



**THE LOFT**  
LITERARY CENTER

# CHILDREN'S & YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE CONFERENCE

MAY 5-7, 2016

*At Open Book in Minneapolis*



**THURSDAY, FRIDAY,  
AND SATURDAY:**  
Featuring Andrea Davis  
Pinkney, Andrew Karre,  
John Coy, Kelly Barnhill,  
and many other writers  
and editors.

Sessions on craft, issues, and publication  
in children's and young adult literature.

REGISTER AT  
**LOFT.ORG >>**

# Children's & Young Adult Literature

<b>Conference Fees:</b>	Regular Price	\$275.00
	Loft Members	\$247.50

*(Saturday lunch provided by the Loft)*

## THURSDAY, MAY 5

- 6:30 p.m.** | **Their Great Gift: A Picture Book Collaboration**  
John Coy, Wing Young Huie, Andrew Karre, and Carol Hinz

## FRIDAY, MAY 6

- 6:30 p.m.** | **Book Talk**  
Lisa Von Drasek and Andrea Pinkney

## SATURDAY, MAY 7

- 9 a.m.** | Conference Check-In Opens
- 10 a.m.** | Keynote Address by Andrea Pinkney
- 11:05 a.m.** | *Breakout Sessions 1*  
Kidspiration: Writing Books that Kids Love to Read  
From Moles to Skunks: Creating a Picture Book  
I'm New Here  
The Mechanics of Voice
- 12:15 p.m.** | Networking Lunch
- 1:00 p.m.** | *Breakout Sessions 2*  
Revision: Finding a Story's Heart  
Writing with Heart  
Planning Your Way Through Revisions
- 2:15 p.m.** | *Breakout Sessions 3*  
Girl Power  
Seriously Fun Nonfiction  
Combining Music & Poetry to Make Picture Books  
The Dog at My Ending and Other Excuses for Not Finishing

# Conference Schedule & Fees

## SATURDAY, MAY 7 (CONTINUED)

- 3:30 p.m.** | Breakout Sessions 4
- The Evolution of YA as a Genre
  - Activating Passive Language
  - Broaching Taboo Topics in Middle Grade
  - Getting From Here to There: A Road Map to Productivity
- 4:45 p.m.** | How Stories Make Us Whole

## THURSDAY May 5

### THEIR GREAT GIFT: A PICTURE BOOK

#### COLLABORATION | 6:30 p.m.

John Coy, Wing Young Huie, Andrew Karre and Carol Hinz

For most picture books, authors and artists work separately, but there can be benefits to breaking this rule. Join author John Coy, photographer Wing Young Huie, and editors Andrew Karre, and Carol Hinz as they discuss *Their Great Gift*, an immigration story that required close cooperation at each step, resulting in a unique and distinctive book. Find out about the joys and challenges of collaborating on a project and what opportunities this presents for your own work.

**John Coy** is the author of picture books, young adult novels, and the 4 for 4 middle grade series. His most recent books are *Their Great Gift* and the forthcoming YA novel *Gap Life*. He lives in Minneapolis and visits schools around the world.

**Wing Young Huie** has been photographing the dizzying socioeconomic and cultural realities of American society, much of it centered on the urban cores of his home state of Minnesota. Although his work has been exhibited in national and international museums and galleries, his most well-known projects are large-scale public installations, including Frogtown (1995), Lake Street USA (2000), and The University Avenue Project (2010), which transformed major Twin Cities' thoroughfares into epic photo galleries, reflecting the everyday lives of thousands of its citizens in the midst of some of the most culturally diverse areas in the country.

**Andrew Karre** is executive editor at Dutton Books for Young Readers.

**Carol Hinz** is editorial director at Millbrook Press, a division of Lerner Publishing Group.

# FRIDAY May 6

6:30 p.m. / **KEYNOTE CONVERSATION**

## **Book Talk: A Dialogue**

*with Andrea Davis Pinkney and Lisa Von Drasek*

Please join us for a conversation with New York Times Bestselling author and publisher Andrea Davis Pinkney, and Lisa Von Drasek, Curator of the Children's Literature Research Collections, University of Minnesota as they delve into the artistic process of creating books for children and young adults. This insightful discussion reveals the joys and challenges of creative expression, while celebrating literacy's power.

