

# "COME QUICKLY— WE'VE CAPTURED A REAL, LIVE AUTHOR!"

Suggested pre- and post-workshop activities & curriculum  
for a visit with author **APRIL HALPRIN WAYLAND.**

*This curriculum is especially for middle and high school students*

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## **I. PRESENTATIONS & WORKSHOPS**

Emphasizing that every writer's creative process is unique, April's energizing slide-illustrated presentations and workshops encourage students to reach beyond clichés and to have patience with the artistic process.

The implicit message of this presentation is that:  
**good writing (good anything) takes time**

To this end, she reveals some secrets of writing poetry, shares behind-the-scenes stories about her books and poems, and takes students through the publication process from first notes, to sitting down to write (sometimes the hardest part!), rewriting, rejection, acceptance, choosing the illustrator, galleys, editing, and finally, publication.

## **II. PRE-WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES**

### **1. QUICK WRITE:**

Have students do a two-minute "quick write" of their reactions to one of April's poems.

### **2. ASK THE AUTHOR:**

Have students write down questions they would like to ask an author about writing, books, their childhood, etc. Ask them to dig deeply for original questions. (There may not be time to answer all the questions.)

### **3. ART:**

Pick one poem from GIRL COMING IN FOR A LANDING and illustrate (in any media—watercolor, colored pencil, collage, on the computer, color Xerox, etc.)

### **4. SCIENCE--TOPICS TRIGGERED BY POEMS IN GIRL COMING IN FOR A LANDING:**

- The double helix shape of DNA
- Imprinting

- Plant identification
- Horse whispering—how to train animals
- The ethics of using animals—even snails—in science classes

### III. POST WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

#### 1. JOURNALING:

After reading the two first-day-of-school poems in GIRL COMING IN FOR A LANDING, have students write two journal entries about their memories of attending a new school for the first time:

- one for the first day of school and
- one the last day of school.

#### 2. MAKE A HOT IDEA FILE:

Here's how I catch ideas before they get away. Yes, I have a journal on my bedside table to jot down dreams before they dissipate. But I put *loose* ideas in this file.

##### Materials:

- colored file folders
- markers, etc. to decorate and celebrate the ideas therein.

1. Write "Hot Ideas File" on the file.
2. Decorate the file to celebrate the ideas you will be catching.
3. Fill with hot ideas.

*Here are some examples of what you might find in my Hot Ideas File:*

- a picture ripped from a magazine--*he looks like the big brother of one of my characters for a book I haven't written yet*
- a jotted down overheard phrase--which could become a book title
- a collection of odd names--a perfect way to find character names
- articles from the newspaper--story ideas, all!
- a poem someone sent me
- jokes from a magazine, jokes from email

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- a doodle on a napkin--I wonder why the cat is on his head?
- something from a dream remembered while I was watching my son's baseball game--written on the back of a Little League flyer
- expressions children have said or written to me
- notes from pulling colored scarves out of my head (brainstorming)!

### **3. WHERE DO YOU GET IDEAS? PART I:**

- Ask students where they might get ideas for a story or poem. List these on the blackboard.
- For example, a phrase in a TV. commercial, someone's name in the phone book, a newspaper article, an overheard conversation, etc.
- Have them add these to their hot idea file.

### **4. WHERE DO YOU GET IDEAS? PART II:**

- Have students go on an observation walk on school grounds or in a park with pen and paper.
- Ask them to observe things they ordinarily ignore.
- Tell them to add these observations to their Hot Idea File.

### **5. WHERE DO YOU GET IDEAS? PART III:**

- Find a phrase to use as the title of a story
- List five different possible stories for that title
- Put the list in their Hot Idea File.

### **6. LETTING IT “COOK”:**

- Early in the year, have them choose one of the ideas from their Hot Idea File and start a story or poem.
- Have them put it away for a time span appropriate to their grade level—a week, two weeks, a month.
- When they come back to it, ask: did they find they had new ideas about writing the story because they let it “cook”?
- Have them put it away again.
- Let them put it away as needed until they can finish it, if they are able to.

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## 7. WRITING A PICTURE BOOK:

Australian educator and author Mem Fox said, "Writing a picture book is like writing WAR AND PEACE in haiku."

IT'S NOT MY TURN TO LOOK FOR GRANDMA! has 750 words.

- Count the number of words in a favorite picture book.
- Now—try writing your own story, staying under 1000 words.

## 8. MATH / MANIPULATION:

Children's picture books have either 16, 32 or 48 pages. You may notice that some books have blank pages at the end. Sometimes these are called "fly" pages. But why doesn't the publisher just print 14 pages or 30 pages or 47 pages instead of including the blanks?

