

To Storybook Mock-up or Not to Mock-up?

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/to-storybook-mock-up-or-not-to-mock-up/>

This entry is part 4 of 6 in the series [How to Start](#)

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This is about the importance of creating a storybook mock-up and determining whether or not you should make one.

I was recently asked, “Do I really need to make a storybook mock-up?” I get asked this about once a month, so I thought I’d give the question some serious attention, here. Regardless of what you might read elsewhere, the short answer is: YES.

But the real answer addresses when and why you’ll want to create a mock-up, who should see it and under what circumstances. To be clear, there are times when presenting a mock-up is inappropriate, but they are specific - I’ll get to that.

Ultimately, the slightly longer answer is yes, sort-of-no and yes again.

The first YES.

If you’ve decided to embark on your [first illustrated storybook](#), create a storybook mock-up. Always.

This is the best way to really grasp the affect of a [page turn](#) happening before or after a particular sentence. You’ll be better able to pace your story, to establish a rhythm for it. Too, you’ll be able to see more or less how the book will [look and read](#).

You can think of this as a sort of [storyboarding process](#), the only difference being that you’ll bind the

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pages together and determine that some pages show one image and other pages might show several (to indicate action, or a series of emotions, or a series of things that are important).

A storybook mock-up is the only way you'll be able to really plan-out your panels (a.k.a. pictures) and where they should go.

- If you are illustrating the book yourself, you'll naturally need to do this.
- If you're hiring an illustrator, it will help you prepare your Illustrator's Manuscript so that you can give them the right type of information.

The Sort-of-No.

So you have your storybook mock-up. Do you send that to publishers? No. That's where the sort-of-no comes.

The mock-up at this point is for you, to help you understand what to tell your illustrator and to help you conceptualize your story as a product with physical attributes that impact the telling of the story (read: the pictures and the page turns).

If you want to submit your manuscript to a [publisher](#) – or first, [to an agent](#) – then your mock-up will really just be for you, *unless you are the artist*. If you're creating your own work, then they'll absolutely want to see what you've done.

If you are not the artist and want to submit your manuscript (via mail or email), you should really only send your Editor's Manuscript. No matter what, always check to see what the agent or editor wants.

They all have a Submissions Guidelines and while there are many similarities, none are exactly the same. So be sure to not only read that; read it carefully. Only give them what they want.

The second YES.

If you plan to *meet* the agent or editor face to face, it's good to bring some kind of visual. I would suggest 1-3 images from your artist – unless the storybook is also a [Novelty Item](#).

If you're [pitching a novelty item](#), a complete mock-up is almost necessary. Try to have the mock-up as completed and polished looking as possible.

Bottom Line Summary

When to do a storybook mock-up:

- For yourself, to help you pace your story and communicate with an artist.
- For the editor or agent, when pitching a novelty item.

When not to do a storybook mock-up:

- If emailing or mailing a submission, do not send a mock-up.
- If meeting in person, show 1-3 images as a visual aid. Not a mock-up (unless it's a novelty – see above).

What to NEVER Do, Ever

Never insert the story text or sound effects (examples: oomph! Gasp! Aaargh!) on your *original* artwork. It makes me cringe when I see this, because I know that it means the creator will need to redo all or most of the artwork.

If you ever need to change any aspect of the story for any reason, inserting words directly onto a picture can lead to a devastating editing job that means recreating several pages. If a single picture needs to be removed, or a paragraph, that means all the pages after the change might also be impacted.

The other thing to consider is this: if you hope to have your story available in other languages, the only way to enable that is to keep the text separate from the images.

Put the words together with your images for the mock-up, of course. Just don't put the words on the original images.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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