

[Conference Home](#) | [Register for Conference](#) | [USBBY](#)

11th IBBY Regional Conference Sponsored by USBBY

Through the Looking Glass: Exploring the Wonderland of International Children's Literature The Léman Manhattan Preparatory School New York City - October 16-18, 2015

The 2013 IBBY Regional in St. Louis: Our featured authors and illustrators share their thoughts on bookjoy. Here's a little taste of what's to come...

To help get us thinking about this year's conference theme, our featured authors and illustrators were invited to share their reflections on bookjoy: What it means to them, how their work speaks to the idea, and thoughts to consider as we begin our discussions.

Andrea Cheng

On bookjoy...

A third grader asked me why my name was on the cover of one of my titles, *Where the Steps Were*. The question surprised me. Wouldn't a third grader know that the author's name appears on the book cover? I asked him to explain. "I think Kayla, Carmen, Dawn, Jonathan, and Anthony wrote those poems, so their names should be on the cover, not yours." He thought the characters in the book actually wrote it. This was the biggest compliment I ever got from a reader. That is bookjoy to me.

My craft and bookjoy...

A fourth grader said, "I like to read and I'm not always nice. Now, thanks to Anna Wang (*The Year of the Book*), I know I'm not the only one." Bookjoy means feeling less alone.

I watched a fifth grader reading *Etched in Clay*. Her face looked really concerned. She looked up. "You mean Dave was actually sold like when I sold my bike at our yard sale?" I nodded. "We learned about slavery in fourth grade," she said. "But I didn't know people were sold." She got teary eyed and read on. Bookjoy means reading even when the words make you sad.

To consider...

What is "creative non-fiction?"

Can we write biographies of people for whom there is little documentation?

If a writer fills in the gaps in a person's life, is she crossing the line into fiction?

Simone Elkeles

On bookjoy...

I would have to say that I discovered my "bookjoy" as an adult instead of as a child. Unlike most authors I know, I wasn't a big reader when I was a teen and struggled understanding the classics. I fell in love with reading as an adult when I went to the library with my children. I picked up a book at random and was so caught up in the characters and story I didn't want to stop reading. I specifically fell in love with romance novels because I love happy endings! I wanted the power to make someone laugh and cry with my words, so I started writing books I would have loved to read as a teen. Once I started reading and writing for "myself" and not for a grade in school, I realized I loved books!

My craft and bookjoy...

I write about characters that have been left out of teen literature for so long, specifically the Hispanic population. My neighbor inspired me to write *Perfect Chemistry* because when we were talking one day, I realized he didn't feel proud to be Mexican. Living in Chicago, where there's a huge Hispanic population, I felt that it was awful that these kids weren't more represented in teen books and I wanted to change that. I love it when I get teens who are Mexican say that since reading the *Perfect Chemistry* series they're proud to be Hispanic or when teens email me that they didn't know about Mexican culture but definitely want to know more about it after reading *Perfect Chemistry*.

To consider...

I know I was a reluctant reader as a teen and I suspect that today there are probably even more reluctant readers than there were when I was in school. What are we, as a community, going to do to ensure that those kids are reached and that the right books find them? And secondly, how come not many people talk about teen couples reading books together - it happens more than you think but it's not discussed a lot!

Mem Fox

On bookjoy...

The bliss of books is being able to visit another world and meet other people with problems of their own. Real life certainly has its myriad joys and contentments, but it also has its own peculiar stresses, vicissitudes, duties and banalities and being able to escape them, through a good book, is heavenly. Knowing I'm in the middle of a good book that I cannot wait to pick up again is like remembering there's one last, delicious chocolate left in the box, just when I thought I had eaten them all.

My craft and bookjoy...

When I was a teacher of teachers I learnt that children who know six nursery rhymes by heart by the time they are four are usually in the top reading group by the age of eight. That piece of research was the genesis of my book *Goodnight, Sleep Tight*. I incorporated into a story about a babysitter seven nursery rhymes (to be on the safe side!), which could be chanted with noisy joy and liveliness, and which would, at the same time, lead children along a lovely road to literacy.

To consider...

Can we ask ourselves how much harm we are doing to children by depriving them of great literature as a means of learning to read? I believe basal readers are a great force for *illiteracy*. They cause children to suffer so much that many of them are put off reading for life. Combined with standardised testing it seems we are actively and foolishly creating a population that loathes reading.