# SATURDAY May 7

10-11 a.m. / **KEYNOTE SESSION**

## **Read, Write, Reach: Inviting and Delighting Readers with Words and Pictures**

*with Andrea Davis Pinkney*

**Andrea Davis Pinkney** is the New York Times bestselling and award-winning author of more than thirty books for children and young adults, including picture books, novels, works of historical fiction and nonfiction. Her books have been awarded multiple Coretta Scott King Book Awards, Jane Addams Children's Literature Honor citations, NAACP Image Award nominations, the Boston Globe/Horn Book Honor medal, several Parenting Publication Gold Medals, American Library Association Notable Book citations, and many other awards and honors. Her 2014 book, *The Red Pencil*, received five starred reviews from trade publications and was named the book of the year by School Library Journal. A motion picture adaptation is currently in development.

In addition to her work as an author, Andrea has had an illustrious career as a children's book publisher and editor. She has acquired and published a robust mix of titles, including the Newbery Honor Book and Coretta Scott King Book Award-winner *Elijah of Buxton* by Christopher Paul Curtis; Allen Say's Robert F. Sibert Honor Medal-winner *Drawing from Memory*; Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Award-winner *The Skin I'm In* by Sharon G. Flake; and Toni Morrison's *Remember: The Journey to School Integration*, winner of the Coretta Scott King Author Award.

Learn more at [loft.org](http://loft.org)

## **Kidspiration: Writing Books that Kids Love to Read**

with *Abby Cooper*

Sometimes, between drafting, revising, marketing, and everything else that comes with being a writer, it's easy to lose sight of why we do what we do and who we're really doing it for—the kids! In this session, we'll bring our audience back to the forefront of our minds as we talk about the kids who inspire us to write what we write. Former teacher and school librarian Abby Cooper will discuss how her students motivated her to write her debut middle grade novel, and how she continues to incorporate their interests and ideas into each book she writes. Get ready to learn—and laugh—as we share stories and discuss how to truly listen to our audience in order to provide the most authentic, engaging books possible.

**Abby Cooper** is the author of *Sticks and Stones*, a middle grade novel to be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux/Macmillan in July 2016. Her second novel, currently untitled, will follow in 2017. She holds her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and has a post-graduate certificate in Library and Information Science.

## **From Moles to Skunks: Creating a Picture Book**

with *Trisha Speed Shaskan & Stephen Shaskan*

The process of creating a picture book can be very transforming. Trisha Speed Shaskan and Stephen Shaskan's picture book *Punk Skunks* began as an illustrated chapter book called *Rock Star-Nosed Moles*. Trisha and Stephen will explore their process from idea to first draft, peer critiques, publishing feedback/rejections, rethinking and revising, and all the struggles and possibilities of change while holding onto the heart of their story. The audience will be challenged and inspired to ask questions and see new possibilities for their own stories.

**Trisha Speed Shaskan** has written over thirty books for children, including her latest picture book *Punk Skunks* illustrated by her husband Stephen Shaskan. For the past twenty years, Trisha has taught creative writing. Trisha lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota with her husband Stephen, and their cat Eartha, and dog Bea. Visit her online at [www.trishaspeedshaskan.com](http://www.trishaspeedshaskan.com).

**Stephen Shaskan's** debut picture book *A Dog is a Dog* (Chronicle Books) was on New York Public Library's Top 100 Books to Read and Share for 2011, and was a 2011 CCBC Choice. He is also the author and illustrator of *The Three Triceratops Tuff* (Beach Lane Books) and most recently illustrated *Punk Skunks* (Harper) written by his wife Trisha Speed Shaskan. Stephen and Trisha live in Minneapolis, Minnesota with their cat Eartha, and dog Bea. [stephenshaskan.com](http://stephenshaskan.com)

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS 1 (CONTINUED)

### I'm New Here with Dara Dokas

Are you brand new to a children's literature conference? Are you new to writing for children? Then this session is for you! We will cover some basics such as different levels of children's writing, how to find an editor, do's and don'ts of conference going, and much more.

