

POSSIBLE PRESENTATIONS

Aimée M. Bissonette

As an educator and writer, Aimée has a great deal of experience speaking to and working with groups of all ages. Suggested presentation topics are included below. Aimée also enjoys customizing presentations to fit your needs. Please contact Winding Oak to invite Aimée to speak at your library, conference, or teacher in-service. inquiry@windingoak.com. For more about Aimée, visit aimeebissonette.com.

Nature connections for children: why it matters

Works well for universities, library conferences, writing conferences, reading conferences, teacher in-services

Length of program: 60 minutes

This is a mix of readings from the works of several children's nature writers (including Aimée's) interspersed with a discussion of academic writings and research about the benefits of exposing children to the natural world. Specific activities for engaging with nature will be discussed and a resource list will be provided. Followed by Q & A, if desired.

Everyday Heroes: writing and sharing stories of lives well-lived

Works well for educators, librarians, and homeschoolers

Length of program: 60 minutes or more

The world is full of amazing people whose stories deserve to be told. Sharing those stories with young readers is especially gratifying because the stories can be coupled with amazing illustrations that add context and detail - even humor. Through these books, young readers learn about inventors, world leaders, artists, and activists. The stories are honest and informative.

I love writing picture book biographies, but in my writing I tend to steer clear of well-known figures. I focus instead on lesser known, but equally heroic people - people whose contributions and hard work may not have changed the world, but were important and inspiring, nonetheless. Identifying these people and unearthing their stories is great fun. In this session, we'll talk about various approaches to identifying and researching "everyday heroes." We'll also discuss how writing their stories can be an exciting and worthwhile classroom assignment for young writers who are learning how to plan a story; write a rough draft; choose rich words and phrases; use temporal words to order events; write to show emotion; use quotation marks to show speech; use powerful adjectives, adverbs, and verbs; and write strong conclusions. We'll conclude with a list of mentor texts for classroom writing activities and a brainstorming session of "everyday heroes" your students may want to use in their projects.

Wonder Women: the importance of strong female characters in children's books

Works well for educators, librarians, and homeschoolers

Length of program: 60 minutes or more

Children's books have always included spunky, feisty female characters like Ramona and Beezus Quimby, Matilda, and Harriet the Spy. But is spunky and feisty enough? The blockbuster success of the 2017 Wonder Woman movie and 2018's Black Panther indicates there is room for much more - in movie theaters and children's books. Female characters that overcome obstacles, solve problems, break stereotypes, and empower others have great appeal to both boys and girls.

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Wonder Women (continued)

This session will focus on choosing books for our classrooms and libraries that affirm positive roles for girls and boys. We'll discuss the assumptions we make when we think in terms of "girl books" and "boy books"; the effect gender stereotypes have on young readers (and the publishing industry's puzzling role in perpetuating those stereotypes); and the role children's books have in developing empathy among young readers (which can lead to reduced bullying among other things). We'll explore the evolving theory about children's books as "mirrors, windows, and sliding doors" and how reading the right books helps students rehearse for and succeed in real life situations. And we'll talk about the reactions and responses I've gotten from girls and boys with whom I've shared my own "strong women" books.

Collecting, sorting, whittling down: researching nonfiction children's books

Works well for educators, librarians, and homeschoolers

Length of program: 60 minutes or more

Nonfiction writers love researching, it's true. And good researching skills are essential—especially when writing picture books. Whether a book is intended for school or library use, or is a favorite "at home" read, there is no room for error. Kids are discerning readers and they crave information.

In this session, we'll look at several different research approaches authors might take (all of which can be replicated with students), the need to track and cite collected information, the kind of research authors must do to give their illustrators a helping hand, and the excitement that comes with finding first person, primary sources. We'll discuss how authors structure their nonfiction writing (expository versus narrative) and how those different approaches benefit you in the classroom. Most importantly, with my own books as examples, we'll talk about the work involved in whittling all that great research down so it can fit into a 32-page illustrated book. It takes a village, believe me!

Audio-visual requirements for all presentations:

Microphone (for large rooms); podium; and projector. Internet connection desirable but not required.