Gregory Maguire

On bookjoy...

The word "bookjoy" suggests a trifecta of pleasures, not unlike the pleasures of a romance. One treasures the memory of early affections, one's first book loves; one anticipates unarticulated satisfactions and nuances in books as yet undiscovered, maybe even as yet unwritten. But the book in the lap, spread open, all its artifice and gule and heart working to attract: Ah, it was ever thus: for the moment, you love the one you're with.

My craft and bookjoy..

A great number of my books intentionally ring changes on familiar stories--those of Oz, of the Little Match Girl, of the fairy tales of Grimm, even of the legend of the Tooth Fairy. I think my novel "What-the-Dickens" is most specifically about the consolations and encouragement of reading. In a Hurricane Katrina-type setting, when a young adult has no other way to protect the children in his charge, he turns to telling them a story to distract and comfort them. His methods, his credos, his rationales, are mine, too.

To consider...

How will quiet bookjoy survive in this noisy era of stealth electronica (the vampiric smart-phones, the ubiquitous laptops, the racket of tweet and twitter and twaddle)?

Louise May

On bookjoy...

Bookjoy for me occurs when I get so wrapped up and engrossed in what I am reading, everything else is blocked out. It occurs when I learn new things or learn to see people or events from a new perspective. It also occurs when I finish a book and want to go back and read it or skim it again to savor the language or certain passages that I especially enjoyed. And bookjoy occurs when I am so excited about a book that I want to tell others about it. At a museum I visited last weekend, the gift shop carried a book I had published that was about the subject of one of the exhibits. A woman was leafing through the book, and then showed it to her companion as they considered whether or not to buy it. I was able to speak with them about the joy of developing the story with the author and working with the illustrator. They were thrilled. They bought the book--an illustrated children's book--for themselves.

My craft and bookjoy..

As an editor who publishes many different kinds of books, one of the things I always consider is "what will a reader take away from this book; will it create some kind of bookjoy in the reader?" This can mean the story just made the reader feel good; he or she had a fun reading experience. It can mean the reader related on a personal level to an event or a character in the story. It can mean the story was satisfying, that the conclusion made the story whole. It can mean the reader learned something new or was able to see things in a different way. It can mean the reader was transported to another time or another world. If the reader was affected in some enriching way, then she or he has experienced bookjoy.

To consider...

With all the recent renewed discussion about the lack of diversity among children's books, most notably in the US, what can we (as authors, illustrators, editors, publishers, and book purchasers) do so that readers of all backgrounds have access to bookjoy from books that reflect their own reality as well as from books that broaden their knowledge and perspective of the world?

Pat Mora

On bookjoy...

Reading: a personal, powerful pleasure. A privilege too. Readers of all ages in all languages know the private joy of reading: bookjoy!

My craft and bookjoy..

I wrote *Tomás and the Library Lady* to honor educator, leader and writer Dr. Tomás Rivera, a migrant child from Texas, who, like many children who face economic challenges, had a deep love of learning and reading. I knew Tomás as an adult. He had a great sense of humor and a deep sense of mission. Yes, I wanted to convey his close family who took pride in his educational journey and the role of a caring librarian. Yes, I hoped that educators at all levels would become intrigued by this dark-skinned boy whose family spoke Spanish, and that educators would be reminded that each child is a bundle of promise, that librarians & educators are powerful people. Ultimately, though, did I write Tomás for didactic reasons? Oh, no. I longed to convey the private pleasure that a young boy discovered in books, bookjoy. When I ask children, "When Tomás is reading, why does he forget where he is and what time it is?" they enthusiastically shout, "His imagination!" Those children know bookjoy. I want all our children to savor bookjoy.

To consider...

How can we more creatively and effectively engage parents at all economic levels as our literacy partners? How can we motivate readers in our communities (local and professional) to exuberantly share bookjoy?

Ifeoma Onyefulu

On bookjoy...

Great books live in our hearts forever and we pass them on to our children - a bit like my mother's delightful stories. Also, the more we read those familiar pages the more we learn. Indeed, great books inspire, entertain, and even unsettle us, and that to me is the definition of bookjoy.

My craft and bookjoy..

In my opinion a great example of bookjoy is *A is for Africa*, my first book, described by Books for Keeps as, "stepping from darkened room straight into noon sunshine," it appeals to people of all ages. Often people tell me how much *A is for Africa* has inspired them. Perhaps it is because of its simplicity and accessibility. The words are simple and the images lively.

