

Rhyme, Verse & Lyricism for Children's Book Authors with Emma Walton Hamilton



www.emmawaltonhamilton.com

Rhyming Verse

Industry stigma – very hard to do as well as Dr. Seuss.

If you write in rhyming verse, make sure that:

1. Story leads rhyme
2. Rhymes are true
3. Rhymes are fresh
4. Meter scans properly



What Constitutes a Series?

- A sequence of books with certain characteristics in common, such as:

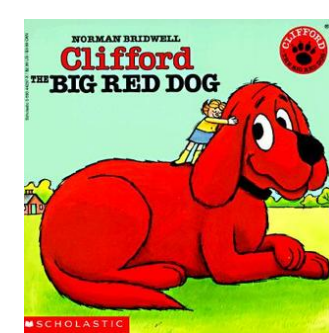
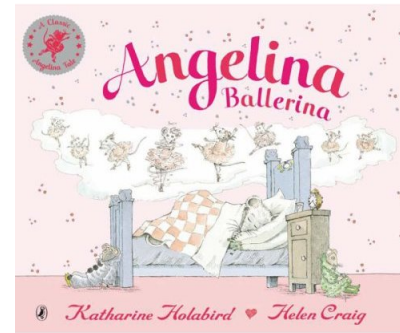
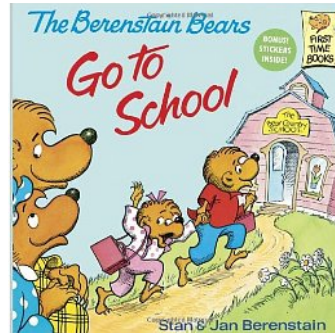
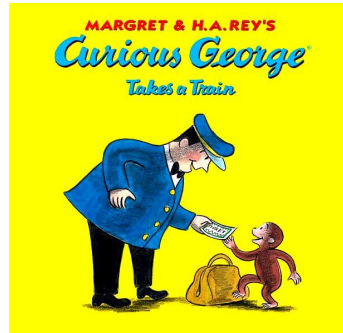
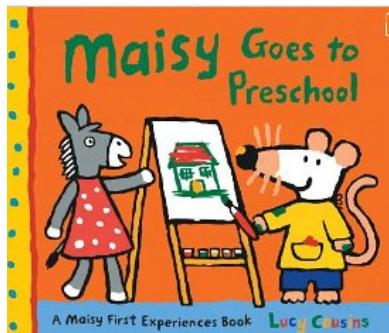
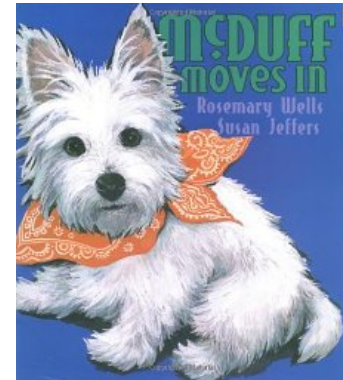
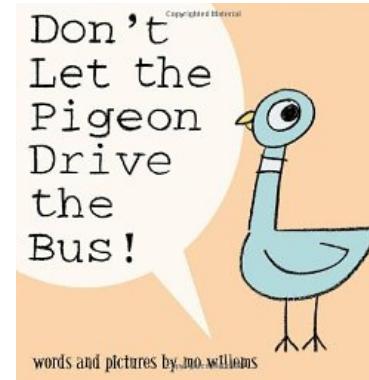
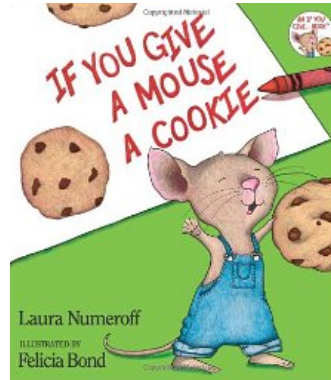
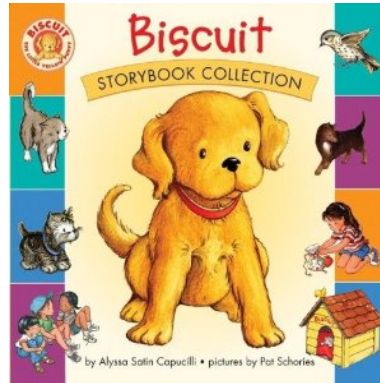
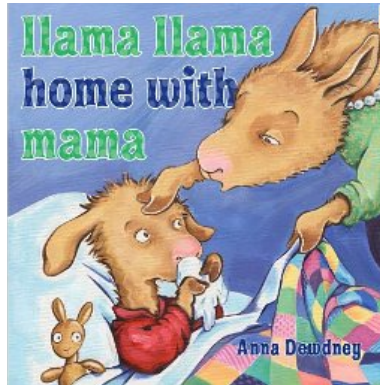
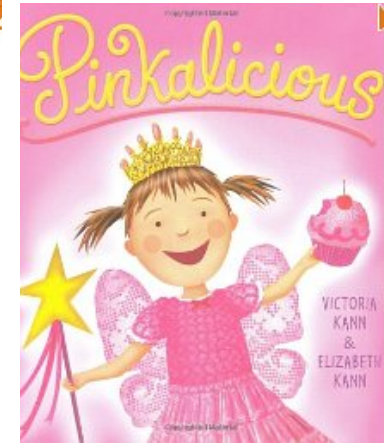
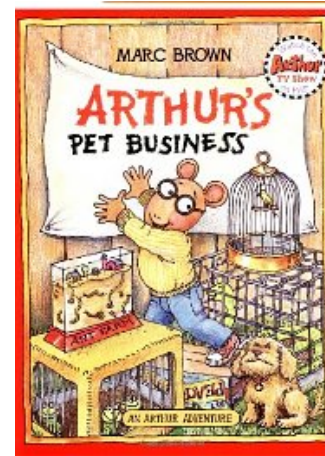
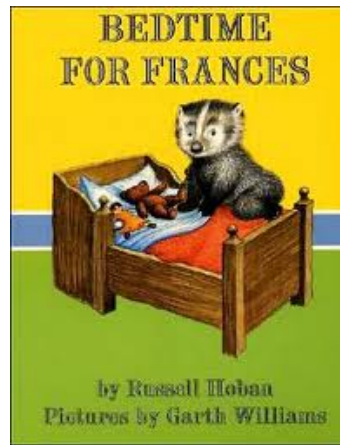
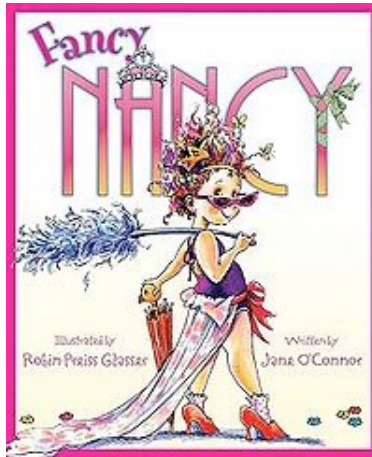
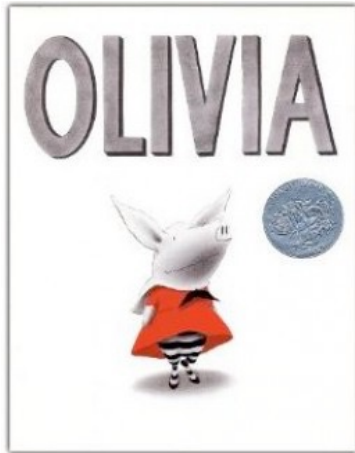
- Setting
- Story arc
- Characters
- Timeline

