Drafts Via Artwork

There have been times when I realized that a story was lagging a bit. I didn't reach that point until several drafts of the manuscript and a drawing. For a story I'm working on right now (in a collaboration with artist Georgie Edwoods), she playfully sketched-out a scene for the protagonist, one where our hero is having teatime.

This moment wasn't in my original manuscript, but as soon as I saw it, I realized that it was necessary. You see, at that point, Georgie hadn't read my manuscript. I had simply told her the story in a Skype session. I told her who the characters were and what they were like. To express the story, I shared [important details](#) about the characters.

When Georgie made that teatime drawing, she was showing me what I had neglected to show in the story. So I changed the manuscript to add that really important piece into it – very early on in the story, too.

If you collaborate on a storybook, let your artist breathe and have input on the story. Make sure they create what's in your manuscript, but if they're inspired to do more – terrific! If you've picked [the right person for the project](#), they may well just create more.

This train set might not get used at all. Not sure. Used this to test-out which Witch I wanted. The newer Witch is warmer, easier to like - as she should be.

## Here's a bit of Manuscript (so far)

When I plan the pages of any storybook manuscript, I don't just plan the actual story. The reason is because even if I plan to pitch a story to an editor, I will still create a professional looking hardback (or paperback, depending on the project) mock-up.

In the case of Bunny and Witch, I'll be creating a hardback mock-up in full color. I'll use that as a [galley print](#) to make sure it looks the way I want it to, and I'll also use my galleys to send out to book reviewers.

So I've delineated certain pages that I know I'll need in the book. I don't want the book to be thicker than the norm (32 pages), so some types of pages will [cut-into my story space](#): Title Page, Copyright, Acknowledgements, After Reading Questions (I decided this book needs those), and a personal note to adult readers.

When I started to plan my manuscript pages, I realized that my Title Page would need to be used for part of the story. So here's what I did: I stretched the visual telling of this part of the story from PAGE 1 through to PAGE 3.

I'm confident this will work, because I've seen text shown on a Title Page before. If it isn't too text heavy and rhymes, it doesn't get overlooked. I won't know for sure until I get the print mock-up though.

**I am taking a little risk here. I may realize later that I need to shift all the pages around somehow. If that happens, it would be a real mess for me because [page-turning is a critical storytelling decision](#).**

**COVER:**

<PANEL 1: Bunny and Witch stand arm-in-arm, looking at us and smiling together.>

**PAGE 1: Title Page. (Right)**

There's just one word you may have heard  
with magic possibility.  
If you say it nice and true  
things go very favorably.

<PANEL 1: Witch sees Bunny playing with two dolls. She's immediately interested and sneaky. Here we just see Witch, and a bit of Bunny's arm and the coveted toy.>

**PAGE 2: Copyright & Dedication Page (Left)**

<PANELS 1-4: Individual pictures of these objects: 1. the boy doll, 2. the girl dolly, 3. the robot, 4. the dinosaur.>

**PAGE 3: (Right)**

Bunny had two little toys  
And liked them very much.  
Then Witch came by and saw what fun.  
Was Witch jealous? Just a touch.

<PANEL 1: Witch covets the toy. We now see Bunny more fully, playing with her two dolls.>

## **Deciding where words go**

In planning a storybook, it's important to remember that the words need to fit somewhere on or around a picture or pictures. At this stage, I'm already thinking about [where my panels should go](#) on the page.

I've decided that the stanzas will probably go underneath the panels, and that the dialogue I've written for the characters will be directly on them. To help me more easily read my own manuscript, I've put [all the dialogue](#) *in italics*.

**PAGE 4: (Left)**

*Mine!*

Without a word, Witch grabbed a toy.  
It didn't matter which.  
Before, she was so happy. Now?

Bunny was shocked at Witch.

<**PANEL 1:** Witch takes one of the dolls from Bunny without asking, saying MINE. Bunny looks quite upset.>

**PAGE 5: (Right)**

*No.*

Bunny wanted her toy back but  
Witch just did not care. Though  
it was mean and made her friend cry,  
she did not want to share.

<**PANEL 1:** Bunny reaches up towards the dolly that Witch stole. Witch holds up an arm to stop her, saying NO, and holds the dolly out of Bunny's reach. She won't share. A tear falls on Bunny's cheek, her brows furrowed.>

You may have noticed that next to the **PAGE #**, I've included a **(Right)** or **(Left)**. This is a note to myself, to help me keep clear in my mind what will be on the left side of the book and what will be on the right.

If you submit your manuscript to an illustrator, I would keep that in for them. If you submit your manuscript to an editor, I would take that out for them.

This also helps me keep track of where the page-turns are. Again, that's vital for [keeping pace to a story](#).

In the next pages, I've decided to use full spreads. Even though I've got some of the story on the Title Page, I want these pages to have that extra space, to pace the story. When the reader turns a page, that is an action that impacts your story as much as the illustrations do.

**PAGE 6-7: (Spread)**

Bunny is a smart girl and she  
understands her friend.  
Bunny found another toy  
and just used that instead.

<**PANEL 1:** Witch still has the dolly but sees Bunny playing with the boy doll and a robot now, her face a little red from crying. Witch wants the robot. Bunny's brows are raised as she pretends not to notice Witch.>

I have the illustration for this spread. Here it is.

**PAGE 8-9: (Spread)**

*Give me!*

Once again, Witch wanted something  
Someone else's source of fun.  
This time Bunny was quite ready  
and this time, she won!

<**PANEL 1:** Witch tries to grab the robot from Bunny, with the words GIVE ME - but this time Bunny is ready. She pulls it from Witch's grasp so she can't get at it. Bunny's eyes are closed, her tongue out.>

This is where I'll stop. The rest of the manuscript and why I split the pages up the way I did (so far) is something I'll need to explain next week. Otherwise, it's just an information overload.

Sign up for my newsletter and I'll send that right to you. What about you? What are you working on – or thinking of working on these days? Write below, let me know – or send me an email.

Keep creating, no matter what.

**This entry is part of the series**

[My Storybook Process](#)

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