I have used the same style of writing and illustrating ever since, including my latest four books, titled *Look at This series: Food, Clothes, Play, and Home*, all set in Mali, West Africa. My simple texts and the photographs I shot, I believe will appeal to very young children, parents and teachers. Also, I hope the images in the books will encourage lively discussions in classrooms and within families.

To consider...

What kind of books would you like to see? Would you like more books showing poverty-stricken Africans or a slice of their rich heritage? I know which ones I'd like to

read - books that are educational, and beautifully illustrated, and that to me is what bookjoy is all about.

Siobhán Parkinson

On bookjoy...

The essential purpose of children's books is (surprise, surprise, NOT to function as a tool of literacy education but) to bring joy to children. It is commonly acknowledged that writing a book is a creative activity; it is less commonly understood that reading a book is also a creative activity. A reader (child or adult) brings their own intellectual and imaginative skills to bear in reading a book, and it is through the power not only of the writer's but also the reader's imagination that the book comes alive in the mind and brings joy to its reader.

My craft and bookjoy...

Well, my own books, though sometimes rather humorous (I hope), are essentially serious in intent. I do think that it's important to treat children seriously and to offer them literature that makes some demands on them, requires them to think. To enter into the world of the book, to empathise with the characters, and to bring their minds and hearts to bear on the language and the content of the book yields readers a joy that is more intense than the quick response of laughter or amusement that is evoked by the average entertainment offering, and that more intense engagement with my characters and their imagined lives is what I hope my own books bring.

To consider...

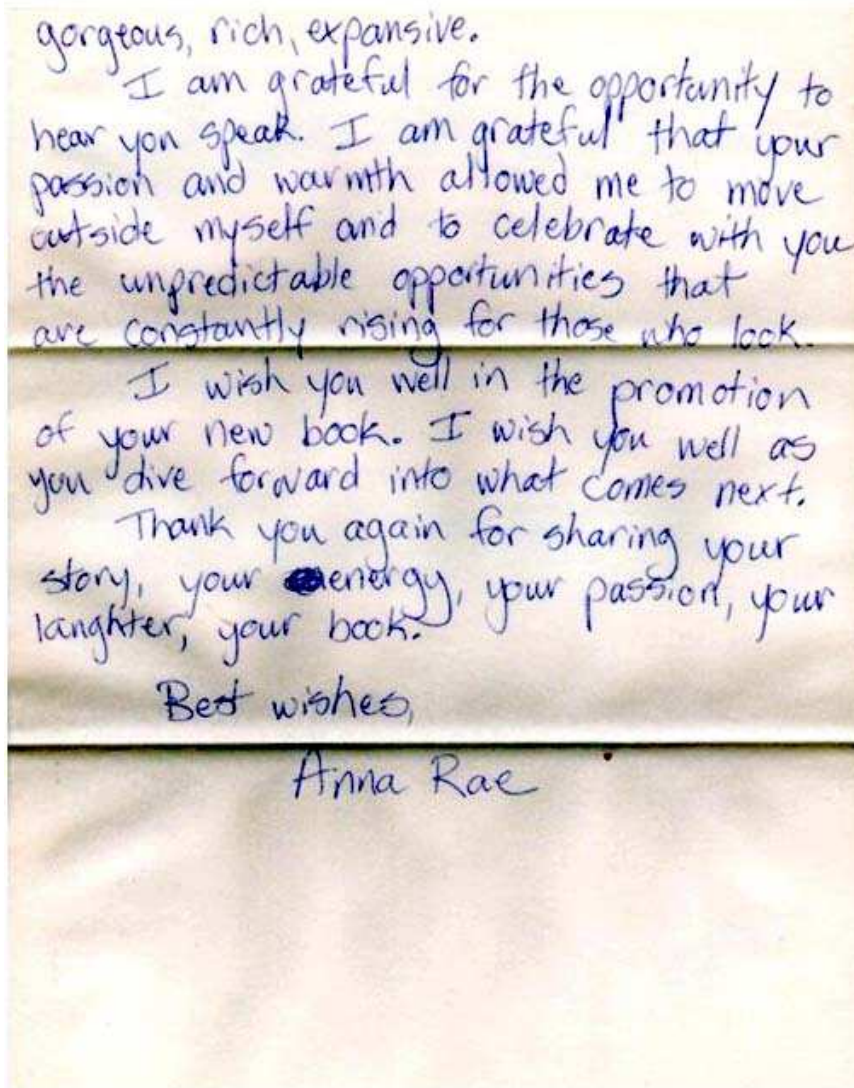
How can the literary value of children's literature be maintained in the face of rampant commercialisation of the culture?

