



Patricia Valdez is a scientist and author of the award-winning picture book biography, *Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor* (Knopf BFYR/Random House). She earned her Ph.D. in Molecular and Cell Biology from the University of California, Berkeley. Originally from Texas, Patricia now lives in the Washington, D.C. area with her husband, children, cats, and turtle, where she continues to write stories for curious kids. Her next book, *How to Hear the Universe* (Knopf BFYR/Random House), is about Dr. Gabriela González, the scientist who led the team that discovered Einstein's ripples in space time (aka, gravitational waves).

Patricia will be accepting applications for: any combination of the following: fiction, non-fiction, STEM, history, and biography. No rhyming manuscripts, please. Marginalized creators are encouraged to apply.

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

I would play Meredith Grey's best friend on *Grey's Anatomy*. I would be as fierce as Cristina Yang and as no-nonsense as Miranda Bailey. Plus, we would "dance it out" every Friday night.

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

I would have the power to clean the house without lifting a finger. I seem to get much more annoyed with dirty floors and clutter now that I am always home due to COVID-19. Somehow there's still not enough time to clean!

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

The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf and Robert Lawson

The Gashlycrumb Tinies by Edward Gorey

Tiny Creatures: The World of Microbes by Nicola Davies and Emily Sutton

Cloth Lullaby: The Woven Life of Louise Bourgeois by Amy Novesky and Isabelle Arsenault

The Remember Balloons by Jessie Oliveros and Dana Wulfekotte

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

I am really proud that a biography of a little-known woman scientist went to a five-house auction. I'm also proud of coming up with the title - *Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor*.

5. What about mentoring excites you most?

I'm excited to share all that I've learned on my author journey. I absolutely love hearing about my mentees' successes and being there to give them advice or to cheer them on! I also love brainstorming with my mentees and experiencing those lightbulb moments.

6. What are your strengths as a mentor?

I bring many perspectives to the table because of my background and experiences as a scientist and writer. I have a good ear for lyrical text. As a parent myself, I understand the importance of a good

read-aloud manuscript. I've also learned a lot about the market and what sells from my agent, Alyssa Eisner Henkin.

7. What is your feedback/critique style like?

I give feedback on overall structure and language choice to make sure we are reaching the right audience. I'll also give line edits at a later stage. I love brainstorming titles. A good title can get an agent or editor's attention.

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

I'd like to work with someone who doesn't feel the need to over-explain their artistic choices in writing. I would like to work with someone willing to rework their story's structure if needed and someone who can clearly explain why they are the best person to write the story.

9. Who are you not the best mentor for?

I'm probably not the best mentor for someone who needs to be in contact on a daily basis. Since I don't illustrate, I'm probably not the best choice for illustrators or author-illustrators.

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

I'm happy to provide general industry insight and advice and help with developing ideas on future manuscripts. I can critique and help polish 1-3 manuscripts. I'm also happy to help with the query letter.

11. What is your style of communication like?

I'd like to have a phone call at the start, followed by weekly email communication and a phone call here and there. Since I have a full-time job, I'm most likely to call or email in the evenings or on the weekend. I'm in the Eastern Time zone, fyi.

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

I'll be looking for an enticing manuscript to start. I'll also be looking for signs that the person is committed to writing in many ways, not only by attendance at workshops and conferences, but also in ways that do not require the monetary burden. I hope to get a sense of the applicant's personality to help me figure out how well we might work together.

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

Write the best story you can! I know - easier said than done. You should be able to describe your story in a sentence or two. This will help ensure it's not overly complicated and help distill down your theme. I'd like to know what your long-term interests are for your writing career, so I can make sure I'm the right mentor for you.

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?

I hope I fall in love with each manuscript/application I read. Remember that the PBChat mentorship is very competitive. Last year I mentored two great writers and they both received offers of representation! I hope I can help you reach your goals this year. All the best!