

The Truth About Writing for Kids

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/truth-writing-kids/>

This entry is part 8 of 8 in the series [How to Start](#)

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- The Truth About Writing for Kids

This gets down to plainly uncovering the truth about writing for kids, and about dispelling some of the most common misunderstandings and myths about what it is like to be a kidlit author.

What is it really like to be a children's book writer? Here's what you need to know, straight-up.

As a writer, blogger and creative writing teacher, there are certain misconceptions I've noticed cropping up again and again, certain ideas about being a writer that seem to be very common. So I want to tackle those right here, one by one.

If you've considered writing a story of any kind at all, your mind has probably brought you to illustrated stories. Sooner or later, this becomes a writer's dream. But it shouldn't be because you think it's easier - it isn't.

Writing for kids isn't kid's play. (But it is fun!)

Commonly Thought: *Writing a story for kids is easier than writing a story for adults.*

Quality story writing is a challenge [no matter what the reader's age](#). You have to remember too that writing for young people means you need to have the best grammar and perfect spelling. Your writing has to be tops, *otherwise you're teaching kids all the wrong things to do as writers*.

Illustrated storybooks are not easy peasy lemon squeezy.

Commonly Thought: *Writing a story with pictures is the easiest form of writing.*

Illustrated storybooks are a huge challenge. You just won't have the [word count](#) should you need more room to get a point across, so your writing has to be seriously on target. Fewer words, simpler words, and yet – you've got to make it worthwhile, memorable, a story to retell over and over because it's about characters we love.

This is a really tall order.

Remember too: the *competition* on the book market is greatest here. Everyone wants to try it, even people who don't really consider themselves writers (like celebrities, for example – and my neighbor).

Don't rhyme all the time.

Commonly Thought: *Writing for kids will be more successful if it rhymes.*

Stories that rhyme help support language development and memorization skills. We know this to be true. It's been demonstrated in many studies. But editors at most publishing houses don't really want rhyming stories.

Surprising, I know. The reasons for this are two-fold.

1. Rhyming stories are exceptionally hard to write well. Just because a story rhymes, that doesn't mean it's a successful story. [It has to hold together on multiple levels](#). So if you announce your story is in rhyme, this will generally cause a negative knee-jerk reaction. That means your writing has to be incredibly strong, incredibly winsome.
2. In today's book market, it's [essential that a book be marketable on an international scale](#). That means your rhyming text will need to be translated, probably into 3 or more languages. Story translations are extremely difficult, and translating rhyme into another rhyming text? Almost impossible.

Illustrating a point, to a point.

Commonly Thought: *If I write an illustrated storybook manuscript, I need to find an illustrator for it.*

Do you need to find an illustrator for your story? Well, only if you plan to self publish. Otherwise – no,

you really don't need one. However, I would certainly **recommend collaborating with an artist** to help you with a mock-up of your first story.

You should always create a mock-up to make sure your story is solid. ([Read more about that HERE.](#))

If you're an artist and you want to create your own storybooks, then you should definitely pursue that. [Many literary agents](#) are only interested in representing authors who also illustrate.

But if you're an author and only an author, editors will want to match your manuscript with professional illustrators they already know. That way, the book they bring to the market will look like it belongs in their catalogue. It's all about branding.

You as an author have to develop a brand, and the same is true for publishers.

In order for a book publisher (especially of children's books) to be successful on the market, book retailers (and other publishing professionals, including competitor-houses) need to be able to recognize the type of product they bring.

If your idea of what your story should look like doesn't match that of the publisher's ideas – it will hurt your chances of getting published.

Selling vs. Making a Living.

Commonly Thought: *Getting a book on the market means I'll be able to live off my writing.*

If you already work as a self-employed person (doing anything at all, any kind of work), then you already know the muddled answer to this. Working as an independent means you work doing anything you can that will bring you income and increase your credibility and visibility.

For example, I don't just write fiction. I also have my blog (obviously), my online classes, my creative writing classes, the Kids English Theatre and Happy Palmtree (reading and crafts at the local library). But I also teach English Communication as a second language. I do whatever it takes to pay the bills.

When my creative writing and blog (never giving this up) are able to make enough money, I will have the option to teach less, but I probably won't stop entirely. I don't think it's healthy to sit in a room all day writing.

That part is up to you (of course!), but just know that your life as a writer will be about balancing all sorts of decisions, ones that involve more than [word choices](#).

Hugely successful writers also earn money from public appearances and teaching. It's all part of the job. **If you're a writer at all, you're never just a writer.**

Write to Succeed, then keep going.

Commonly Thought: *If my writing is excellent, the sales will follow.*

Writing a great story is NOT enough, actually. [You've also got to be good at marketing your great writing](#). The best selling authors all know how to market their work (none of them rely solely on the efforts of their publishing house). So keep your eyes open. Take notice of what they're doing and *how it is you are even aware of their work*.

Writing for kids - it never stops.

If you're lucky, that is. You just keep going; keep getting better and stronger.

What are you doing these days? Are you creating a character profile? –outlining chapters? –editing? –planning a marketing strategy? Write below, let me know – or, as ever, write me an email. You know I love getting those.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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