Peter Sis

When thinking about bookjoy for our pre-conference posting, this letter came to mind for Peter. He was touched by it and asked if it might "do"... This young reader speaks to the impact of both art and artist, capturing the essence of bookjoy with an elegance that inspires.

Dear Mr. Sis,

Last Monday, at the end of a long and miserable day, I was out walking in an effort to regain some balance. I wandered into the Porter Square Bookstore and your talk. I intended to listen for precisely one minute and then walk away but instead I was drawn in by your warm energy, enlivened storytelling, generous humor. I am still amazed, thinking back, by your openness and ability to be entirely present in that moment with such excitement and engagement. Your story was fascinating - a lesson in perseverance and in art for the love of art. More than that - art in every manifestation that could speak to people and build community - in the subway, in the laps of children, on the covers of albums to never forget. It is beautiful art Mr. Sis, and your book is



Klaas Verplancke

On bookjoy...

A while ago I received this picture from a mother in Taiwan. Her son is reading one of my picture books. She writes: "My son read your book a lot of times and totally forgot his Wii and iPad." Isn't this marvelous? Isn't this real magic? Isn't this an image of the real joy a book can bring in daily life? No batteries, no technology, no internet. Only imagination is needed to offer this boy some magical moments, to forget and escape and travel through his mind and imagination.

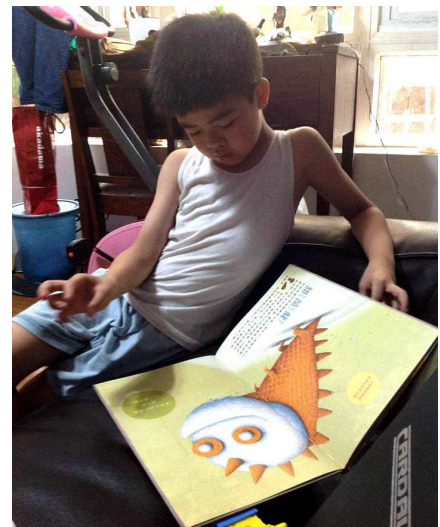
Joy creates joy. Knowing that this happens at the other side of the world, miles and days away from the table where this book is initially drawn and written, makes me speechless and grateful for having the inherited talents and opportunities to contribute to this.

Pictures like this help me to realize that being an author and illustrator for children is a real privilege. That I can offer joy, comfort and protection so that our children have the words and images to explore the known and discover the unknown. That requires the awareness of a great responsibility.

Memories are composed by the words, sounds and songs we've heard and the books we've read in our youth, the images that are burnt in our mind. Thus, the children's books we make today will be the memory of the adults of tomorrow. We create the future through children's books, and that is a huge challenge and a privileged job. All authors, illustrators and publishers in the world should be aware of this.

My craft and bookjoy...

Applesauce is a frank and vulnerable picture book that originated from my personal experiences as a father. It's a book about the joy of being a father, including all the ups and downs, all the do's and don'ts. In short, one of those aspects of life that we only learn by doing and listening to children. This "familiar story" appears to be a universal and cross-border story, judging by the many translations all over the world, including the US (my first from a bibliography of 150 books). This reinforces my opinion that stories must feel like coming home. Books are like mirrors. They reflect, articulate and visualize emotions and thoughts. They offer us the awareness that we're never alone with our doubts, our fears, our sadness. That's the wonder, the mystery and the joy that reading offers, to adults and certainly to children as well. We cannot underestimate their capacity and sense for 'understanding' this process of identification, and how important, influential this is in the formation of their personality and creativity. That's exactly why children shouldn't be poisoned by books with meaningless or mindless entertainment.



To consider...

Joy emerges from satisfaction
Satisfaction emerges from optimism
Optimism emerges from creativity
Creativity emerges from motivation
Motivation emerges from joy

[Conference Home](#) | [Register for Conference](#) | [USBBY](#)