

RHYME THAT SHINES! 4/30/22
SCBWI NE Presentation Outline – Janet Lawler

What ideas/stories are suited to rhyme?

- bedtime stories
- love poems
- young picture books
- concept books
- inspirational texts
- early nonfiction
- poetry collections – fiction & NF
- holiday titles
- novelties – pop-ups, etc.
- humorous stories
- early readers

The story/concept must come first.

- Rhyme must further, or add to, story or concept.
- Rhyme is an added layer. Like whipped cream on a sundae, makes it better.
- Test yourself:
 - Can you write out the story idea in prose?
 - Is it strong enough conceptually?
 - Will rhyme free you or constrain you as you tell your story?
 - Is there a beginning/middle/climax/ending?

Find a rhythm/beat pattern.

- Create a pattern of accented and unaccented syllables.
- Methods used by other authors.
- Adding refrain or alternating patterns okay.
- Read aloud, over and over. Objective read-alouds.
- Focus on each word.
- A natural pause can be a beat.
- Keep it simple to start; focus on couplets (2 lines).

Writing the rhymes.

- Begin drafting a few lines and/or do outline.
- Within couplet or quatrain, what do you want to say/show?
- End words—the alphabet game.
- Utilizing helping tools to find rhymes: dictionaries, online, thesaurus
- Play *what if?* and *what else?* when you get stuck.
- Say it another way, or change your plot.
- Have a colleague read out loud while you listen!

Troubleshooting your draft manuscript or poem.

Eliminate words that can be pronounced more than one way.
Keep checking text against established beat pattern!
Keep reading out loud!
Change stumbling points. Do words “fight” each other?
Avoid altering natural word order to make end sounds match—forced rhyme.
Say it another way or say something else.
Is it too adult?
Is the tone in keeping with text?
Avoid trite and predictable rhymes (sometimes okay for very young audiences).
Avoid phrases with little or no content that are used to make an end rhyme work.
Don’t repeat end sounds.
Space similar end sounds far apart.
Avoid “near” rhymes.
Write lively (not passive)?
Is rhyme overwhelming your story?
Leave out most description.
Focus on action for picture books.
Leave a *lot* for the illustrator!
Try to keep text under 400-500 words.
What genre is it?
Is there a market for it?

Adding humor and word play.

What would make it funnier?
Include hyperbole, exaggeration.
Kid vs. adult humor. Combinations of both.
Look at your verbs.
Add alliteration.

Meeting the challenge of revision requests.

Don’t panic.
Think through the substance of request.
You CAN find another rhyme.
Common reasons revisions are requested in rhyming texts.
Editorial preferences for simplicity/complexity.
What you can do when someone rhymes for you.
Why authors must monitor the copyediting and proofreading processes.

Additional resources.

<http://www.dorichaconas.com/> (click on: Writing in Rhythm and Rhyme)
<http://www.underdown.org/mf-rhyming-picture-books.htm>