**Dara Dokas** is the published author of three books for children including a picture book, *Muriel's Red Sweater*, which was runner-up for the McKnight Award in Children's Literature. In addition to writing and teaching at the Loft, Dara teaches 8th grade English in St. Paul.

### The Mechanics of Voice with E. M. Kokie

Writers frequently hear publishing professionals talk about voice as the deciding factor in whether to represent or publish a manuscript. But when writers ask for clarification as to what makes a strong narrative voice, we often hear vague answers or examples without analysis. This session breaks narrative voice down into its components so that we can examine what makes a distinctive and effective narrative voice, and then offers suggestions for revising to improve the effectiveness of a manuscript's narrative voice. The session will use examples from well-known published works to illuminate each component of voice and to demonstrate how those components fit together to affect the reader's experience. Then, by discussing tips for revising to enhance the effectiveness of a manuscript's narrative voice, participants are encouraged to look at their own work with fresh eyes and to think about voice as the result of deliberate choices, as opposed to magic or happenstance.

**E.M. Kokie** is the author of the young adult novel *Personal Effects*, which explores loss, recovery, and competing visions of masculinity in the shadow of the conflict in Iraq. Her next novel, *Radical*, also explores issues involving identity and self-determination, this time against the dueling backdrops of queer identity and the survivalist movement. She also has short stories in the 2015 anthologies *Things I'll Never Say: Stories About Our Secret Selves* (Candlewick Press) and *Violent Ends* (Simon Pulse). A lawyer by training, Emily lives in Wisconsin with her wife and pet Wookie. She can be found online at [www.emkokie.com](http://www.emkokie.com), tweets as @EMKokie, and blogs at [www.thpiratetree.com](http://www.thpiratetree.com), a collective of children's and young adult writers interested in children's literature and social justice issues.

12:15-1 p.m. / **NETWORKING LUNCH**

# SATURDAY May 7

1-2:10 p.m. / **BREAKOUT SESSIONS 2**

## **Revision: Finding a Story's Heart** *with Charlotte Sullivan Wild, Megan Maynor, and Minju Chang*

No matter how much skill a writer brings to manuscript, every new project begins as a mystery. Or, shall we be honest? A big mess. Agent Minju Chang and her clients, Megan Maynor and Charlotte Sullivan Wild, draw back the curtain to describe how they revise picture books—alone and together—to find the heart of their stories. This session will provide strategies and guiding questions for navigating revision of fiction and informational picture books.

**Minju Chang** is an agent with BookStop Literary Agency. BookStop was established in 1984 and represents both authors and illustrators for the picture book, middle-grade, and YA markets. Their authors and illustrators have received numerous awards and honors including the Pura Belpre Award, the Kirkus Prize, and the National Book Award.

**Megan Maynor** is a former advertising copywriter and author of picture books *Ella and Penguin Stick Together* and *Ella and Penguin: Perfect Match* (forthcoming 2017), both from HarperCollins Children's Books. Represented by Minju Chang at BookStop Literary. [meganmaynor.com](http://meganmaynor.com)

**Charlotte Sullivan Wild** is the author of a forthcoming picture book (2017). She earned her MFA from Hamline University and taught children's literature for nearly two decades. She interviewed children's authors for Write On! Radio (KFAI) and enjoys developing community programming on children's literature. Represented by Minju Chang at BookStop Literary.

## **Writing with Heart** *with Jane St. Anthony*

We'll explore "heart" as we strive to deepen our writing. Using literature, visual art and music, we'll discuss how the arts have the power to affect us at a visceral level. With our insights and pencils, we'll work toward a better understanding of writing with heart.