... and as such, are identified together as a group

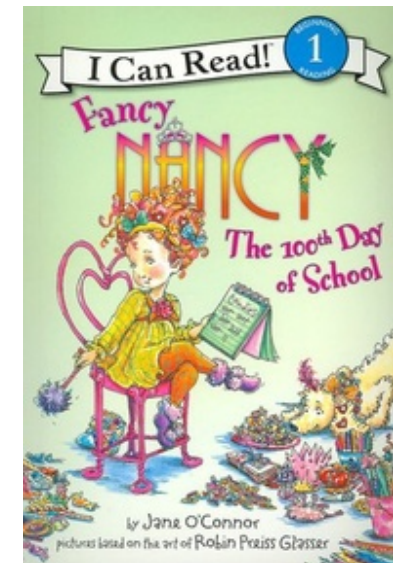
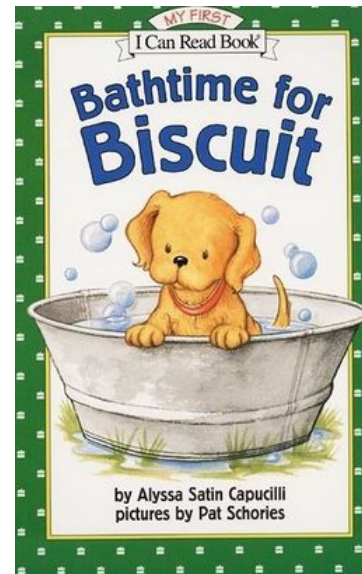
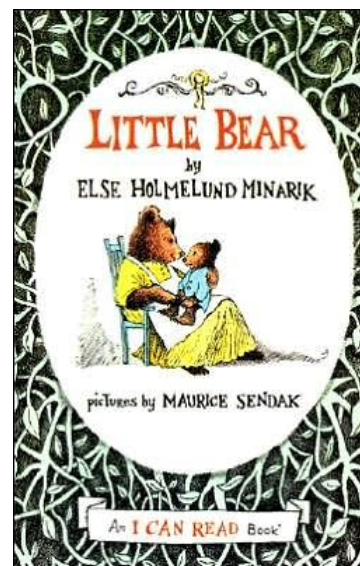
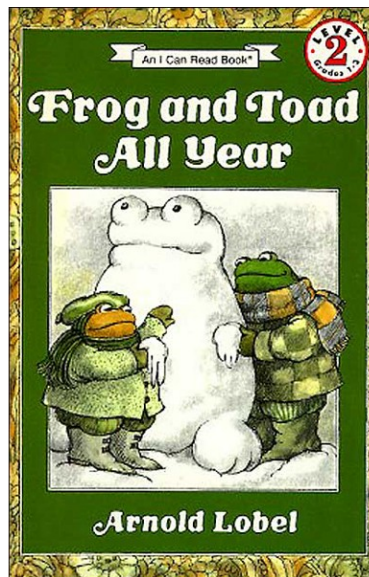
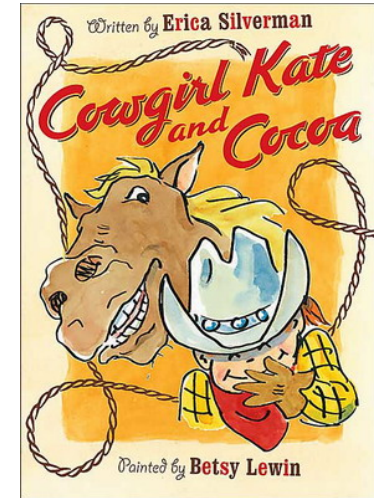
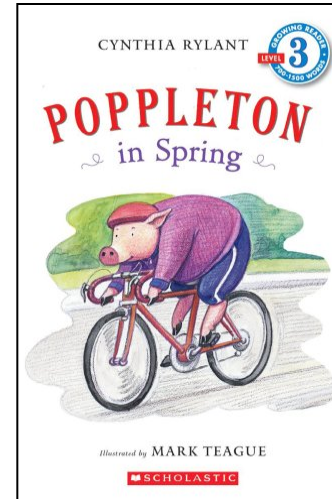
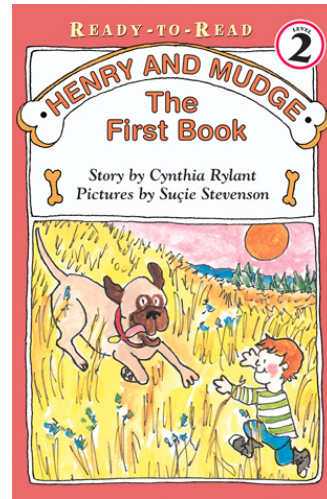
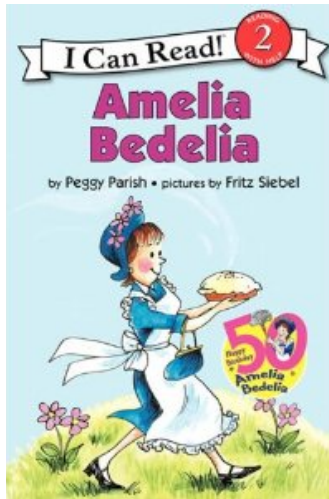
- Some have a unifying theme, some a unifying concept
- Some series books stand alone/can be read in any order
- Some are written – and designed to be read in chronological order
- Some are not written – or released- in chronological order, but travel back (or forward) in time
- Some are not really proper series, but a single work so large it must be published over two or more books
- Some are open-ended, and can continue as long as there is demand, others are designed to be finite.



