

Book-Making Project

Reading a picture book offers a great opportunity to begin a book project with a class. In so doing, a teacher can show the class many of the same steps that a writer, illustrator, editor and designer team goes through in putting together a book.

Some steps to beginning a book project:

- 1) Discuss with the class where the character in the book goes from the last page of the story. In the book "Squirt," the last lines are: "Who knows what else he's got in store." Children can begin to discuss what happens to Squirt next. What is his next adventure?
- 2) Work out a story line with the class. Each child or groups of children can be responsible for one page in the book. A picture book generally has 32 pages. The first page is the title page, second is the copyright page. Action does not generally begin until the third page. Generally, publishers leave 4 pages of room for their own information. This includes the title page and copyright page. A writer and illustrator generally have only 28 pages for a story. This works well for classes of 25 students, because there is almost one page per child for the class.
- 3) Write out the story.
- 4) Editing - Divide the story up over 28 pages. Some stories may be much shorter, of course, and so the text goes over fewer pages.
- 5) Assign each child his/her text and page in the story.
- 6) The child then has the task of coming up with the illustration for that page. This is a good point to talk to the children about the various methods that illustrators use to create their art work: computer generated images, watercolor ("Squirt"), oils, collage ("Mr. Seahorse"), etc.
- 7) Another great tool for oceans units is to pick a general theme, such as, "What Lives in a Shell?" The book has as many pages as you have children in the class. Each child designs one page with a drawing and information about his/her creature.
- 8) Collect the pages.

9) Talk about the various codes that a publisher has to obtain for a book: the ISBN (the social security number for books), EAN bar code, Copyright, CIP, LCCN (Library of Congress catalog number)

10) Design & Layout - This process can be as elaborate or simple as you would like to make it.

Very simple: Copy the originals back to back and then use a spiral binding process to hold the pages together.

More elaborate: If your school has access to Indesign (Adobe) or Quark, it is possible to layout the book in the program and show children how the pages come together in the computer. Children will need to pick out a font, page size, write up the copyright and publishing information for the first page.

11) Layout the master page. This is the form that all pages in the book will take on.

12) Create layers. Each page has at least two layers. The illustration is the back layer, and the text, generally, is the front layer. This way the text does not get "covered" by the illustration.

13) Scan in the illustrations and save them as tif or jpeg files. When a publisher does scans, they use either a high resolution flat bed scanner or a drum scanner. The latter is older technology, but seems to pick up color better than many many scanners. However, high end flat beds are about as good. For a drum scanner, the illustration is wrapped around a drum and spun. The scanner picks up the colors and creates an image from the process.

14) Place the illustrations on their respective pages.

15) Add in text

16) Create title page

17) Create copyright page

18) The last part many designers tackle and, ultimately, agree upon is the cover page. This can go through multiple runs. Up to 50 different designs may be discussed and ultimately rejected.

19) Printing - Once layout is complete, it is time to go to print. This is a good chance to talk about different types of paper that are used in books. Paperback books use thinner, rougher paper than hardbacks. Squirt, for instance, used artistic

- paper, heavy weight. It has a matte finish, rather than a gloss, so that the shine does not reflect too much light in the reader's eyes. Papers have different colors, from blues to yellows. Blues give a book a colder feel, whereas yellows lend them a softer, warmer feel. Publishers take these color issues into consideration when choosing paper for each book.
- 20) You can print the book off at the school printers, or you can take it outside the school. There are various small shops in the area that will print short runs of books. You can also, to save on costs, run a master copy and then run copies off of this at Kinko's. The majority of picture books are printed overseas, rather than in U.S. mostly due to labor costs.
 - 21) Binding - Once a book has been printed, it needs to be bound. This is a good chance to talk to children about the multitude of ways that one can bind a book. There is the simplest, saddle stitching (i.e. stapling), which is the one most readily to children and within their control. The next, slightly more complex method, is to bind using a comb or spiral. There are methods related to hardback books, i.e. case binding, stitching, library bindings, and those related to paperback, predominantly, gluing and saddle stitching (magazines).
 - 22) Depending on the age of the class, it is also possible to have children bind their own books using the stitching method: Children use needles and dental floss to sew their pages together. They use cardboard for the covers, and sheets of paper for the end covers that connect the cardboard cover to the sewn pages. Volunteer parents can also be a great help at this stage. Those that can sew can bring in their machines and actually sew the books together for the children, or they can be sewn at home and the final binding process to the cardboard can then be finished in class.
 - 23) Regardless of how elaborate the publishing process is, this is a great opportunity to talk to children about all of the issues that come into play in how an idea becomes a book.

Good reference book:

Beach, Mark & Eric Kenly (1993) *Getting it Printed* 3rd Ed., North Light Books.