**Jane St. Anthony**, a voracious reader as a child, grew up in Minneapolis and graduated from the University of Minnesota. She likes to walk, swim, be with her friends and family, and read. Jane and her husband, the parents of two adult children, live in Minneapolis. In her spare time, Jane hopes to teach her cats to read.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS 2 (CONTINUED)

### Planning Your Way Through Revisions with Stephanie Watson

You've written a complete draft of your novel, and you're ready to revise that big, beautiful mess. But where do you begin? By creating a revision plan. In this session, you'll start filling out a chapter-by-chapter table that will help you keep track of your different story threads, character arcs, emotional states, and more. See sample revision tables by greats like JK Rowling, and walk away with the beginnings of your own plan to guide your rewrite.

**Stephanie Watson** is the author of the middle-grade novels, *Elvis & Olive* and *Elvis & Olive: Super Detectives*, both Junior Library Guild selections. She's also written picture books, including *The Wee Hours* (illustrated by Mary GrandPré), *Behold! A Baby* (illus. by Joy Ang), and *Best Friends in the Universe* (illus. by LeUyen Pham). In addition to writing books, Stephanie also teaches writing workshops and draws comics. Learn more at [www.stephanie-watson.com](http://www.stephanie-watson.com).

2:15–3:25 p.m. / **BREAKOUT SESSIONS 3**

### Girl Power with Molly Beth Griffin

How do we create complex girl characters that will give our readers windows and mirrors into what it's like to grow up female? From girl toddlers who get messy to young women who question gender roles, how can we fight stereotypes and tackle tough issues in our fiction? Let's discuss "strong female characters" in great picture books, MG, and YA, and also the idea of strength itself. Can strength and power come from vulnerability? Can we root for characters who make bad choices? Can a character who isn't likable still be compelling? We will talk about these questions, and write toward more questions—deeper questions that will challenge us and the way we see our stories.

**Molly Beth Griffin** is a graduate of Hamline University's MFA Program in Writing for Children and Young Adults and the author of two picture books, *Loon Baby* and *Rhoda's Rock Hunt*, as well as the YA novel *Silhouette of a Sparrow*. Her novel was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award, the Lambda Literary Award, and ForeWord's Book of the Year, and was featured on ALA's Rainbow List and the Amelia Bloomer List of Feminist Literature. *Rhoda's Rock Hunt* won a Northeast Minnesota Book Award and a Jeanette Fair Book Award. She was the recipient of the 2014 McKnight Artist Fellowship in Children's Literature.



## BREAKOUT SESSIONS 3 (CONTINUED)



### **Seriously Fun Nonfiction** with *Tracy Nelson Maurer*

Lighten up, nonfiction writers, and let's have some fun with the truth. Explore humor as a way to make a nonfiction manuscript engaging and memorable. We'll take some cues from the pros and experiment with techniques for tickling funny bones. No comedy experience required, but you're highly encouraged to wear a smile to this session.

**Tracy Nelson Maurer** has written more than 100 nonfiction books for schools and libraries, and recently completed *Noah Webster's Fighting Words* for publication with Millbrook Press, an imprint of Lerner. She's also written two forthcoming biographies for Henry Holt, including *John Deere, That's Who!* She is a graduate of the Hamline University MFA Program in Writing for Children and Young Adults.

### **Sing Me a Story: Combining Music and Poetry to Create Picture Books** with *Rachel Gabriel*

What do the blues, a folk ballad, and a litany all have in common? They, along with many other forms, are poetic expressions with roots in the synchronistic relationship between music and words. There is a natural call and response to story telling, and children's literature also grew from this tradition of sharing stories through song. Writers, too, use repetition, rhythm, and auditory expression for their youngest readers, most of whom are just developing their literacy skills by playing musically with words. After a brief presentation of songs, as well as books by authors (including Margaret Wise Brown, Joyce Sidman, and Al Perkins), participants will have ample opportunity to practice the craft of writing picture books that really sing.