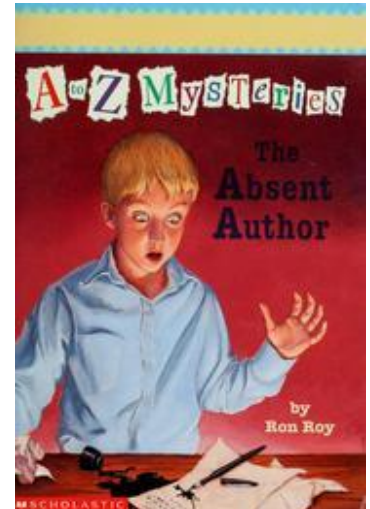
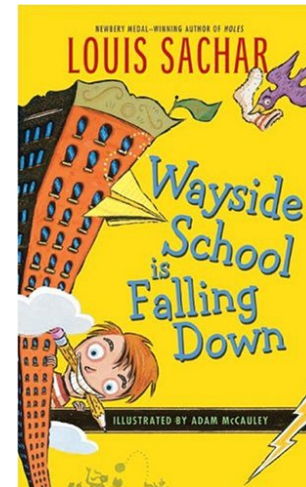
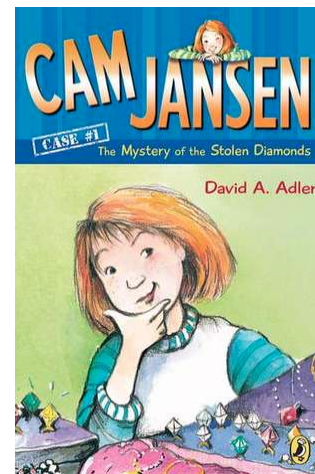
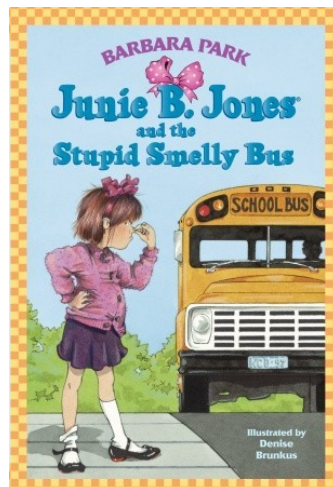
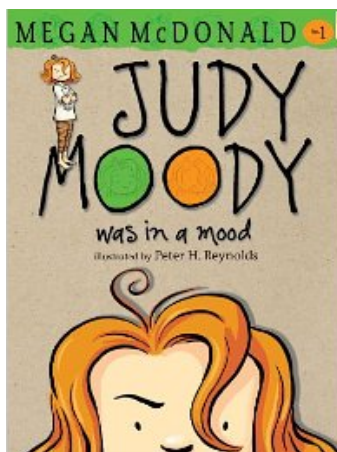
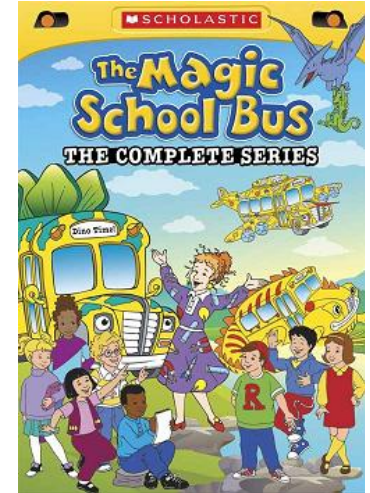
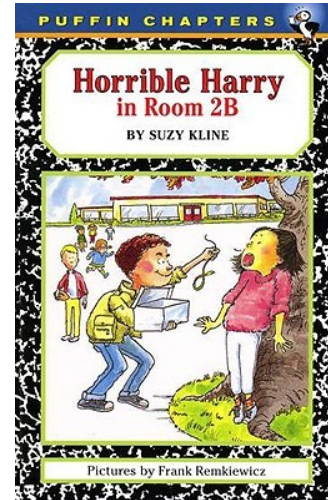
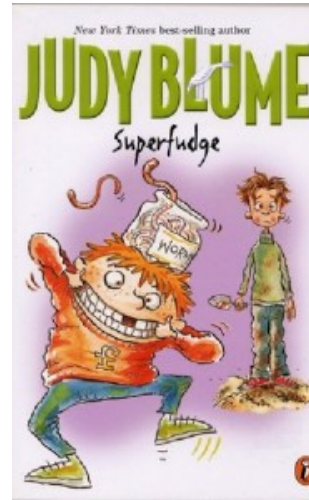
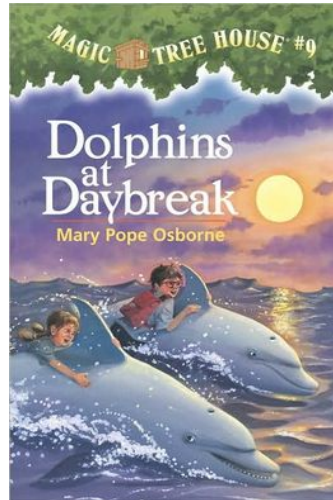
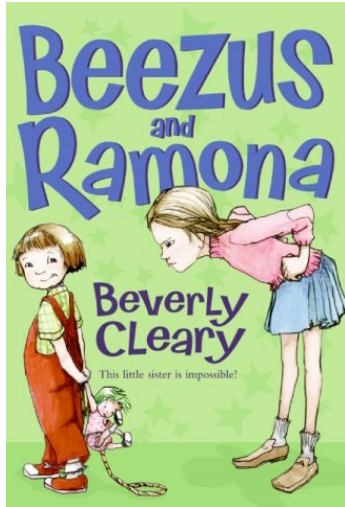
Picture Book Series



