

# COMD3633 Advanced Strategies in Illustration

## Story Development

### I. The CONCEPT EXPLORATION:

- a. Who; What; Where; When; Why; How?

### II. The CONCEPT:

- a. Good concepts are rooted in a very simple core idea.
- b. Topics for Children's Picture Books ideally come from personal experience or a topic that you are an expert in:
  - Childhood fears or trauma.
  - Childhood friends or pets.
  - Childhood environment: urban, suburban, country, or foreign country.
  - Special childhood events/holidays/life stages.
  - Childhood hero: real, fictional, or historic.
  - Sport or hobbies.
  - School, church, or work.
  - Ethnicity & Diversity: LGBTQ
  - Current or historical Events: BLM, Me-Too, Climate Warming.
  - Retelling or Updating Fairy Tale, Mythology, or Fable.
- c. These ideas come with built-in audience recognition. It is then up to the writer and artist to blow-away those preconceptions.

### III. The STORY BASICS:

- a. After establishing a strong story concept, the writer/illustrator develops strong characters with unique personalities.
- b. Story is about those characters and the emotional journey they take.
- c. The audience has to **relate** to the characters, and see themselves in the characters hopes, dreams, insecurities and desires.
- d. UNDERLYING THEMES:
  - Ex. "Don't judge a book by its cover"- (Beauty and the Beast)
  - "Good things come to those who wait"- (Cinderella)
- e. Protagonist must have a basic action (motivation).
  - Ex. Snow White; STOP THE SPELL
  - Cinderella; GET THE PRINCE
  - 101 Dalmatians; SAVE THE PUPPIES
  - The Lord of the Rings: DESTROY THE RING

The Odyssey; GET HOME

- f. Simplicity and Clarity are really important in storytelling. What does the guy want? Why can't he have it?
  - g. Characters, themes, and stories should be entertaining to specific age ranges of kids. That's why we also have subcategories under this umbrella category. You now have stories for t'weens, preschool kids, and young adults (YA). Varying age brackets are treated as different audiences, according to age and school grade level.
  - h. No matter what the subject matter is, you need to have a youthful (age reflective) central character, with a dilemma. It would be best if they can solve the problems presented in the narrative, but one element always has to be present in these books: **Hope.**
- IV. **STORY STRUCTURE:** (3 parts like an opera):
- a. Part one introduces the characters and their world, and gets into the characters dilemma. Part one should end with a problem.  
Ex. Belle's father is lost and captured by the Beast. Belle rescues father by taking his place.
  - b. Part two develops the plot and reveals the motives of the main characters and the depth of their relationship. Part two ends in a completely unsolvable problem for the hero. And all seems lost!  
  
Ex. Belle goes from seeing the Beast as a monster to seeing him as a loving friend.
  - c. Act three is all about the resolution. The characters begin the act in a hopeless situation. Protagonist's courage is revealed in the face of insurmountable odds, and often includes the undoing of evil, and the triumph of good, and the arrival "home" to a new psychological place.
  - d. The three-act structure is only a guideline. It's important to be completely free with the story and let it be told in its own unique way.