As a writer and teaching artist, **Rachel Gabriel** encourages creative expression through the power of storytelling and the complex beauty of the human voice. A trained vocalist and joyful advocate for children's literature and literacy, Ms. Gabriel also teaches Music Together classes for young families, and facilitates a monthly children's story time as "Mama Ray." She is currently at work on stories inspired by her two children.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS 3 (CONTINUED)

### The Dog Ate My Ending and Other Excuses for Not Finishing with Patrick Jones

So why didn't you finish that great book for kids sitting on your computer? Chances are it is NOT because your dog ate the perfect heartbreaking ending you outlined the morning before on a Starbucks napkin. While there are good reasons, there are more bad ones to push past in order to get to the finish line. In this session, learn techniques to complete your book, including a practice exercise.

**Patrick Jones** started his writing career at age eight with an article for a NYC-based pro wrestling newsletter. Since that time he has published over two hundred book reviews, one hundred plus articles, fifty or so essays in reference works, nine professional books for teachers and librarians, eight young adult novels, ten short stories, and two nonfiction books, including one of professional wrestling. His current focus is reluctant YA readers with twenty eight published since 2013 with four more due in fall 2016. He is a frequent speaker at workshop and conferences.

3:30-4:40 p.m. / **BREAKOUT SESSIONS 4**

### About And/Or For: The Evolution of YA as a Genre

with Carrie Mesrobian & Andrew Karre

The young adult genre is a relatively young one, and even in the last few decades has gone through many stages and changes. At heart is the dialectic that defines this genre: it is about teenaged readers, but not necessarily or exclusively for. What does this mean for us as writers in this genre, when the target audience can matter so much in some senses, and not matter at all in others? Do we owe young readers something different than other readers? Something better? Or nothing at all? This panel will focus on where YA has come from and where it might possibly be going, from both an author and an editor perspective.

**Carrie Mesrobian** has taught at the Loft since 2007 and is the author of three YA novels, *Sex & Violence*, *Perfectly Good White Boy*, and *Cut Both Ways*.

**Andrew Karre** is executive editor at Dutton Books for Young Readers.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS 4 (CONTINUED)



### **Activating Passive Language** *with JoAnn Early Macken*

Active language makes a point clearly. It wastes no words. It engages readers and draws them into a scene. Passive language is indirect and wordy. It might even be boring. It raises the risk of losing readers.

In this session, we'll discuss some common types of passive language. We'll examine examples of each one, and we'll explore specific remedies. You'll learn helpful techniques to apply to your own writing. You'll have opportunities to contribute suggestions. And you'll take home a detailed handout to help you remember.

**JoAnn Early Macken** is the author of five picture books, including *Baby Says "Moo!"*, *Waiting Out the Storm*, and *Flip, Float, Fly: Seeds on the Move*. She has also written more than 125 educational books for young readers, and her poems appear in many children's magazines and anthologies. JoAnn earned her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts. She has taught writing courses at four Wisconsin colleges. JoAnn contributes to the Teaching Authors group blog. You can visit her website at [www.joannmacken.com](http://www.joannmacken.com).

### **Broaching Taboo Topics in Middle Grade; Swearing, Sex, Violence, and Drug Use** *with Jacqueline Hesse*

Eleven-year-old boys swear more than any other identifiable group—including truck drivers and sailors. But is it acceptable to include swearing in books for this age group? How can MG authors effectively broach such taboo topics as sex, violence, and drug use? Presentation will include a brief literary chronology of swearing, as well as the psychology and research behind why we swear, and contemporary examples of violence, sex and drug use in MG. Discussion and a writing exercise to follow.

**Jacqueline Hesse** took her first Loft class 18 years ago. She earned an MFA in Children's Writing from Hamline University in 2013 and has taught reading, literature, and writing for K-12 and at the college level. She has written four MG novels and two YA. Her MFA critical thesis was on swearing in middle grade fiction and she continues to collect data and research how swear words are used in both society and literature.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS 4 (CONTINUED)

### Getting From Here to There: A Road Map to Productivity

with Erin Soderberg Downing & Catherine Clark

In this interactive session, Erin & Cathy will let you in on their secrets to staying productive and hitting writing goals while working day jobs, raising kids, and trying to stay sane. They will help you set realistic goals, make writing calendars, and talk about their strategies for dealing with frustration and self-doubt. Learn how to stay accountable to yourself as you navigate the writing and publishing process. Erin & Cathy have been motivating and cheering each other on for the past ten years, and they want to help you achieve your writing goals, too.