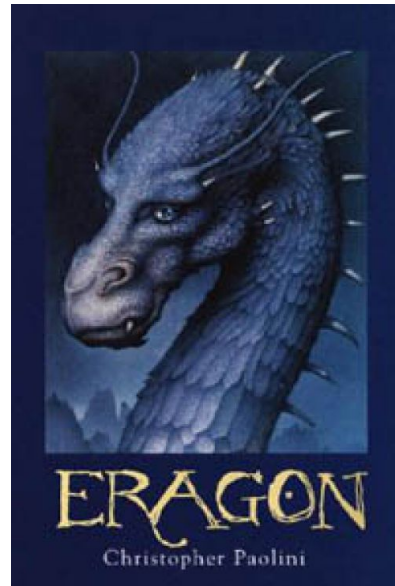
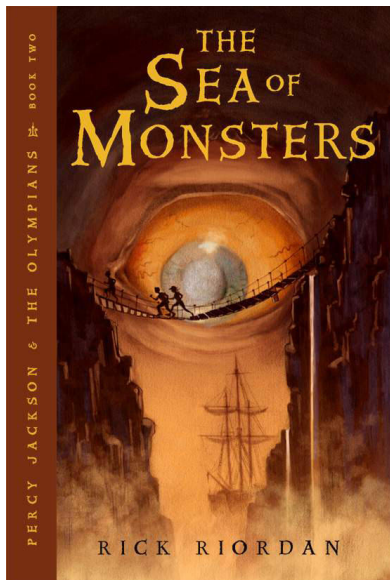
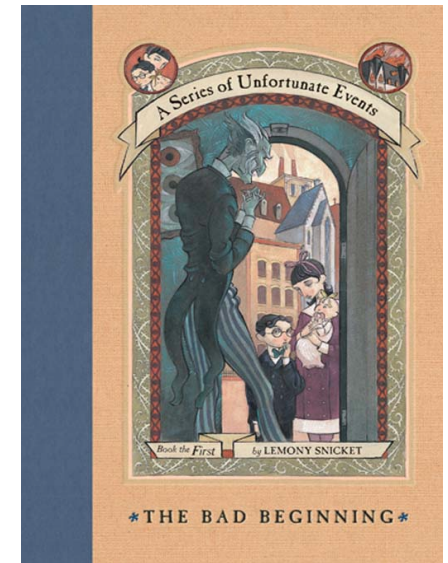
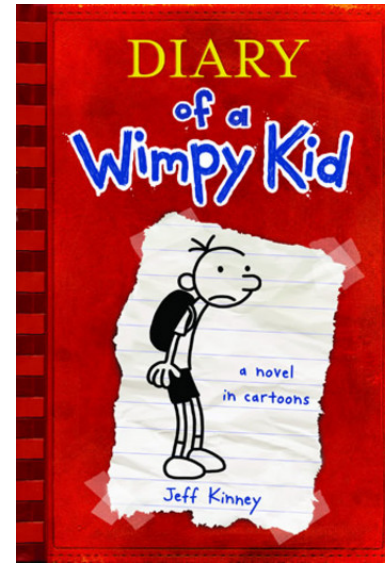
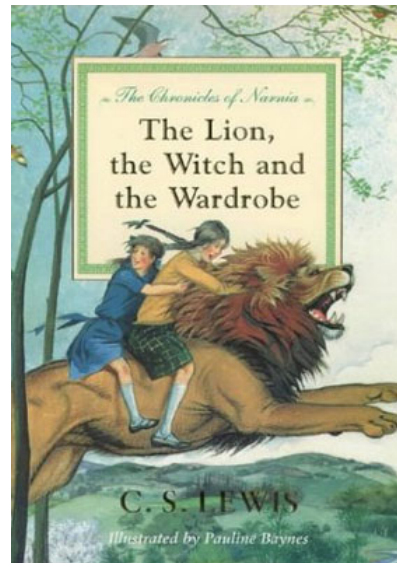
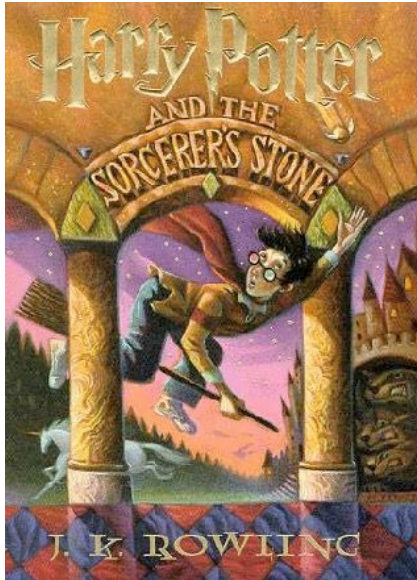
Easy Readers/"I Can Read" Series



