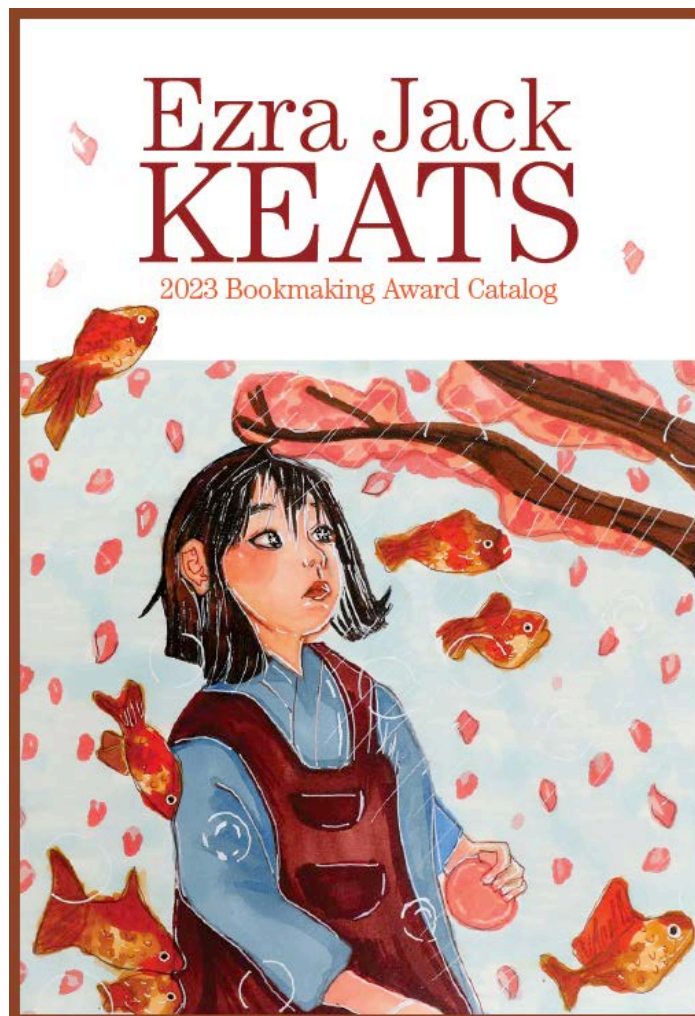




**ARTS Office**  
Division of Teaching and Learning



## **Table of Contents**

1. The Power of the Picture Book: A Letter to Colleagues
2. Decide Together What Makes a Good Picture Book
3. Discuss the Text
4. Discuss the Illustrations
5. Short Bookmaking Video Tutorials
6. Selection Committee Tips
7. Additional Resources

This resource was created by the Arts Office NYCPS  
Karen Rosner, Director of Visual Arts

# The Power of the Picture Book: A Letter to Colleagues

Dear Educators,

Exemplary picture books are powerful teaching tools. With their images and words, they enchant, instruct, surprise, amaze and move us in incredible, unforgettable ways. Successful picture books become models for quality artwork and excellent writing.

By creating their own picture books, students experience first-hand how books are made and how authors and illustrators think.

***They learn to:***

- consider their choice of words and phrases
- consider their audience in terms of message and clarity
- make artistic decisions

***The Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition provides opportunities for students to:***

- engage in research
- analyze text and image
- explore authors' and illustrators' styles
- exercise their creativity
- practice rigor and perseverance
- develop independent voices and opinions

No matter what subject you teach you already have the basic skills and, probably, the materials in your classroom to lead your class in a bookmaking activity right now.

The information in this booklet, along with the short [Bookmaking Tutorials](#) on Writing and Illustrating, as well as additional support materials found on the EJK Foundation website, will help you guide your students to create books they will be proud of, and remember for the rest of their lives. We wish you and your students an exciting journey through the rewarding process of creating picture books.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Rosner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Karen Rosner Director of Visual Arts

## **Decide Together What Makes a Good Picture Book**

A picture book study can begin with students discussing their favorite picture books. To help each student feel invested in the process, the following steps are suggested.

Have your students:

- Share a favorite picture book from home or from the class/school library.
- Meet in small groups and take turns explaining why they each like their book.
- Work together using their notes to create a group list of what they believe makes a good picture book.
- Meet back with the whole class and compare their list with those of the other groups.
- Work together with your guidance to create a master list, incorporating ideas from every group.



## Discuss the Text of a Picture Book

To prepare to create their own picture books students should become familiar with different genres. Using the questions below, students working individually or in groups can examine a variety of picture books from the viewpoint of a writer and consider how the author might answer each question. During this process students will become aware of the components of successful picture book text.

- Is the book fiction or nonfiction, biography, history, fantasy, poetry or science?
- What structure was used to best tell the story?
  - Snap-shot (comparable to a photo album with each page a stand-alone)
  - Linear (a journey from one place to another)
  - Circular (the characters may change but the action ends where it began)
- What is the problem being solved?
- What is the beginning, middle and end of the story?
- When in the course of the story is the problem solved?
- Is the location an important part of the story?
- Is there a narrator and how does the narrator fit into the story?
- Is the voice of the narrator in the first or third person? What effect does this choice have on the story?
- Is the story told through dialogue?
- Are all the key characters necessary to the story? Are there too many, too few?
- Why are the characters people, animals, or objects?
- Does the story take place in the past, present or future? Why?
- Is the season, month, week, day or time part of the story?
- Is the text edited so it contains only the words that are necessary?
- Does the text repeat information provided by the illustrations?
- Does every page need text?

