

## The 2019 #PBChat Mentorship

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Edgar-nominated author **Bruce Hale** is passionate about inspiring reluctant readers to open books (and actually read them). From picture books to graphic novels and novels, he has written or illustrated over 50 seriously funny books for children. Bruce's books include the award-winning *Chet Gecko Mysteries* series and *Snoring Beauty* (one of Oprah's Recommended Reads for Kids), as well as his two newest series, *Clark the Shark* and *Class Pets*. An actor and Fulbright Scholar (in Storytelling), Bruce is in demand as a speaker, having presented at conferences, universities, and schools across the U.S. and internationally.

**Bruce will be accepting applications for:** fiction picture book manuscripts, particularly funny ones.

Photo credit: Roxyanne Young

**1. If you had to wear the same t-shirt with one word on it for a year, what word would you choose?**

Either KINDNESS or FUN

**2. If you had your own talk show, who would your first three guests be? Bonus points for sharing the name of your show and what it would be about.**

Mark Twain, Celia Cruz, Emily Blunt

**3. If you could instantly become an expert in something (non-writing-related), what would it be and why?**

Playing saxophone. I've always loved the way it sounds and never wanted to put in the time to actually learn it.

**4. What are your five favorite picture books not written and/or illustrated by you?**

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE  
I WANT MY HAT BACK  
THE TRUE STORY OF THE THREE LITTLE PIGS  
GREEN EGGS AND HAM  
SYLVESTER AND THE MAGIC PEBBLE

**5. What is the toughest feedback you've ever received?**

"This is trite and banal," for a one-act play I'd written.

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### **6. What are some of the most important lessons [in creating and/or publishing, or even life in general] you've learned so far?**

Too many to count, but a few of them are...

- Don't be afraid to reach out for help when you've lost perspective on your work-in-progress and can't figure out what's wrong.

- Be persistent. Keep writing, keep drawing, keep submitting, and never let rejections convince you that you're not good enough.

- All you have control over is the quality of your work. You can't control how people respond to it, what critics say, or whether your publisher lets your work go out of print, so focus on what you can control.

### **7. What writing-related accomplishment are you most proud of?**

I'm proud of having written over 50 books for kids and receiving their emails telling me how much my books have inspired and helped them become better readers.

### **8. What are your dreams and goals as an author?**

I dream of having one or more of my works adapted as a TV show or movie. I dream of reaching millions of kids and inspiring them to read for fun

### **9. What are your strengths as a mentor?**

Experience, the ability to draw as well as write, and empathy.

### **10. Who are you not the best mentor for?**

I'm not the best mentor for nonfiction writers or writers of serious stories.

### **11. What are the most important things you're seeking in a mentee?**

The ability to not take criticism personally, but to learn and grow from it.

A good sense of humor.

Persistence, and the willingness to keep working on a story until it reaches its potential.

### **12. What is your feedback/critique style like?**

So far, I haven't made anyone cry. I try to focus on both what works and what needs improvement.

### **13. During the mentorship, how will you help your mentee and their stories develop?**

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I will work with my mentee in finding the essence of their story and honing it into something that editors would be interested in. Most of my work will be focused on critiquing manuscripts, although I can also work on dummies if they have one, and provide suggestions for improving query letters.

### **14. What type of relationship do you hope to establish with your mentee?**

Friendly, productive, and collegial.

### **15. What is your style of communication like?**

I tend to be straightforward, although I'm not brutal in my honesty. I always keep in mind that I was once in the mentee's shoes.

### **16. While reading prospective mentee's manuscripts, what do you hope to experience?**

I hope to experience the wonderful surprise of discovering a new voice that needs to reach a wider audience.

### **17. What will you look for in the applications you receive?**

I'll look mostly at the quality of the work, although I look favorably on those who have gotten involved with SCBWI, taken workshops, or done other things to seriously improve their work.

### **18. What about the idea of mentoring excites you most?**

I love the idea of helping someone make a breakthrough.

### **19. Is there anything, author-related, you wish people would ask you about? If so, what, and how would you respond?**

I wish people would ask more questions about craft and fewer about "how do I get an agent". Craft is the foundation for all success in this field, but some folks would like to skip over that and go directly to landing an agent or selling a major series.

### **20. What advice or inspiring and/or motivational words would you like to offer up to anyone applying to be your mentee or simply reading this questionnaire?**

Trust your creative gut. Everyone has a story to tell; hang in there until you find the best way to tell yours.