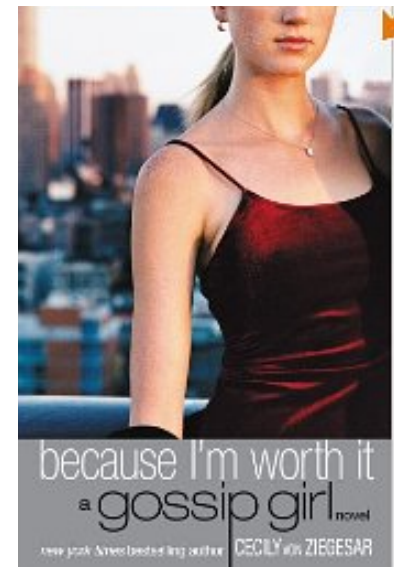
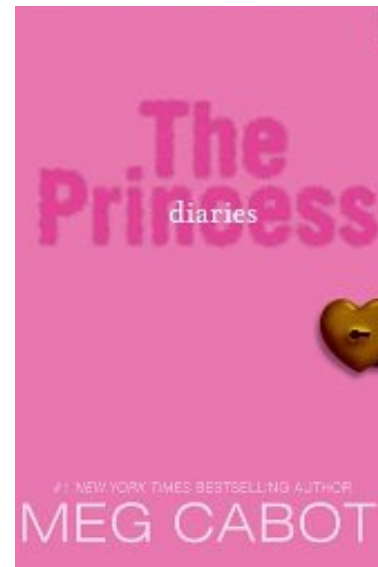
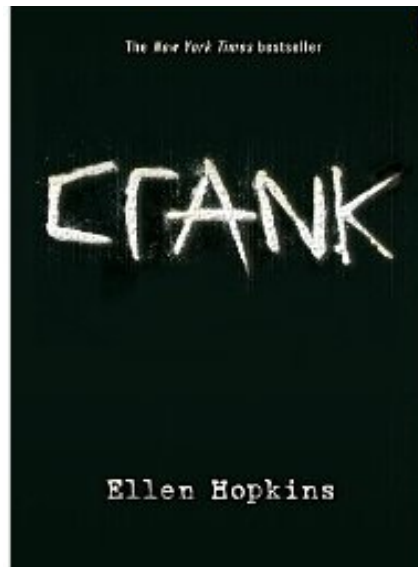
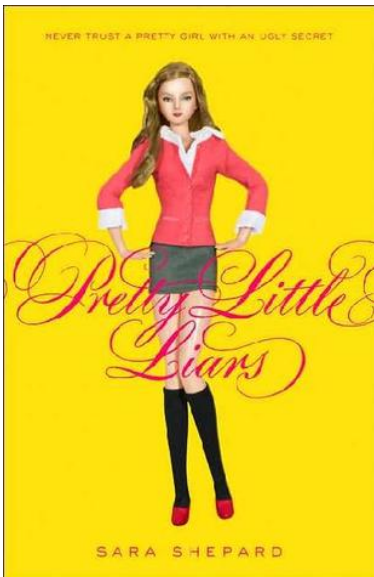
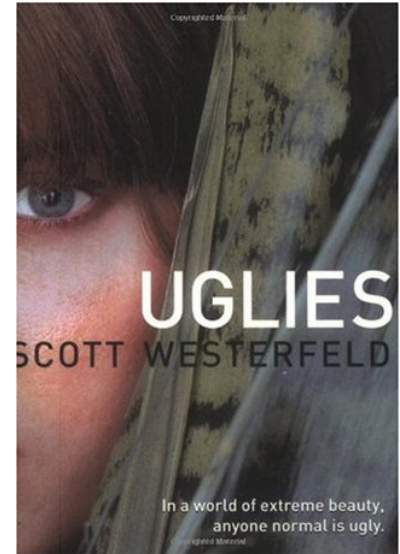
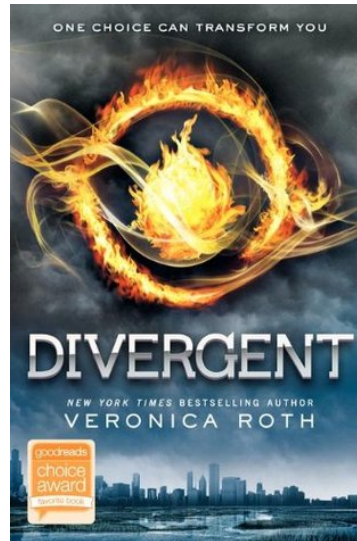
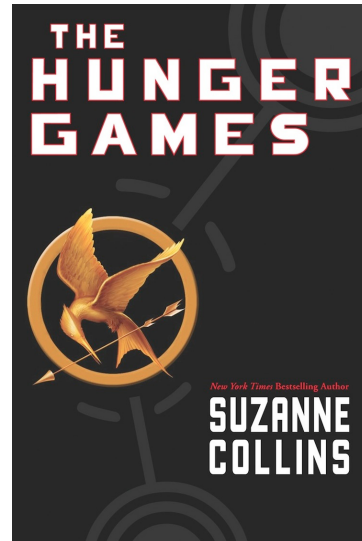
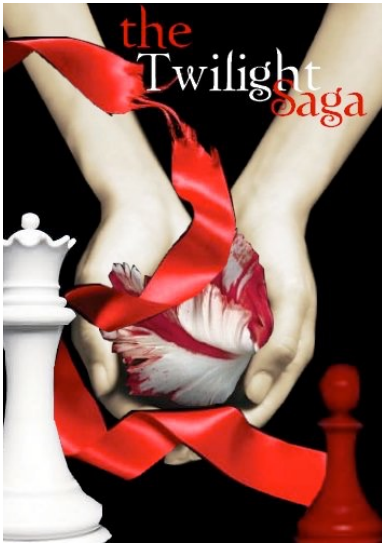
Chapter Book Series



