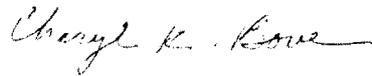


“Kate’s London Adventure”

A children’s book

By: Megan Wilson and Kendra Curless

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Bove

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cheryl K. Bove".

**Ball State University
Muncie, IN**

June 2008

Undergrad
Thesis
LE
2009
2008
.W553

Kate's London Adventure

Megan Wilson

Abstract

Having always been an avid reader and a lover of books, one of my life goals, for as long as I can remember, has been to write and publish a children's book. Being an elementary education major here at Ball State University, I feel I have learned so much about children and how they cognitively develop. Taking that knowledge and adding to it my extensive knowledge on children's literature, I sat down to write this, my very first book. In my writing, I decided to couple my passion for working with children with my love of traveling; this resulted in *Kate's London Adventure*. This short story picture book is about a young girl and her mischievous brother who travel to London to meet and stay with their aunt during their summer vacation from school. Written in journalistic style, I take on the voice of Kate. In twenty-four journal entries, the reader will travel from California to London and back again. The reader will tag along with Kate, Ronnie, and Aunt Irene as they visit famous museums, eat at local pubs, and ride on varying forms of transportation. I wrote this book in journal style so children could better relate to the voice of the narrator and so they could see, through the eyes of someone their own age, just how fun and exciting traveling can be. My goal for this book is that children will be engaged while reading and will simultaneously be learning about a foreign city's culture and unique history.

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank Dr. Bove for advising me through this project. Not only has she taught me so much in the classes I have been honored to take from her, she has been one of the most inspiring and influential people that I have met at Ball State. I can only aspire to be as great of an educator as she has been.
- I would also like to thank Kendra Curless, the book's illustrator and my best friend. Without her, my dreams of publishing a children's book would not have been fulfilled. Her illustrations really made this book and its characters come to life. I wouldn't have wanted to write my first book with anyone else.

Megan Wilson

Honors 499

Thesis Reflection

Kate's London Adventure

I knew when signing up for this course that I wanted my senior thesis to revolve around children in some way. Being an elementary education major here at Ball State University has proven to me, time and time again, that working with children is my passion. So staying within my area of expertise, I begin to consider my options. When brainstorming ideas for my thesis, I thought about doing a unit plan or organizing a children's community event, but the idea of writing a children's book kept resurfacing. Due to my love of reading and the pleasure I take in creative writing, composing a children's book has been a long time dream of mine, so I decided to keep the idea on my list of possibilities. However, once my friend, Kendra Curless, expressed an interest in illustrating my story, my decision was made. Writing *Kate's London Adventure*, has been an extremely rewarding experience. Not only was I able to fulfill my dream of writing and publishing a book, I was able to learn more about children's literature and the intricate process of publication.

Looking back on the finished product, I realize that I put a lot of myself in this book. Culminating my love for travel, reading, and children, this book tells about me as an individual. When I traveled to the U.K. as an aspect of one of my honor's college colloquiums, my mindset and view of the world were forever changed. I believe traveling and seeing the world is so important that I am going back to Europe to do my student teaching in Germany next spring. As a future educator, I believe it is imperative for

children to have a better understanding of the world in which they live. In writing *Kate's London Adventure*, my goal was to help children gain insight into a foreign city's culture and history. Never having traveled overseas until college, I was all too aware of the limited view that many children have of the world. In fact, books were my only source of "travel" as a child. Having always been an avid reader, I found myself in many exotic and foreign places thanks to books I checked out of the library. For children who rarely travel, I want *Kate's London Adventure* to be a passport for their minds; that is why I wrote the book in journalistic style.

One of the first things I decided was to write the book in journal format. Taking on the voice of Kate Clemmons, a 5th grade girl living with her father and annoying little brother, I wrote the entire book through the eyes of a child. I chose journal format because I believe it allows the readers to better relate to the tone and nature of the story. Writing in journal format is also something that many upper elementary students are asked to do as a part of school curriculum. This provides a good example of journal writing, while at the same time making the length and format of the book acceptable.

Wanting to write a book at the reading level of a fourth or fifth grader, but not wanting to write a chapter book, the journal format allowed me to keep the book short but developmentally appropriate for older children. Understanding the importance of reading aloud in the classroom, I wanted to create an upper-elementary book that could be read aloud in one sitting that was both engaging and cognitively challenging. As students progress upwards through the primary grades and on into the intermediate grades, research has shown that the amount of time teachers spend reading aloud dramatically declines. A switch takes place in which students are no longer learning to read, but

reading to learn; subsequently, with the focus being directed to more textbook type reading, many students come to associate reading in a negative light. However, I believe teachers can help students maintain their interest in literature, by reading aloud every day, by establishing a literature rich classroom, and by allowing students to silently read a book of their choice for fifteen to thirty minutes a day.

