

CREATING YOUR PICTURE BOOK



THE READINGZONE PICTURE BOOK COMPETITION 2018

Creating a picture book is fun but it can also be daunting, especially when you first begin, so here are some brief tips to help get you started with your picture books.

EXPLORE OTHER PICTURE BOOKS

Before you start working on your own picture book, take some time to look at picture books that you have enjoyed and try to work out why you liked them. Was it the story, the humour or the details in the images that you enjoyed? How can you make your own picture book just as appealing? Ask your teacher or librarian if they have other picture books you can look at, so you see a wide range of stories.

GETTING STARTED

Here are some of the things you will need to think about as you start work on your own picture book. You can work on your own or with other people in a group.

WHAT SHOULD MY PICTURE BOOK LOOK LIKE?

Your picture book can be up to 24 pages long. It should be A4 size (like this piece of paper), and it should be laid out portrait style (upright, like this page). Oh, and no flaps or novelties please.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I WRITE?

Many picture books are just 700 words long - and some are a lot shorter with just a few words - or no words at all - on each page. So try to keep your story as short as you can. Too many words will get in the way; pictures are every bit as important as the words in a picture book.

WHICH PARTS SHOULD I ILLUSTRATE?

Each page in a picture book is normally filled with a picture that shows what is happening in the story, with a small amount of text on each page.

WHAT SHOULD MY COVER LOOK LIKE?

Try to create a striking cover for your picture book - it's the first thing that people will see and it's the cover that attracts people to open your picture book. You will also need to think carefully to find a title that tells the reader a little bit about your picture book. The 'blurb' on the back cover can also help to tell readers what your story is about.

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PLANNING YOUR STORY

Most picture books are about 24 pages long, or you can think about it in terms of 12 double page 'spreads' (although your picture book can be shorter than this if you want). You will need to decide how you want your pages to be divided up, with the beginning, middle and end of your story.

Often, picture book stories follow this pattern:

- The first few pages of your picture book can be used to set up the story: we meet the characters and find out what the character(s) want and what is the problem.
- The main part of your story shows us what the character does next and brings the story to a climax. The climax normally arrives around two thirds of the way through your picture book.
- The last few pages of your picture book can be used to resolve the story so you have a funny, sad or surprising ending.

It's important that each page of your book leaves your reader wanting to turn over the next page; try to keep your reader hooked with something funny or exciting happening before each page turn.

CHARACTERS

Some authors begin their stories by deciding who, or what, their main character will be. Will yours be a boy or girl or some kind of animal? Perhaps you want an alien or an explorer as your main character? You will need to decide their name. Is the main character alone or will there be other characters with them?

SETTINGS

What is the setting? Do you want an everyday setting for your story, like a house or park, or will you be taking your characters somewhere completely different – to the moon, or under the sea? The great thing about writing stories is that you can take your characters anywhere you want to go - to another country or another world entirely!

HAVE FUN!

Creating a picture book takes lots of work, but we also hope you have fun making your own picture book. We are really looking forward to seeing your work.