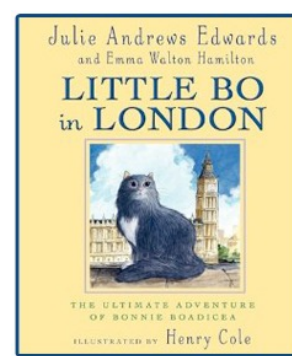
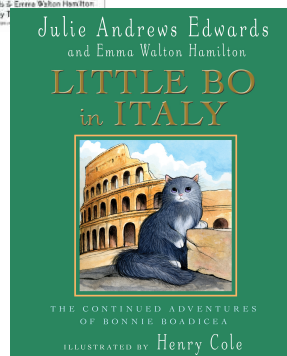
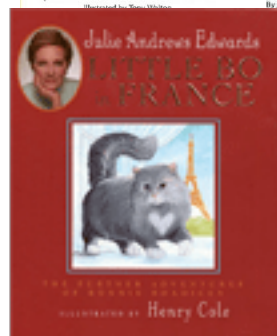
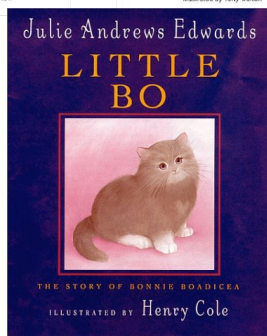
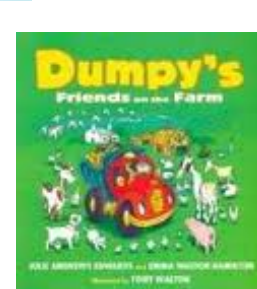
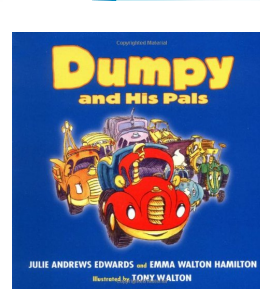
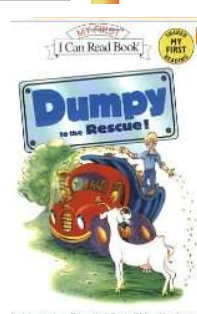
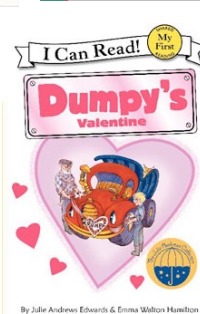
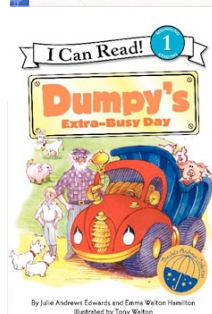
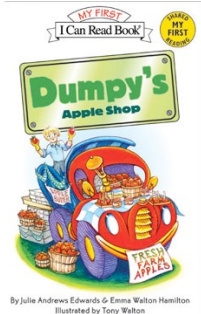
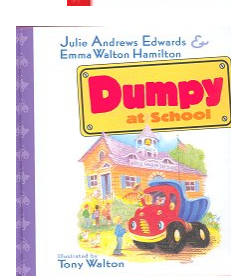
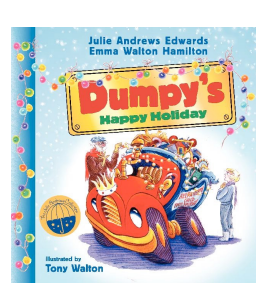
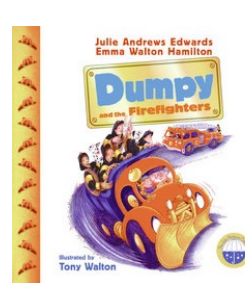
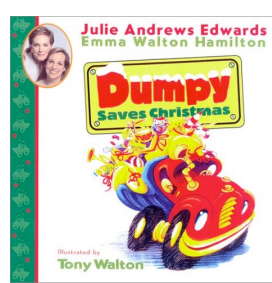
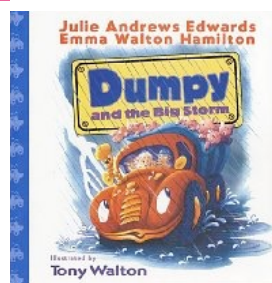
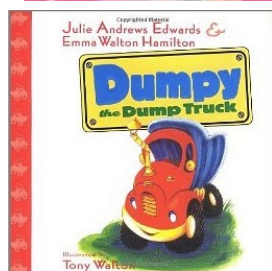
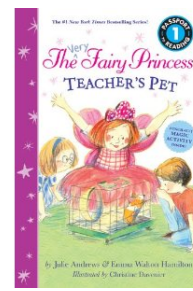
Middle Grade (or Juvenile) Series



Young Adult (“YA”) Series



Our Series Books



What Makes a Story Series-Worthy?

- A unique and compelling character or concept that lends itself to multiple story ideas
- Something that leaves readers wanting *MORE*