## Discuss the Illustrations in a Picture Book

Picture book illustration can be explored in much the same way as the text, using the questions below as a guide. Students working individually or in groups, can examine a variety of picture books and discuss how an illustrator might answer each question. These exercises will inspire the students to think creatively about what they want from their own illustrations, and text.

- Does the physical shape/size of the book relate to the subject matter?
- What media did the illustrator use and how does it serve the story?
- How does the cover art relate to the story being told and invite the reader in?
- Is foreground, middle ground, background depicted on each page? ....In how much detail?  
From which perspective are images seen? Why?
- Are the images realistic, stylized, or abstract? What effect will this have on the reader?
- Are the images of characters and objects portrayed consistently so they can always be recognized?
- How do the illustrations move the story forward
- How are images placed in relation to the text?
- Is the text designed as part of the illustrations?
- How is empty or negative space used?
- What is the mood established by the pictures and how?
- How are color, line, shape and texture used to enhance the content of the story?
- Are light and shadow important parts of the images?
- Would you have illustrated the story differently?

## Children's Book Illustrators



**Top Row:** Chris Rashka, Oge More, Bryan Collier, Matt James, Jessica Love, Daisy Hirst, Shadra Strckland, Jessixa Bagley  
**Bottom Row:** Aaron Meshon, Bianca Diaz, Christopher Robinson, Sophie Blackall, Pat Cummings, Doug Salati, Jenny Sue Kostecki Shaw, Mike Curato, Christopher Myers

## Short Bookmaking Video Tutorials

The EJK Foundation has created, along with award winning author/illustrator Katie Yamasaki, **six short tutorials that will guide you through the entire process of inspiring your students to find, write, edit and polish their story and create, refine and combine the illustrations that will result in the creation of an original picture book.**

**There are three tutorials dedicated to the writing and three to the illustration process. Each tutorial is separated into bite sized segments** that will allow you to watch what you need, as many times as necessary, with your students, or before you present your lesson.

Visit the [Bookmaking Tutorial](#) to find the topics listed below.

### Writing Tutorials

- #1. Finding Your Story (7 min)
- #2. Beginning, Middle and End (approx. 8 min)
- #3. Pacing, Pagination and Polishing (approx. 12 min)

### Illustration Tutorials

- #1. Materials, Media and Method (approx. 13 min)
- #2. Storyboards, Thumbnails and Sketch Pads: Planning the Visual Story (approx. 12 min)
- #3. Components and Construction (approx. 12 min)



Katie Yamasaki from her EJK Bookmaking Tutorial in front of her mural

## THE SELECTION COMMITTEE TIPS

Along with what already has been noted in the memo, here are some of the qualities the Selection Committee focuses on when considering each book submitted for the EJK Bookmaking Competition. **We hope you find the following information helpful...and of course, share it with your students!**

### TEXT/STORY:

- Concise and condensed text, no more than 1,000 words.
- A story or narrative with a beginning, a middle and end.
- Engaging storytelling
- Correct spelling and grammar
- Legible text
- Book title and name of author on the cover of the book and on the title page

### ILLUSTRATIONS:

- Support and advance the story
- Cohesive design throughout (including text, front and back covers)
- Effective use of color
- Creative use of materials
- A cover (front and back) illustration that offers a clue to the book's story.
- Use of text as illustration, or as part of illustration.

### OVERALL CONSIDERATION OF THE BOOK:

- Integrated images and text to convey the story
- Attention paid to every page
- Use of blank pages only when called for in the story
- All text and artwork must be the original work of the student(s).
- Bound creatively and securely
- No smaller than 6" x 9" and no larger than 15" x 18"
- No fewer than 12 single side pages, no more than 36 single side pages



### 2023 EJK Bookmaking Competition

#### City Winners (LtoR)

***It's Okay To Bee Unique***, Coco Lee and Demi Lee (Grade 5)

***Hana Matsuri***, Hailey Li (Grade 8)

***Delilah Loves Her***, Arna Asad (Grade 11)

## Additional Resources

### Book Binding Methods

- [How to Make a Concertina Book](#)
- [How to Make a Pop up Book](#)
- [How to Make a Spiral Bound Book](#)

### Ezra Jack Keats Foundation

- [EJK Bookmaking Competition](#)
- [For Educators](#)
- [EJK Award Book Discussion Guides](#)

### Websites for Diverse Picture Books

- [Citywide Digital Library on Sora](#)
- [Ezra Jack Keats Award Winners and Honorees](#)
- [We Need Diverse Books](#)
- [The Brown Bookshelf](#)
- [Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature](#)
- [First Nations Development Institute - Native American Children's Literature](#)
- [25 Inspiring LGBTQ Themed Books for Kids](#)
- [Schneider Family Book Award](#) - for artistic expression of the disability experience for children

### Things to Know

- [This is More than a Competition](#)
- [Bookmaking: A Short Glossary of Terms](#)