



### Manuscript Consultation Service

I love reading and talking about picture books, and enjoy helping fellow writers to tell the story they want to tell in the best way possible—with a distinctive voice and lively language that engages readers from the first line and holds their attention right to the end.

Doing this requires time and careful attention. With each manuscript that I review, here are a few of the things I consider:

- ❖ Does the story hold together? Where does it soar? Where does it stumble?
- ❖ Does it work as a picture book? Is it visual? Does it allow for varied illustrations?
- ❖ Does it have child-appeal? Would a child care about this story? Would an adult enjoy reading it?
- ❖ Does it capture the reader's attention from the start, and sustain it to the finish?
- ❖ Is the ending satisfying?
- ❖ Is the voice distinctive? Is it told from the best point of view?
- ❖ Are the characters real? Whether charming or villainous, are they appealing? Do we care what happens to them?
- ❖ Is the language lively and engaging?
- ❖ Would this story stand out in the crowded field of picture books?
- ❖ If written in verse: SHOULD it be written in verse? Do the rhythm and rhyme scheme work? Do they enhance the story? Are there places where the rhyme feels forced, the rhythm is off, or the story has taken a back seat to the rhyme?

After considering these questions and more, I will provide you with the following:

**A written evaluation.** An honest assessment of where your story shines and where it needs work, including specific suggestions to improve your manuscript, questions to consider, and perhaps some recommended reading. I may write comments directly on your manuscript as well.

**Phone consultation.** A phone call scheduled at a mutually convenient time. We'll discuss what's in the evaluation, and ways to make your story stronger. I'll also answer any questions you may have. If you're in the Denver area, I'd be happy to meet you at a local coffee shop for an additional fee.

**Please note** that I cannot (a) re-write your work, (b) promise your story will get published—even with all the recommended revisions, or (c) provide access to agents or editors who will read your work.

## **Qualifications:**

Since 2001, I've had twenty picture books published by major houses, including Sterling, Roaring Brook, Houghton Mifflin/Harcourt, Simon & Schuster, Dutton, and HarperCollins, and several more are due out in coming years. The books—which include poetry collections as well as rhyming (and non-rhyming) picture books—have received a number of awards and starred reviews, and have been named to the "Best of the Year" lists of the New York Public Library, Bank Street College of Education, IRA/CBC Children's Choice, and *Booklist*, *Cookie*, *Parenting*, and *Child* magazines (for details, please visit my website).

I've given presentations about writing at regional conferences of the International Reading Association and SCBWI, and have taught workshops on various elements of writing picture books, including rhyme, humor, voice, language, and the revision process. In addition, I've given manuscript critiques at several national SCBWI conferences.

Over the years, I've developed a practical sense of what works and what doesn't, as well as an intuitive sense of the magic involved in making memorable picture books. With each consultation, my goal is to nurture the creative spark that inspired you to write your story while giving you nuts-and-bolts advice to help you tell it in the best way possible.

## **Pricing:**

\$200 per picture book manuscript (up to 1,500 words). Includes the written evaluation and a phone call. If you're in the Denver area and would like to meet in person at a coffee shop near my home (in lieu of the phone call), the total charge is \$225. Optional follow-up: I will read and provide written comments on the revised manuscript for an additional \$75.

## **Process:**

The first step is to send me your manuscript by email. If, after reading it, I believe I can help you, I'll request payment via Pay Pal and give you an estimate of the turnaround time (I'll also let you know if I *can't* help you). When I've completed the written evaluation, I'll email you to schedule the phone conversation or meeting.

**NOTE:** If, like many writers, you have several stories and can't decide which is strongest, you may send up to three manuscripts and let me choose. I'll do an evaluation of the one I believe has the most potential. This is very helpful to me. Reading several stories gives me a better sense of who you are as a person and a writer.

## **Questions?**

Feel free to send me an email through my website at [www.lindaashman.com](http://www.lindaashman.com).