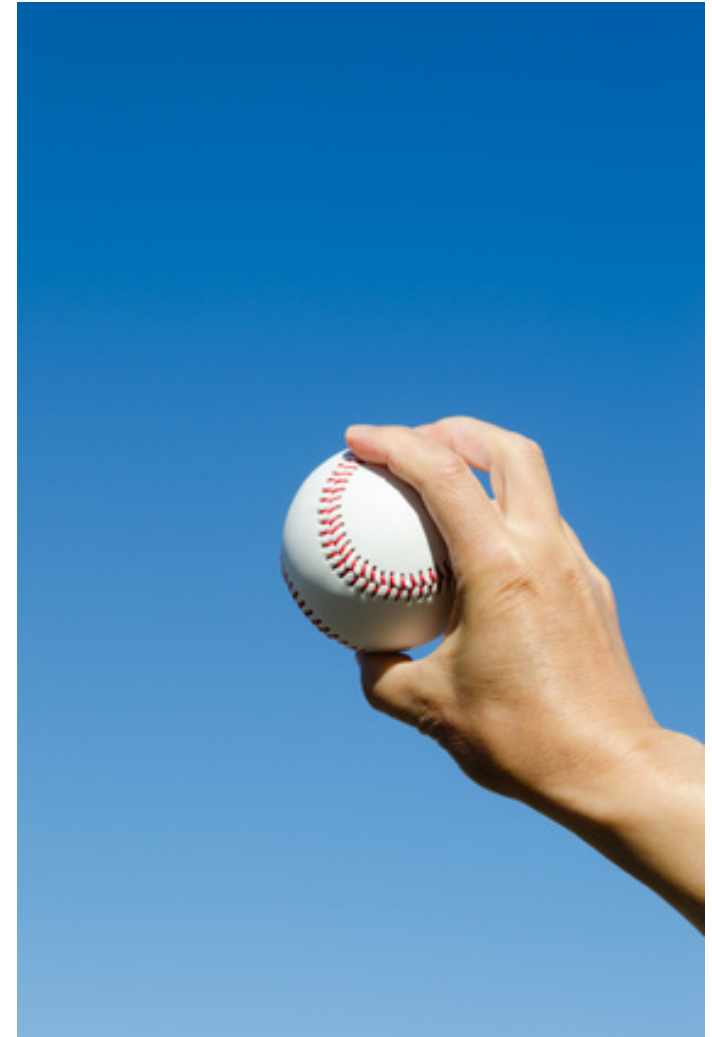


7 Keys to Writing a Series

1. **Concept** – Your hook, the character or idea that keeps them coming back for more
2. **Consistency** – Make a bible! Map your settings, character traits, events, unanswered questions.
3. **Discovery** - Aim for a balance between satisfyingly inevitable and pleasantly surprising.
4. **Flexibility** - Avoid potentially limiting character traits – keep your options open for as long as possible.
5. **Clarity** – Write for the person who reads it out of order.
6. **Satisfaction** - Offer readers enough of what they love – and crave - while delivering a different plot and new information with each installment.
7. **Perspective** - Don't lose track of the long view and what you want to get across. Know or have an idea where the main character is going to end up.

Pitching a Series

- Generally speaking, in today's market, **publishers want to see if a character or concept will fly before** they commit to more of the same.
- **Chapter books and novels series are easier sells** – lower price point, greater demand for series titles for this age group.
- It's best to **draft no more than 1-3 complete manuscripts** within a series before attempting to sell or publish
- But **brainstorm other ideas/titles** – in case a publisher or agent asks for more



Beginning/Planning a Series



- When starting a series you are establishing ...
 - Characters
 - Setting
 - Style
 - Tone
 - Other unifying elements
- Whatever you establish in Book One will extend through and define the balance of the series thereafter
- Know (or have an idea) where the main character will end up.
- Brainstorm other ideas/titles – and write a paragraph on each
- Organize yourself! Maps, flowcharts, files – whatever works.

Organizational Tools



Things to keep track of:

- Characters
- Character Traits
- Settings
- Plot details
- Consistency of voice

Tracking tools:

- Files or worksheets:
 - Physical (Folders full of notes, index cards, Post-its)
 - Digital (Spreadsheets, questionnaire)
- Storyboards (for plotting)

Some Examples

Character Continuity Spreadsheet

[illegible]

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Character Worksheet

Character Name:	
Role (protagonist, antagonist, love interest, foil, etc.):	
Age (relative to time period of story):	Gender:
Nationality:	Race:
Eyes (Color? Glasses?):	Complexion:
Hair (Color, style, straight/curly, long/short/bald?):	Style of Dress:
Build (Height, Weight, Body Type/Shape):	Distinguishing Marks / Physical Features (scars, moles, etc.):
Characteristics / Mannerisms:	
Speaking Voice (Vocabulary, Accent, Expressions):	
Personality:	

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(available www.ChildrensBookHub.com under “Resources”)

Plot / Scene Spreadsheet						
Manuscript Title:						
Book # (in series):						
Chapter #	Scene #	Setting/Location	Time	Characters	Problem/Conflict	Action/Event(s)

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Setting Worksheet

City/Town/Village:

Region/Area/Country:

Buildings (style of architecture, age, construction materials):

Room(s) (size, function, décor, relationship/placement, furniture):

Topography / Landscape (hilly, flat, desert, ocean, forest, etc?):

Flora and Fauna:

Climate:

Ways to Entice a Reader to Read the Next Book

- Sample chapter of next book
- List of other books/titles/topics in series
- Images of other books/titles in series
- Reviews of other books/titles in series
- Cliffhangers (use with caution)
- Special offers (coupon codes, links)
- Links to website, FB fan page etc.



QUESTIONS



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Story Before Rhyme

- Rhyme is the frosting - not the cake
- Have a *reason* to write in rhyme
- Write a prose version! Assess structure and storytelling, including:
 - Story arc
 - Character journey
 - Tension/page turning moments
 - Showing versus telling
 - Balance of action to exposition
 - Illustration progression
 - Theme
- Convert back to verse, incorporating changes or discoveries



True Rhymes

Keys to perfect or true rhyme:

1. The **vowel** and **final consonant** sounds in both words must be **identical**: i.e. *June* and *moon*
2. The sounds or letters **preceding the vowel sound** must be **different**.



Imperfect: *Days/daze, peas/appease, leave/believe*

Perfect: *Days/haze, plays/stays/phase, pease/please, believe/bereave*

Slant Rhyme

Also called *near rhyme*.

- 2 words with final consonant sounds but not preceding vowel or consonant sounds in common, i.e. *ill/shell*

or

- 2 words with same vowel sound but different last consonant, i.e. *moon/room*

Use sparingly!



Fresh Rhymes

- Avoid tired, cliché or overused rhyme schemes: *June/moon, day/play, night/light, you/do, maybe/baby etc.*
- Avoid repeating the same rhyme or rhyme scheme/final vowel sound

BORING

More Notes on Rhyme

- **Internal rhyme** - makes it like “a tapestry shot through with rhyme,” takes pressure off the anticipation/inevitability of the end rhyme
- **End-stopping** - when the thought and the rhyme end at the same place
- **Enjambment** - when the thought continues onto the next line. Look for opportunities for enjambment, because end-stopping relentlessly gets boring
- Find the **form** which best suits the **subject**
- **Vowel sounds** have **meaning** to our ear... *Ee* or *ahh* = tight or loose, *oo* = mysterious
- Rhyme and meter is at it's best when **syntax and form connect** in such a way that it feels like it just came out that way
- If you've got a lot of **prepositions**, you've got **padding**. Instead of padding, open up space by pushing some of the next line back in to the first. Enjamb!

