

Rosemary Wells – The Author | Illustrator Visit

Schools and Libraries may contact me via my website or at Dayton Bookings <http://daytonbookings.com/>.

Many schools, starting early, encourage their children to write and illustrate their own stories. Much of what I present in both writers' and artists' workshops is directed to that purpose.

Much depends as well on how big the school is, and how many grades and classes will be included. A presentation to 500 children in an auditorium is different than the hands-on Writer/Artist workshops in smaller classrooms. I can easily accommodate either or both programs.

Artists' Workshop:

The centerpiece is an up-close and personal video of my studio showing in great detail, the unusual techniques and process I use to create the artwork for my books. I narrate the film each time myself, varying the narration according to the age and capabilities of the classes attending.

In this video presentation I emphasize the importance of careful work, of revision, of practice and respect for the materials, all of which make a professional artist's life possible. These are the key philosophies most teachers try to instill in their small artists! I bring the idea of patience and focus to the forefront of my effort to show an artist's life to the children.

- The main video is 18 minutes long. I have a shorter version for Kindergartners. 10 minutes long.
- I have a Power Point show, shown on the website of a Kindergartener using most of my techniques.
- For the very young, I add to this the beginning of Max and Ruby, how they were my very own children and how I turned that into a string of books.
- I try to make them both laugh and remember these little stories.

Given extra time I also include a film showing the work of a French pastel maker, which the children love because again, it's hands-on and easy to understand yet utterly new to them. You can see this in the full version, "Maison de Pastels." (Link here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKADInlvW2o>)

In smaller classes, according to age and small motor skill, I sit with the children and offer a basic drawing lessons, sometimes Max and Ruby, sometimes art school 101 on how to draw your neighbor's face.

For this I need a desktop visualize projector. We talk about color, anatomy, drawing what you actually see. Everyone, in every grade, gets to use my handmade rubber stamps to make a big village of houses that they can then recreate for their classroom walls.

I always send the school a few line drawings in advance of my visit and ask the art teacher to copy them on drawing paper. The kids then add color (a skill very under-rated these days) and decorate their drawings imaginatively with scraps of origami paper (which I also send in advance).

Writer's Workshop:

The writer's workshop is all my own. but with the inspiration of the Columbia Teachers College's writer's program.

I believe that writing is the most difficult thing children ever learn in school, more so than physics or Algebra. So many children find it challenging to organize what they actually know when it comes to putting words on paper. Organizing random material coherently can be a real struggle.

If I have the time, I ask the children for a few sentences about the highlights of their day, the low points, and also their hope for tomorrow. The following day we read and comment on what they have written and I ask that they write again, about a different day, using what they have learned. And journaling

begins!

With this exercise, which evolved from *Rose, Thorn, and Rosebud*, the children relax because they know what's coming and, though the assignment never varies, their writing changes each day because each day is different, even for twins!

Children begin to recognize what they actually do know. They begin to write with ease about very real events in their lives.

They also begin to notice the best or least good parts of their days, their hopes etc. because they are asked to journal these each night. I found with my own children, because of the unflinching structure of this assignment, they had the freedom to express anything they wanted. My daughter's third grade teacher used to give this assignment daily all year long. She then collected each child's writings from September to June, bound them up and gave them to every parent as a journal of their child's 9th year on earth. What a treasure!

The second part of the Writer's Workshop is how to structure a story. We do this aloud in the classroom as a group using a story map and action figures, which can be worked into any narrative the children choose. Writing a beginning, middle and end is much easier if you map it out first, then make changes and add details. Again, this method uses a faithful structure or template and helps to keep the events on track, allowing maximum freedom to invent.

I try to show how a writer changes reality to make a better story, how I must revise and rework everything I create, and do so with great patience.

If the school asks the children to read some of my middle school or young adult novels in advance, then the Writer's Workshop becomes an in depth look at how a particular story evolved.

In addition to the workshops I like to address a gathering of

parents midweek after school and talk about the importance of reading aloud to children and keeping books in the forefront of their busy lives.

I've had the privilege of honing and tempering my presentations and have had wonderful experiences in amazing international schools including Singapore, Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok and Burma, too.

I take seriously what each school hopes to achieve by inviting an author/illustrator to visit. I keep the school's goals in mind at all times, and do my best to prepare myself, the school, and the children in advance so we all make the most of what can be a magical time to learn and grow.