



Top Tips for Children's Book Writers

With thanks to Patrice Lawrence & Rashmi Sirdeshpande

And our funders:



Tip #1: Pinpoint Your Readership



Picture Books

Ages 2–5 | ~ 500 words

Co-created with illustrators

Must pass the 100-read test

Relatable, child-centric themes

If you rhyme, rhyme WELL



Young Fiction

Ages 5–8 | 2.5–15K words

Short chapters

Highly illustrated

Familiar structures

Series potential



Middle Grade

Ages 8–12 | 30–40K words

Range of genres

Children must have agency

Keep the reader hooked

Importance of hope



Young Adult

Ages 13+ | 50–80K words

Mature, relevant themes

Range of readers (even adults)

High stakes and more peril

Range of genres and mash-ups!

Tip #2: Brainstorm Your Hook

■ Think about what **MATTERS** to your target audience/age group

■ Think about what they **LOVE**/are excited by + what is topical and timely

■ Big well-loved themes = **hooks**

■ Big familiar themes + **a twist** (*sibling rivalry with time travel*)

■ **Multiple hooks** (Lee Newberry's *reality TV/talent show with vampires*)

Tip #3: Choose Your Hook Carefully

When you have lots of ideas, how do you choose which one to run with?

- ■ Something hooky and commercial
 - ■ Something that **YOU** find exciting
 - ■ Something you care about enough to invest in
 - ■ Something that feels **IRRESISTIBLE**
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Tip #4: Craft an Irresistible Premise!

Who

The main character
(established
on page 1)



What

Their central
goal or desire



Context

The specific world
or situation they
live in



Obstacle

What stands
directly in their
way

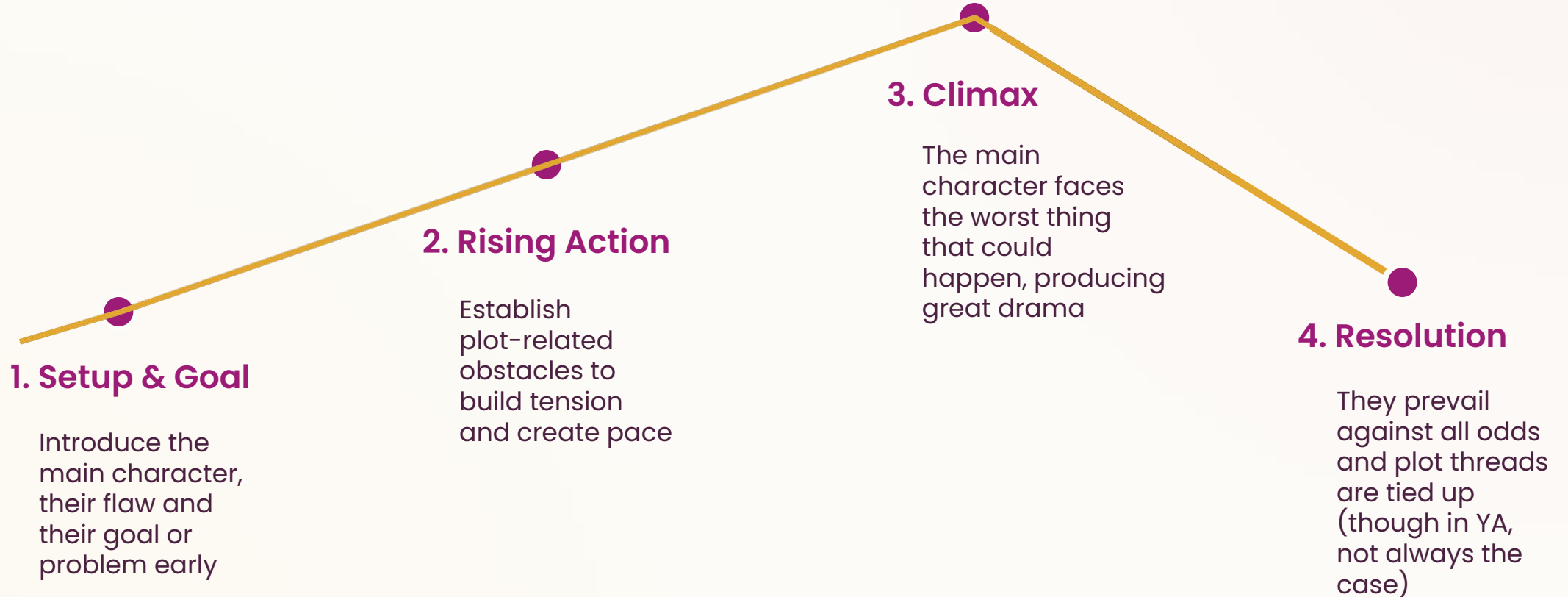


Stakes

What happens if
they fail to achieve
their goal

The elevator pitch test: Can you describe your premise quickly and clearly that makes the listener want to hear more?

Tip #5: Create a Compelling Plot Structure



Tip #6: Know Your Reader

The trap

Childhood nostalgia can be compelling but it isn't reliable. Don't base your understanding of children's books on what you read as a child.



The practice

Read widely within the age range and genre you've chosen. Analyse how contemporary authors handle voice, vocabulary, pacing and inclusive representation.



Remember

To write for today's children, you must read what they are reading.

Tip #7: Have Fun!

- Write for pleasure and it'll show in your writing**
- Don't write to a trend – it'll be over before you're even close to being published!**
- Connect with fellow writers to share your work and support each other**