Meter

- Meter = Rhythm, number of beats or stressed syllables (known as “feet”), per line
- Make sure number of feet per line is consistent
- Never expect a reader to emphasize a word or syllable not usually emphasized in order to accommodate rhyme.
- **Duple Meter** – alternating stressed and unstressed, as a trot or a heartbeat.
- **Triple meter** – two unstressed syllables grouped around one stressed syllable; a waltz, a canter or gallop.
- Learn how to scan!



Scansion

Determining meter of a line by identifying stressed and unstressed syllables. Examples: (U = unstressed, / = stressed)

U / U / U / U / U /

When in / dis-grace / with fort /-une and / mens eyes

When **IN** dis-**GRACE** with **FORT**-une **AND** men's **EYES**

U / U U / U U / U U /

You're off / to Great Pla /-ces! To-day / is your day!

You're **OFF** to great **PLA**-ces! To-**DAY** is your **DAY**!

for better for verse

Types of Meter

Trochees and iambs - the stress patterns of feet in duple meter; trochaic, iambic

- Trochee = / U SING-er, SALT-y)
- Iamb = U / (Re-SPECT, Fon-DUE)

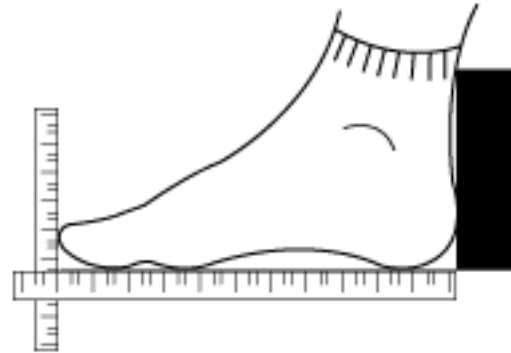
Dactyls, Amphibrachs and Anapests – the stress patterns of feet in triple meter

- Dactyl = / U U (PO-e-try, PINE-app-le)
- Amphibrach = U / U (Ex-HAUST-ed, Cre-A-tive)
- Anapest = U U / (aft-er-NOON, tan-ger-INE)



Measuring Feet

- **Trimeter** - 3-foot line
- **Tetrameter** - 4 feet
- **Pentameter** - 5 feet
- **Hexameter** - 6 feet



Iambic Pentameter (Shakespeare):

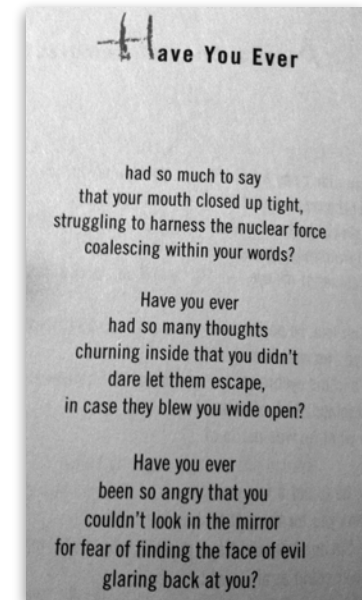
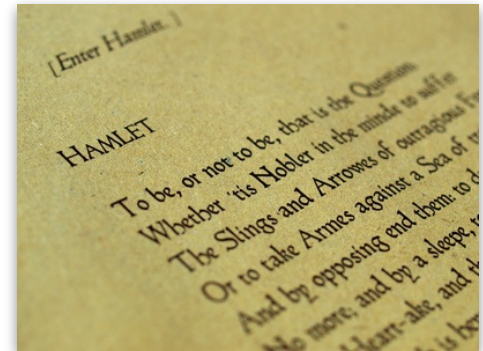
"Oh, **WHAT** a **ROGUE** and **PEAS**-ant **SLAVE** am I"

Anapestic Tetrameter (Dr. Seuss):

"And to-**DAY** the Great **YERT**-le, that **MAR**-velous **HE**
Is **KING** of the **MUD**. That is **ALL** he can **SEE**."

Blank Verse & Free Verse

- **Blank verse** = *unrhymed* verse with a fixed metrical pattern, often iambic pentameter. Shakespeare wrote his plays in blank verse.
- **Free Verse** = variable; usually unrhymed lines, having no fixed or consistent metrical pattern. Many middle grade and YA writers use free verse - Sharon Creech, Karen Hesse, Ellen Hopkins, Patricia McCormick, Virginia Euwer Wolff



Lyricism



Using language “lyrically” in verse or prose.

Consider...

- **Alliteration** - using several words in a row that start with the same or similar consonants (“We wondered where he went”)
- **Anaphora** - repeating a sequence of words at beginnings of sentences or neighboring clauses, to give emphasis (*Oh, the Places You’ll Go!*)
- **Cadence** - rhythm, tempo, musicality. i.e. tense scene = clipped language
- **Caesura** - pause, interruption or breath; line or section break
- **Imagery** - metaphors, similes, sensory images
- **Onomatopoeia** - words that sound like their meaning (*Bang, Zoom, Buzz, Hiss*)
- **Parallelism** - repetition of structure, clauses or words for effect
- **Personification** - giving human qualities to objects (“The flowers danced”)
- **Refrain** - repeated patterns, echoes, motifs
- **Wordplay** - puns, creativity, taking advantage of multiple meanings of words

Verse Resources

- Renee La Tulippe's "Lyrical Language Lab" -
<http://www.nowaterriver.com/the-lyrical-language-lab/>
- Audrey Owen's 4-week online course in writing verse for children (free). <http://www.writershelper.com/write-verse.html>
- rhymezone.com
- Rhyming Dictionary
- Read poetry and the work of great writers!

