

How to decide what to write about

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/how-to-decide-what-to-write-about/>

This entry is part 2 of 4 in the series [Writer's Block](#)

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How to decide what to write about.

What is it you want to write? The older I get, the more I realize how important it is to answer this deceptively simple question. And it *is* simple, because if we break it down, it becomes, “What do you (as a writer and reader) want to *do*?”

“What do you want to do?”

For many people, this is a really tough question.

Whether it's about tonight or this weekend or for dinner, the question of what we want is one that either gives us pause or that we simply defer: “I don't know. What do you want to do?”

When it comes to certain types of writing, like what I do on my blog, it makes sense for a writer to ask this question. The words are a little different, but the sentiment is at its core the same: “How can I help you? Send me your questions and comments.”

When writers ask this question, we're asking, “What do you want me to write about?” So the endless question of, “What do I (the writer) want to write?” is deferred to *you*, the reader – and thankfully, you tell me. Whew!

But what about fiction, and in particular, the types of stories we write for kids? Stories with pictures would seem to be a type of writing that's completely different from blogging. Surely. You can't really just ask people what kind of stories they want, right?

Well... yes and no.

Overcoming the Curse of Knowledge

Blogging and non-fiction writing is unquestionably something that easily prompts a writer to ask other people questions. There is the long tradition of the “curse of knowledge,” so the best way for someone to remember what’s needed at the *earlier* stages of learning (the learning process never ends!) is to communicate with others and ask questions.

[NOTE: Steffan Berk pointed out to me that I neglected to explain what the Curse of Knowledge is. A-ha! [Case in point.](#)]

“What do you want to know about this?” It’s the most important question for a writer to ask (every day), because the answers dictate our next several hours of writing.

Can we do this for fiction writing?

Yes, we can and many of you probably do it already without realizing it. If a child or grandchild has inspired you to write a storybook, there was most likely at some point in the back of your mind a mini-dialogue. The child indicated a need, you realized there was a need and you decided to fill it.

Example: Your child has reoccurring nightmares and you’ve devised a way to help him or her deal with the nightmares and have more restful nights. It works, your idea.

This book (with a magic stone, handmade by the writer) is a great idea from Hilary Lazor. [You can get her book at Etsy.](#)

And by scanning the Internet you realize that many parents are looking for ways to help their children overcome the same problem. So you write and rewrite the idea as a story - for everyone, and bring it to the market. That’s what Hilary Lazor (from [our Facebook Group](#)) did.

How to decide the *form* of the idea

Should the idea be shared in a non-fictional or fictional way? Should it be an [illustrated storybook](#), a [graphic novel](#), a [chapter book](#)? What form should the story take?

The way you as a writer decide to answer that can take you in nearly any direction.

Either ask the child or imagine what most children would want. Deep down, you’ll probably be able to make a decision for yourself pretty quickly. You’ll know what it is you actually want to do. Do what you want to do – always.

Yes, you can [research the market](#). That is always an option and a good idea. But what is much more important is that you make your decision for the love of what you’re doing. If you don’t love your story, that *lack* will shine through in your final draft.

The best research = test your audience.

Don't ever release your story without an editor first checking everything. And don't ever release your story without first having a [reading group](#) test your story first.

If the story is for kids, ask your [local librarian](#) if it's all right for you to read your unpublished book to kids. They will probably say yes if they like your book. If they don't like your book, ask them for feedback – and take it. Both hands! If there's anything librarians know, it's what makes a book great. If it isn't great, they'll know why and can tell you.

Make sure your idea gets translated into a great story. Then get it on the market any way you can. [Publish](#) it, [produce](#) it, [get an agent](#). Bring it!

Keep creating, no matter what.

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