

Synopsis - Writing for Children Course

Module 1 - Introduction

Welcome to the Writers Bureau - your first and most important step to becoming a published writer - how to build on your natural talent - how to enjoy your course - hints for studying successfully.

Module 2 - Making a Writer out of You

Deciding when and where to write - how to start your writing - overcoming writer's block - the basic books and tools you need - how to organise yourself - the importance of reading widely - the personal qualities every writer needs - coping with rejection - the need to build on firm foundations.

Module 3 - Getting Started

Deciding why you want to write for children - liking and understanding children - contact with children - reading modern children's books - deciding what you want to write - writing for a hobby or an income. Market research - the importance of knowing your market and your reader - how to find out what children are reading today - research form - recommended reading list. How children see the world - exercise: deciding what to write - your responsibilities as a writer - political correctness - writing for different age groups - start writing: tips on getting yourself motivated - the three Is: imagination, inspiration and ideas - your ideas file - ideas cards - developing your story - What if? - useful books and magazines.

Module 4 - Fiction for the under 12s

Creating characters - the Key Character - child characters - fantasy characters - animal characters - adult characters - character cards - mixing the good and the bad - naming your characters - tips for getting to know them better - character profile - introducing your Key Character - viewpoint: first person or third person - keeping things consistent - show don't tell - secondary characters - the title - plotting the story - your theme - six important questions to ask: who, what, where, when, why and how - the importance of conflict - different types of conflict - writing in your own voice - the synopsis - writing the first draft - dialogue - 11 reasons for using dialogue - choosing the right language - six rules for writing dialogue - direct and indirect speech - story structure - beginnings: setting and atmosphere - the middle: moving the story along, flashbacks - chapters and chapter titles - six tips for satisfying endings.

Module 5 - Genre Fiction Part I - Fantasy, Horror and Science Fiction

What is genre fiction? - knowing what's out there: the importance of research - generating ideas: parallel story exercise - the six big questions - the 'because game' - more connective prompts - lensing - asking 'what if?' - creating a story tree - story structure - visualization - the three column game - seed thoughts - creative dialogue - structural components: 'chunk' sizes - the basic plan - themes - elements - ingredients - injecting a sense of wonder - idea as hero - motifs - vivid particularities - what is acceptable: how far can you go? - creativity exercises.

Module 6 - Genre Fiction Part II - Other Genres

Author led-v-series led stories - the pros and cons of each examined - historical novels and crime/thrillers - is factual accuracy necessary? - retelling legends and local stories - what is acceptable in the romance genre - working to a series house style - what are publishers currently looking for? - writing for the educational market - reading schemes - writing for less confident readers - looking to the future.

Module 7 - Picture Books

What are picture books? - who provides the pictures? - know your market - looking through the eyes of a child - books for babies - novelty books - story books - what to write about: give your character a problem then help them solve it; use your own children as inspiration; give an old favourite a new twist - finding a new angle - the power of children's imagination - picture book characters - naming your character - the title - writing up the story - the plot - the rule of three - the beginning, middle and end - language: rhythm, rhyme and repetition - using all six senses - making every word count - picture book formats - your first draft - let the

pictures do the talking - making artwork suggestions - subplots - your final draft - creating a 'dummy' - educational picture books - concept books - information books - early readers.

Module 8 - Puzzle and Activity Books

Choosing a theme - getting ideas - finding a new angle - specialist activity books - story/activity books - what about the art work? - plotting the book - writing up the puzzles: dot-to-dot, crosswords, mazes, matching pairs, counting, spot the difference, colouring by numbers, rebus, find things in a picture, word searches, unscrambling words, anagrams, codes, missing letters, riddles, general knowledge, logic and other puzzles - activities - materials - making sure it works - writing the instructions - the artwork - pull outs - joke books - approaching a publisher - payment for photocopying your work; the ALCS.

Module 9 - Writing for Magazines

Getting started - American magazines - annuals - the importance of research - magazine content - short stories: studying style, thinking-up ideas and using the right language, presentation - picture strip stories: the art work, the story board, writing the text, picture strips with speech bubbles - comic strips: speech bubbles, captions, sound effects, making the pictures do the talking - photo stories - writing articles: choosing your subject, finding a new angle, research, writing it up - puzzles - activities - quizzes.

Module 10 - Non-Fiction Books

Text books - studying the market - preparing a book synopsis - research - vocabulary level - preparing assignments - illustrations - quotations and extracts - reference books and series: age and development; sense of audience; language level.

Module 11 - Writing Poetry

Know the age you are writing for - choosing a subject - using the school curriculum - experience, observation and imagination - the importance of humour - style and tone - using the right words - finding rhymes - rhythm and metre - set forms - 'devices' - finishing touches - presentation - submissions - back to school - your rewards.

Module 12 - Presentation and Publication

The three Rs: rereading, revising and rewriting - your first page check list - further 10-point check list - avoiding common spelling errors - when to stop revising - presentation - paragraphs - cover sheet - sending off your work: some dos and don'ts - sample covering letter - sample query letter - agents - multiple submissions - dealing with rejection - further revision - acceptance - payment - the contract - knowing what rights to offer - copyright - plagiarism - libel - packagers - self publishing - vanity publishers - public lending rights - the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society - publicity.

Module 13 - Using the Internet

Using the Internet for research purposes - using it for market research - finding scriptwriting opportunities - looking for an agent - finding information about other authors - book reviews - writing groups - writers' societies - obtaining funding - awards - e-publishing: submitting your work to e-publishers - setting up your own website - your rights.

Module 14 - Supplement: Punctuation and Spelling

Everything you need to know if you've every worried about either aspect of your writing, or you just want to check on a point about which you need clarification.

15 corrected assignments - 10 set and five open.