Besides its journalistic format, another unique quality of *Kate's London Adventure*, is that it is illustrated. After third grade, most students are encouraged to read chapter books with few, if any, illustrations. There are very few picture books written for upper elementary students. Why this is, I am not sure. Even at twenty-one years of age, I love reading picture books. Although I also enjoy reading chapter books, I do not understand why most people believe children should be reading either one or the other. What is wrong with children reading both picture and chapter books? I believe a book like *Kate's London Adventure* could be extremely beneficial in the classroom. For struggling readers, a thirty-three-page book is much less intimidating than a one hundred and fifty-page book. A book that is developmentally appropriate but also contains illustrations to give insight and provide context clues is also extremely comforting to a below-average reader. However, even for students who are average or gifted readers, this book still contains vocabulary that I would deem difficult for an upper elementary student. Although a fictional piece of writing, this book gives numerous true facts about London and its unique culture and history; in that regard, *Kate's London Adventure* serves as a wonderful educational tool as well as an appropriately challenging text.

Being that the book contains many colorful illustrations on top of an engaging story line, I believe it should not be limited to intermediate grades; younger students

could enjoy and learn from this book as well. In primary grades I believe teachers could incorporate this book as a read aloud. Even though some of the vocabulary may be difficult for second or third graders to comprehend, the illustrations should help them develop meaning from the text. Although different from most books on the market today, I am proud of how versatile *Kate's London Adventure* turned out to be. Writing this book, I not only spent more time considering what type of a story students would find engaging, I also spent time considering what type of a book teachers would find beneficial.

All in all, I have not only learned about myself as a writer during this process, I have learned about myself as an educator. While writing this book I was amazed at how many times I referenced things that my professors said in class or that I read in one of my education textbooks. When writing a book for children, one really has to consider what kids will find engaging and what he or she believes has a chance of doing well in the marketplace. Thankfully, I do not have to worry whether my book will be a bestseller. Even though *Kate's London Adventure* won't be showing up at Barnes and Nobles anytime soon, I am happy that it will be going on my bookshelf. Although I still have much to learn about writing children's books, I am proud of my first publication; it most certainly will not be my last.

Bibliography

- Feehan, P.E., & Barron, P.P. (1991). *Writers on Writing for Young Adults*. Columbia, SC: Manly.
- Kasten, W.C., Kristo, J.V., & McClure, A.A. (2005). *Living Literature: Using Children's Literature to Support Reading and Language Arts*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education
- Shepard, A. (2000). *The Business of Writing for Children*. Los Angeles: Shepard Publications
- Sueling, B. (1991). *How to Write a Children's Book and Get it Published*. New York City, NY: Macmillian Publishing.

Kendra Curless

Honors Thesis

Kate's London Adventure Children's Book

Abstract

In illustrating this book, I wanted to show children the joy of traveling and experiencing cultures different from their own and create a visually interesting book to keep their attention. In *Kate's London Adventure*, the main character, Kate, goes on a trip with her brother Ronnie to visit her Aunt Irene. The story is formatted as a series of journal entries chronicling Kate's experiences. I designed the book wherein each page contains a journal entry as well as a combination of drawings of the characters or sights seen, actual pictures taken on my own trip abroad, or a few scrapbook-like items. With a multitude of bits and pieces on each page, I hoped to keep the reader's attention while furthering an interest in traveling by allowing the reader to see what Kate saw on her own adventure. I hope that, through this book, children can become interested in exploring other cultures just like Kate and myself.

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank Dr. Cheryl Bove for advising this honors thesis and her encouragement.
- I am also grateful to Dr. John Emert for providing the opportunity to travel through the Honors College while allowing for discovery and discussion on culture and sights of the United Kingdom.
- I would also like to thank Megan Wilson, writer of this book, fellow traveler, and a great friend, for providing such an imaginative story to illustrate.

Kendra Curless

Honors Thesis

Kate's London Adventure Children's Book

Artist's Statement

Though I am a biology and medical technology major, the decision to study something outside of my major for my honor's thesis came easily. One thing I have learned through my various classes in the Honors College is that students should never be confined or limited by what their career choice may be. Time and time again I was encouraged to study, write a paper, or create a project outside my field of study at Ball State. This was a welcome departure from my day-to-day science studies and served to cultivate my interests in many different areas.