**Catherine Clark** and **Erin Soderberg Downing** have written and published more than 150 books between them, ranging from cute early chapter books to funny middle grade novels to edgy young adult romance. They often work side-by-side, staring at their laptop screens, with breaks to discuss plot problems, their terrible middle-of-the-book chapters, and muffins.

4:45 p.m.

### NEXT STEPS FOR WRITERS

### How Stories Make Us Whole with Kelly Barnhill

McKnight Artist Fellow in Children's Literature will close the conference with some ideas on next steps for writers.

**Kelly Barnhill** is the author of four middle grade novels—the most recent, *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, is coming out next fall. She also writes creepy short stories and strange novellas and other odd projects that keep her up late at night. She has received a bunch of starred reviews and was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award, the Norton Award and the PEN USA Literary award. She has won a Parents' Choice Gold Award and a McKnight Artist Fellowship in Children's Literature. She also makes excellent pie.

# Other Loft Opportunities

## Upcoming Children's and Young Adult Lit Classes:

**Query Letter Clinic for CYA Writers** | Stephanie Watson | [April 9, 2016](#)

**First Draft Diagnostics** | Carrie Mesrobian | [April 9, 2016](#)

**Visit [loft.org/classes](http://loft.org/classes) to register!**

## Summer Youth Classes:

**Another full lineup of youth classes this summer (ages 6–17)**

**Registration open in February**

## Loft Manuscript Critique:

**Ready to work one-on-one with a Loft editor?**

**Learn more at [loft.org/edit](http://loft.org/edit)**

The Loft's renowned teaching artists can now work with you one-on-one to deepen your skills, get a manuscript ready for publication, and finally complete that long-term project.

Children's and young adult editors include **Carrie Mesrobian, Kurtis Scaletta, Esther Porter, Elizabeth Law, and Molly Beth Griffin.**



## Become a Member and Support the Loft Community

As a nonprofit organization, the Loft relies on your member support to keep this thriving community of readers and writers going strong. When you make a tax-deductible membership contribution, you help build a vibrant Loft community. You provide low-income access to creative writing classes, free and low-cost readings with writers and artists, grants and mentorships to Minnesota writers, artist residences in schools and community organizations, and so much more. Thank you. For more information or to join today, visit [loft.org/support](http://loft.org/support) or call 612-215-2597.

## Discover Future Opportunities!

Sign up for the Loft Enewsletter: [bit.ly/LoftEnews](http://bit.ly/LoftEnews)



**The Loft advances the artistic development of writers, fosters a thriving literary community, and inspires a passion for literature.**

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Photo: Anna Min Enterprises

## MINNESOTA POETRY OUT LOUD >>SEE THE FINALISTS THIS MARCH<<

Poetry Out Loud is an exciting national recitation competition for high school students. Participants build self-confidence and master public speaking skills while learning about art and literature. The Minnesota State champion receives an expense-covered trip to Washington, D.C. to compete for \$20,000 to put toward college tuition.

**State Semifinals: March 8 & 9, all day**  
**State Finals: March 10, 5 p.m.**

▶▶▶▶▶ VISIT US TO LEARN MORE! ▶▶▶▶▶

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## FUNDERS

Loft activities are made possible through the generous contributions of Loft members and by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund. Major support is also provided by Amazon.com, The William Randolph Hearst Foundation, Jerome Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Target Foundation, and the Surdna Foundation.



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## ACCESSIBILITY

The Loft Literary Center strives to be accessible to all, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, veteran status, economic status, sex, gender identity or expression, age, sexual orientation, or disability. As possible, we will remove barriers to participation in our programs to persons with disabilities.

To arrange for accessibility accommodation, please contact the Education Administrator at 612-379-8999 three weeks in advance. Accessibility services are partly supported by the Rachel Vaughan Memorial Fund. For more information about accessibility see [loft.org/access](https://loft.org/access).





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