Because a picture book starts as one huge sheet of paper called a signature page—which has all the pages of the entire book on it.

This page is then folded and cut in a mysterious way—something that I call Publisher's Origami to create a book.

Make a signature page in miniature and figure out how to fold the pages into a book using the fewest possible cuts. (There is no single correct answer.)

## 9. MATH (ECONOMICS 101!):

- If a hardcover picture book costs \$15,
- And the author and illustrator together make 10% of that,
- And if the author and illustrator divide the profits equally,
- How much does the author make per book? (75 cents).
- How much does the illustrator make per book? (75 cents).
- What percent is left over?
- Where does that go? (Publisher, Distributors, Bookstores...)

(Refer to the book, HOW A BOOK IS MADE by Alik.)

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## 10. MATH (ECON 101 CONT'D):

The typical print run for a children's picture book may be 5,000 copies, and is sold over many years.

How many books would have to be sold for the author to make

- \$7,500? (10,000)
- \$25,000? (33,333).
- \$75,000? (100,000).

## 11. LANGUAGE:

Have students pick out following from April's poems and/or books:

- Metaphors
- Similes
- Alliteration
- Colorful language
- Interesting expressions
- Interesting rhythms
- Rhymes

## 12. PUBLISHER'S CHOICE—an exercise in teamwork:

- Divide the class into Authors, Illustrators and Editors.
- Ask the Authors to write a picture book, poem, myth, or fable. This is the “manuscript”.
- Have the Illustrators put together a "portfolio"—samples of their artwork.
- Give the manuscripts to the Editors.
- After looking over the portfolios, each Editor chooses an Illustrator for an Author's work. The Author is not consulted and does not see the artwork until it is finished.
- The Illustrators illustrate the stories they have been assigned.
- After the Illustrators have finished, circulate the books and discuss:
  - ~ Were the pictures different than what the Authors had imagined?
  - ~ Does the class think that this process produced the best product?
  - ~ Why or why not?

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### 13. WHEN I AM AN AUTHOR...

- Tell students to make a point of noticing the name of the author and illustrator of books.
- Ask them to read about the author and illustrator on the jacket flap of five or more books.
- Have them write their own flap copy as if they were the author.

### IV. THE BIRTH OF A BOOK— THE JOURNEY FROM WRITER TO READER

Note: every writer's method is different. This is one writer's process.

1. The writer sets aside time to write. (Sometimes the hardest part!)
2. Remembering a feeling or a dream or thinking about someone's peculiar habits or a funny name, the writer begins to write. Sometimes a story begins to appear, sometimes it doesn't. When the writer puts what she has begun away, she doesn't forget it. Often, the idea haunts her and she thinks about how to make it better. She wakes up at night and scribbles an idea in the journal by her nightstand.
3. The writer sets aside more time and adds to or rewrites parts of what she has started. She "lets it cook" by setting it aside and coming back to it many times before it takes shape and becomes a story she loves.
4. When she thinks it is ready, she takes it to her critique group, a group of fellow writers, and asks one of them to read it aloud. Then, each person in the group gives her comments. Does it work? Is it wonderful? Can it be improved?
5. The writer may incorporate some of the group's suggestions in her story. She may ask the group to read it again after the re-write. When she is satisfied that it is the best story she can write, she types it up in manuscript form and sends it to an editor at a publishing house. Sometimes she sends it to several editors at once.

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6. The publisher normally takes four to six months to reply. If the first publisher rejects it, she mails it off to another.
7. This process can take years. She is writing stories and sending them out all the time so that she is not waiting for just one story to be accepted.
8. An editor at a publishing house reads her story and loves it! The editor takes it to an editorial meeting and asks other editors and marketing people to read it. They discuss it—will it sell? What size should it be? Which illustrator would be best for this story? They decide to publish it. The editor calls the author to say they want to buy her story. The author celebrates!
9. The author (or the author’s agent) and the editor negotiate a contract for the publication of her book. The contract answers these questions and more: how much will she be paid for each book sold? If the book later is published as a soft cover book, how much will she be paid then? If someone makes a cartoon from the book—or a stuffed animal or a radio show—what will the author be paid and what will the publishing house and the illustrator be paid? If the book is translated into French or Hebrew, what will the author be paid? Etc., etc!
10. If the book is to be illustrated, the editor selects an illustrator, who may take a year or more to illustrate the story.
11. Before the book is published, author is sent the galleys—the typed text—to make sure there are no printing errors in the book. This is the last chance to change something.
12. Finally, often years after the story is written, the book arrives in bookstores and libraries. The writer throws a publication party at a local bookstore. Her friends and relatives come to congratulate her and buy the book, which she autographs. And naturally, their first question is, “So—what do you have coming out next?”

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