

Laura Purdie Salas – Online Writing Courses

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Writing Children's Nonfiction Books for the Educational Market

An online workshop from January 26 – March 20, 2009
(no posts February 23 – 27, but you'll have homework)

Participate in an online class (new posts three days per week) for eight weeks (with one week off in the middle) and learn how to get assignments writing nonfiction books. Here's how it will work:

You will read a private lesson online each day (at whatever time is convenient for you) that will contain information, as well as online resources, sample materials, and a homework assignment. Some days the homework assignments will be brief. Other assignments will be more involved, but you'll have more than one day to complete those. You should set aside about an hour (or a bit more) each day for reading the materials, working on homework, and participating in discussion.

After you read the material, you will post comments online. These can be responses, ideas, opinions, questions...I'll respond, and I hope everyone will participate so that we have lively discussions.

I will critique one cover letter from each person, and I will also critique a short writing sample from each person. I will ask everyone to participate in constructive critiques for their classmates.

After the class is over, I'll leave the blog available for one more week and will continue to answer questions and participate in discussions.

I'll offer a one-hour teleconference call during the last week. This will basically be a chance to ask questions "in person."

At the end of this eight-week course, you will have identified 3 or more educational publishers who are a good fit for you. You will have prepared your cover letter, writing sample, and resume and be ready to start sending out introductory packets.

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Syllabus: Writing Children's Nonfiction Books for the Educational Market

(Please note: the order may change somewhat)

Lesson Topics

Introductions

Overview of the educational market & trade vs. educational publishers

How to find publishers and catalogs & what are catalogs good for?

Analyzing a catalog

Finding your comfort zone among audience ages

Finding topics you might like to write about

The joys and challenges of writing for each age range

Introductory packet – what is it and when do you send it?

Cover letters

Publication lists, resumés, business cards, and SASEs or reply postcards

What do you send for a writing sample?

Writing a sample from scratch

Critiquing cover letters

Studying series to help you write your book

What guidelines will editors give you?

Readability levels and how to use them (or not)

Giving the editor what she asks for & Your working relationship with an editor

Photo research, expert consultants, and permissions issues

How much do you get paid & Contract basics

Scheduling yourself & Setting goals for your educational writing

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Nuts & Bolts Info: Writing Children's Nonfiction Books for the Educational Market

The class will be **limited to 15 people**.

The cost is \$300.

I will need 5 students minimum in order to hold the class. If fewer than 5 students register, all monies paid will be refunded to those who did register.

You will need to obtain catalogs and some books to look at. I'll make this as online-friendly as possible, but it really helps to have some things in-hand, too. Upon registration, I'll email you the list of items to obtain (none should cost you any money).

All class materials will be confidential. The materials I post are for your information and use, and you are free to print them out to save as a reference. They are not to be forwarded to other people or photocopied, emailed, or shared in any form with other people. Letters and writing samples posted by classmates are strictly confidential and you should not retain copies of anyone's work. Thanks for your cooperation. We need these assurances to make everyone feel comfortable sharing their work!

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Instructor Bio

Laura Purdie Salas started out writing for grown-ups, but she soon discovered that kids were her favorite audience. After graduating from college with an English degree (emphasis in Creative Writing), she worked as a magazine editor, writing occasional freelance articles for newspapers and other magazines on health and education topics. She then taught 8th-grade English for two years and rediscovered her love for children's literature. Laura turned her focus to writing for kids and has never looked back. She writes realistic fiction, all kinds of poetry, and nonfiction books and articles.

Laura is a member of the Children's Literature Network and the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. She teaches writing for children (to adults) through the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis and is a former instructor for the Institute of Children's Literature.

Laura has written more than 50 nonfiction books for kids. Please see her website (<http://www.laurasalas.com>) to learn more about her books. For a complete listing of her published and some of her forthcoming books, please see this .pdf file: <http://www.laurasalas.com/pages/about/My%20Books.pdf>.

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Student Comments

I just want to say that I really am glad I took this class. Even though I have been working as a writer for a number of years, it has cleared up some mysteries about the world of educational publishing for me, about the NF market in particular, of course, but also gives me some ideas about how to seek out the kind of work I want in general.

---[Katie Rawson](#)

I feel you covered everything thoroughly and if I am persistent I will be offered work in the educational nonfiction world.

---[MaryEllen Ryan](#)

Fabulous Class! Hands on, professional level, intense.

---[Linda Brennan](#)

Everything was fabulous. I had no idea I would learn this much information. Sharing your experiences, letter samples, and resources was the most helpful. Not everyone is willing to share so freely! The critiquing was very valuable. I appreciated your "no stress" approach to homework.

---[Julie B. Wise](#)

Laura, I enjoyed this class and learned a lot. Thanks so much for making the information available.

---[Linda Herman](#)

I also want to say that I got so much out of this class—beyond my expectations. And I really enjoyed it. I am so grateful I came across your announcement on our SCBWI e-mail list. You have been an exceptional teacher and done a great job of combining being frank with being kind and gracious. Thank you.

---[Karin Fisher-Golton](#)