My most memorable experience in the Honors College, and possibly of my years at Ball State, came when I had the opportunity to study for two weeks in the United Kingdom on a field study colloquium by Dr. Emert entitled "From Alice in Wonderland to the Harry Potter Series: The Intertwining of Science and Wit." Our classrooms were train carriages and parlor rooms of inns where we discussed ideas and the culture while traveling through England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. One of the most fascinating places we visited was London. The mix of old and new, the history surrounding nearly every street and building, and the diversity of its people captivated me. My worldview since returning from this trip is drastically different; I am now more aware and interested in what is taking place in the world. I decided I wanted to pay homage to my experience through my honor's thesis.

My partner for my thesis, and fellow traveler on the trip, is Megan Wilson. We decided on creating a children's book because we wanted to be able to show children and adults what it was we loved about our trip while relating our own experiences at the same time. The idea to

create a child experiencing London for the first time and portraying it through a child's eyes allowed us to use our separate talents in writing and drawing to convey the story. A children's book would also allow us to share our enjoyment of traveling and discovering cultures different from our own with children who may read the book.

The format of Megan's story is that of a child's journal entries chronicling her days visiting her aunt in London with her little brother. In designing and illustrating the book, I decided to create a type of scrapbook which included the child, Kate, writing her journal entries alongside pictures she had taken as well as pictures she had drawn. This idea is directly from my own childhood. I was never much of a writer and, like Kate, an interest in art runs in my family. It became a daily habit for me to illustrate events or things I had seen during the day. Naturally, I believe Kate would be prone to doing this as well.

In designing the layout of the book itself, I was aided by looking at the book *Let's Go Traveling* by Robin Rector Krupp. This book uses the author's realistic illustrations paired with real pictures, postcards, maps, and odds and ends which the main character collects through her travels. I believe this is an interesting idea and helps the reader to feel as if the book is in fact an actual scrapbook kept by a real person. I used many of these same ideas in designing my own book, however simplified by the use of real and drawn pictures with few scrapbook articles to keep the interest in the storyline and experiences rather than solely on the places. For these same reasons, though *Let's Go Traveling* also uses different coloring and layout features from one page to another, I felt it was important to keep a regular layout treatment throughout the whole book. This included borders reminiscent of international mail envelopes and consistent font types and sizes.

For the drawings, I decided to keep them moderately simple and add detail with shading. Colored pencils were used, as this seemed an appropriate medium for a traveling fifth grader. The book *This is London* by Miroslav Lasek was a great deal of help when I was deciding how to balance detail and simplicity in the drawings. The people in Lasek's book were illustrated simply while the locations, such as the House of Parliament and the Tower Bridge, were meticulously drawn. Because of this, an effect is created wherein the locations seem to pop out of the page. I felt this idea, to highlight things the characters saw by making them more precise representations whereas the characters themselves are styled to look more like cartoons, was an interesting and effective approach. The locations I drew were based upon actual photographs Megan and I took or pictures found in books.

The real photographs in the book are ones either Megan or I took while on our trip. These pictures, when added to the journal entries and the drawings, strengthen the idea that this book is a record of Kate's summer in London. One can almost imagine Kate taking pictures, drawing, and journaling her days away while traveling around London.

Overall, I believe the book turned out far better than Megan or I imagined when we first began planning it. It incorporates the sights we saw and the experiences we had when we were in London. The pictures, drawings, and journal entries add to the feeling of a real adventure. I'm proud of the book we created and hope that it inspires children to learn about cultures different from their own and spark their interest in traveling. My desire to travel increased tenfold after my own trip to London. In fact, I am planning to return to London to study abroad for a semester before graduating.

Bibliography

Blashfield, Jean F. *England*. New York: Scholastic, 2007.

Darling, Harold. *From Mother Goose to Dr. Seuss: Children's Book Covers, 1860-1960*. San Francisco: Chronicle, 1999.

Franklin, Robert. *Timeless London*. London: Compendium, 2007.

Rector Krupp, Robin. *Let's Go Traveling*. New York: Morrow Junior, 1992.

Sasek, Miroslav. *This is London*. New York: Universe, 1959.

Trotman, Felicity, and Trel P. Bicknell. *How to Write & Illustrate Children's Books and Get Them Published*. Writer's Digest Books, 2000.