

Writing fiction for children of primary school age

Start date	1 April 2016	End date	3 April 2016
Venue	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
Tutor	Dr Clementine Beauvais	Course code	1516NRX074

Director of Programmes Emma Jennings
For further information on this course, please contact Public Programme Co-ordinator, Clare Kerr
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Tutor biography

Clémentine Beauvais is the author of over fifteen books for children, in French and in English, including the Sesame Seade series with Hodder and the Holy-Moly-Holiday series with Bloomsbury. She is also the author of Teach Yourself: Writing Children's Fiction (Hodder Education). Her books have been translated into many languages and won major awards in France. She has been featured on the IBBY international honour list, and one of her teenage novels is being adapted for the theatre and for the cinema. Clémentine now lectures in English and Education at the University of York (UK), after studying and working for 9 years at the University of Cambridge. She has taught weekend and term-long courses in children's literature creative writing at Madingley Hall.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Session 1: Writing for Children of Primary School Age: An introduction
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2: Characters and their worlds
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3: Plotting, planning and synopsising
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4: Style
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5: Thinking in series
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6: Laughter, Sweat and Tears
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7: Finding a publisher
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

To introduce students to central aspects of writing for children of primary school age, with particular emphasis on plot, characterisation, and writing style.

To offer students the opportunity to work on their writing, to share it should they wish to, and to obtain feedback both from peers and from course team members.

To give students a solid understanding of the current market in children's literature, and on the particular requirements that the publishing industry may have in relation to children's books now.

Content:

This creative writing course focuses on fiction targeted at primary-school age children. It will provide students not just with the opportunity to practise their writing, but also with in-depth knowledge of this type of text and area of publishing. Rather than providing abstract recommendations or advice, each session will embed knowledge very clearly within the study of specific texts and the practice of specific writing skills.

The works of published authors in this domain will be explored critically in order to identify specific strategies related to plot, characterisation, writing style and other literary aspects of the books, with a view to helping students develop them in turn in their writing. Students will be encouraged to read widely and to familiarise themselves with books published for this age range, and to practice writing through classroom exercises. There will be no pressure to share work, but students who wish to do so will be welcome to.

Presentation of the course:

The course is premised on a semi-academic, semi-creative approach to writing. Each session will feature a talk about the specific topic, a discussion revolving around this topic and resting in part on close reading of chosen texts, and a creative writing exercise.

Outcomes:

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

Recognise the main aspects of writing for primary-school age children, in terms of style, characterisation and plot, and transfer this knowledge to their own writing.

Synopsise a stand-alone (possibly with series potential) book targeted at primary-school children, resting on a solid understanding of the expectations of the publishing industry in this area.

Think about 'how to pitch' this project and present a summary of it in the future, in a form likely to attract the attention of publishing professionals.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Participants are advised to read widely from a variety of recent children's books qualified as 'early reading' or 'mid-grade fiction' (MG). Below are some examples:

Kinney, Jeff. 2007. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid, and others*. London: Puffin.
Lindgren, Astrid. 2012/1945. *Pippi Longstocking, and others*. Oxford:Oxford University Press.
Lowry, Lois. 1994. *The Giver*. London: HarperCollins.
Murphy, Jill. 2013/1974. *The Worst Witch, and others*. London: Puffin.
Priestley, Chris. 2007. *Uncle Montague's Tales of Terror, and others*. London: Bloomsbury
Rundell, Katherine. 2013. *Rooftoppers*. London: Faber.
Walliams, David. 2013. *Demon Dentist*. London: HarperCollins.
Wilson, Jacqueline. 1998. *The Lottie Project*. London: Corgi.

Website addresses

An Awfully Big Blog Adventure: <http://awfullybigblogadventure.blogspot.co.uk/>
Authors Allsorts: <http://authorallsorts.wordpress.com/>
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators: <http://www.scbwi.org/>

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 23 February 2016