

## The 2019 #PBChat Mentorship

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A diary keeper, a journalism major, a public relations executive—

**Lindsay Leslie** has always operated in a world of written words. Now a children's book writer, Lindsay is the author of *THIS BOOK IS SPINE-LESS* and *NOVA THE STAR EATER* (May 21, 2019/Page Street Kids). Her third picture book, *DUSK RAIDERS WANTED* (Page Street Kids), will launch in the spring of 2020. Lindsay lives with her husband, two boys, and two fur-beasts in Austin.

**Lindsay will be accepting applications for:** Works of fiction from lyrical to funny and meta to fic-informational (read STEM here). If it's fiction, I'd love to read it. One caveat, please no rhyme. Not that I don't love a great rhyming picture book, I'm just not an expert and would rather you get the best help possible.

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

Kerfuffle

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.**

I'd interview Janice, The Swedish Chef, & Rowlf from the Muppets. I'd call the show, What's What, Puppet? It would be about the inner psyche of puppets. I want to know what they're hiding.

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

Any other language—Spanish, Russian, French, etc.—because I would love to communicate with others in their native tongue and I'm terrible with foreign languages. I don't have much of a brain for it.

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

My five favorites right now are: *After the Fall* by Dan Santat, *Bob, not Bob!* by Audrey Vernick and Liz Garton Scanlon/illus. by Matthew Cordell, *The Remember Balloons* by Jessie Oliveros/illus. by Dana Wulfekotte, *The Book with No Pictures* by B. J. Novak, and *The Important Thing About Margaret Wise Brown* by Mac Barnett, illus. by Sarah Jacoby.

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

I heard from a very established and well-known author that I was trying too hard with my writing and I needed to learn how to write. That felt soooo great (insert sarcasm). Luckily, I'm incredibly stubborn and a pretty driven person, so I learned what I could from that feedback and kept at it.

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### **6. What are some of the most important lessons you've learned so far?**

No matter what anyone says about your ability to do something, it's up to you to try and maybe even prove them wrong.

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

I'm most proud of the starred review *THIS BOOK IS SPINELESS* received from Booklist. I couldn't stop crying. It was an overwhelming and surprising moment for me.

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

I would love to have the opportunity to keep creating and being published for the long haul.

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

I think my strength is to not impose my writing style and voice on the pieces I read. I know that your work is yours. With that in mind, I would work with you to make your manuscript the strongest it can be. Also, I feel I'm a pretty good brainstormer, and I love to come up with new and interesting ideas that would give a manuscript a twist or really drive home a poignant moment.

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

Unfortunately, I'd have to say I'm not the best mentor for non-fiction (although I adore, I just haven't focused or written any pure non-fiction), rhyming (again, love it, but no experience), and anything super didactic (it's just not my thing). I would be a great fit for anything fiction or even fic-informational. I really love quirky/unusual observations of life, quirky/unusual takes on topics, and HUMOR!

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

I would love to work with someone who is open to feedback and loads of brainstorming, and understands we are working toward the same goal. I would love to mentor someone who loves to ask questions and is eager to solve problems.

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

I always start with the 100-foot view. I look for what's working/not working with a manuscript's concept. It's like a gut check. Does the manuscript have something new to say? Is it creative? Is there heart and passion on the page? Then I zoom in closer and focus on the story mechanics: arc, character development, point-of-view, theme, pacing, etc. How can we create more impact? Then I zoom in closer and get to phrasing and word choice, etc.

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

I'm open to mentoring based on what that person needs and what the stories need. I think focusing on two manuscripts sounds reasonable over the time allotted for this mentorship. It may be more based on where the work is. Who knows? I'm totally flexible. I'm happy to give thoughts on query letters and my opinions on an agent outreach strategy and author platform.

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

A respectful, open, and really fun back and forth!

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

I love to communicate via email, but I feel that with a mentorship we would need to hop on the phone to chat. I'm also open to Skype. I usually get back to folks within a day to set expectations for turnaround on materials or next steps.

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

I hope to say WOW, what a cool, creative idea or I hope to laugh out loud. If my mind can picture what's going on and I get whisked off into the world of your story (and I'm not stopping to edit), then you have me hooked!

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

I think those who apply are already showing a dedication to their learning of the craft, so applying already speaks volumes to me! I'd say I want to see how active you are in the writing community and that you have been taking advantage of the many resources available to you. (Thank you, Internet!!) I'm a big fan of humor, quirkiness, and off-the-wall creativity, so that will grab my attention. Otherwise, I'll let the manuscripts speak for themselves. I also love quiet and lyrical work, as long as the perspective is new.

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

Oh my goodness, I just can't wait to help out and pass on the knowledge. I loved the chase when I was working toward my first book deal. I loved the energy of trying to catch that carrot. It would be my honor to be on someone's journey toward his/her/their goals.

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

One thing that pops into my mind is sharing about the debut process and how you can play a big role in marketing/PR for your book. There is so much the author and illustrator can do together to drum up buzz, from creating trailers to proposing a panel for a conference to creating or joining a debut PB group. I have a lot to share on this topic and so many others!

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**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?**

My mantra is to keep trying. I'm like Dory from Finding Nemo. Seriously, just keep trying. And, if a manuscript isn't working and it's not getting the response you want, then thank it for its service, and put it in a drawer. Go on to something new. Every single thing you write will inform you and move you closer to where you want to be. No time is wasted. Ever.