



A diary keeper, a journalism major, a public relations executive, now a children's author—**Lindsay Leslie** has always operated in a world of written words. She likes to bring her unique outlook on life, quirky humor, and play with words to the page in picture books. Lindsay is the author of *THIS BOOK IS SPINELESS* and *NOVA THE STAR EATER* (Page Street Kids). Her third picture book, *DUSK EXPLORERS* (Page Street Kids), will launch June 2, 2020. Lindsay lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband, two boys, two fur-beasts, a guinea pig, and a tortoise.

**Lindsay Leslie** will be accepting applications from fiction picture book writers only and encourages marginalized creators to consider her. She would love to see whatever fiction you have, but unfortunately no rhyme, as she is not an expert. Her tastes lean toward the quirky and humorous, but she also loves to dig into the lyrical and dreamy.

**1. If you could be in any movie or tv series, what would it be and what character would you play?**

Fleabag, because I loved the writing so much and the quiriness of it all, plus the looks at the camera. I'm not saying I related to that character. Nope nope nope. But I'd love to play her! She was so despicable, yet you ended up cheering her on.

**2. If you could have any supernatural power, what would it be and why?**

Mind reading. Yep. That would help a lot. But I'd probably get really annoyed with the super power, so I'd have to be able to turn it on and off.

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

*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.

**4. What writing and/or publishing-related accomplishment are you most proud of?**

I have to say I'm proudest that I'm at the table. That I had the wherewithal to keep pushing through the "no's" and the self-doubt. That I had enough confidence in myself and my work to keep going.

**5. What about mentoring excites you most?**

The possibilities! I love working with others on their manuscripts. I often find myself spending most of my time doing that rather than my own work. (DOH!) I want to help other writers catch the dream of finding a just-right agent, experiencing the feels of getting their first contract, seeing their manuscript as a book, and establishing themselves as an author.

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

What pops into my mind first is I'm fairly forthright. I want you to succeed and will have the hard and maybe messy conversations to help you bring your manuscript to its fuller potential. Also, I am thorough. I take lots of time. Lots and lots of time. I don't take this lightly. I try my best not to impose my voice and writing style on the pieces I read. Your work is yours. But I love to brainstorm and help come up with different approaches/new ideas that would give a manuscript a twist or really drive home a poignant moment.

## **7. 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.

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

I'd love a mentee who is coachable and open to feedback/constructive criticism. I want them to be energized about the process and to see the benefits of all the ups and downs, the possibilities. I'm looking for someone who is open, communicative, asks questions, isn't shy, and wants to push forward and stretch. And it doesn't hurt to have a wicked sense of humor, because ya just gotta laugh.

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

I would not be the best fit for non-fiction writers and writers of rhyme. Sorry! Although, I *can* do it, I just wouldn't be the best possible fit.

On the personality side, I would not be the best mentor for people who get defensive, for folks who aren't go-getters (but if you are applying to this mentorship, you are probably a go-getter), for people who don't want to put in the hard work. I feel like I'm not describing any of you. :)

## **10. How will you help your mentee and their stories develop?**

I was a mentor for the inaugural #PBChat mentorship and I am still in touch with them and we help each other with our stories. I'm so glad to have them in my life. So, I don't see this as a relationship that disappears once the showcase begins. I'm a long-hauler. I'm loyal and dedicated. I'm open to help with anything a mentee needs. You might have to wait a bit if I'm on deadline or something, but I'll let you know what to expect. If I have knowledge to share, I'll be more than happy to share it. I'm particularly good at the pitch (query letters). I've had a lot of practice, plus I used to be a PR hack and pitched reporters all the time.

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

I try to get back with comments/thoughts on manuscripts within a week. I don't mind a mentee (or manatee!) pinging me if I've not gotten back to them on time. I'm kinda juggling a few things, so I do not take offense. I'm open to phone calls, emails, texts, whatever.

**12. What are you looking for in the applications you receive?**

I'm first and foremost looking for a story that makes me go...what? Wow? I wish I had thought of that! I'm such a sucker for a fabulous concept and approach. Something that pushes the envelope and takes risks. I'm the type of person who looks for the proof in the pudding. I do want to see that you are taking picture book writing seriously, so seeing that commitment is a very positive thing.

**13. Any tips/advice for applicants to make their applications and/or manuscripts shine?**

I'd say do some homework on how to format a picture book manuscript (proper placement of personal info, word count, title, indent paragraphs, double-space, 12 pt Times New Roman font, etc., page numbers), so that all the mentors are focused on your story and not how the story is presented. I want to be whisked away by the concept of the story and to turn off my silly editor brain. Secondly, be yourself. Let your personality shine through!

**14. 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?**

Good on you for being here! That means you're serious. The only way to get a book published is to put in the hard work, learn as much as you can, and then put yourself out there. You will get "no's" and that is OK. We all do! Swim through those "no's" to your "yes".