



**Rebecca J. Gomez** enjoys writing stories as much as she enjoys reading them. When she isn't reading or writing, she enjoys baking, creating art, and hiking through the woods with her husband and three grown children. She lives in Nebraska, where she grows a salsa garden every summer.

**Rebecca J. Gomez will be accepting applications for:** Fiction picture books written in rhyme or in a lyrical, poetic style.

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

This is silly, but I've always thought it would be a hoot to play an Orc in The Lord of the Rings!

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

Teleportation, because I love visiting other places, but getting to those places is often such a hassle (though I prefer road trips to air travel).

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

This is a tough question to answer, because I could never narrow it down to the THE five favorites. But here are some standouts: THE FORGETFUL KNIGHT by Michele Robinson, THE TRUE STORY OF THE THREE LITTLE PIGS by Jon Scieszka, TEENY TINY TOADY by Jill Esbaum, WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE by Maurice Sendak, and A DANCE LIKE STARLIGHT by Kristy Dempsey.

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

Probably writing my most recent verse novel manuscript. Close second would be my newest picture book, FEDERICO AND THE WOLF.

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

Getting to know someone new as we whip a manuscript into shape!

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

My biggest strength is with poetry, especially rhyme and meter. As a fiction writer and a poet, I'm pretty good at telling how to make a text more concise without sacrificing story.

**7. What is your feedback/critique style like?**

I like to use the "sandwich" method, which means when offering feedback I will lead with what I like and what is working well, then go into the manuscript's weak spots, and end on a positive note of encouragement.

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

I am looking for a mentee who understands language's natural rhythm, who loves language and word play, who is tough and willing to do the hard work. Someone who enjoys the revision process and will have fun getting their manuscript to where it needs to be. Someone with a positive attitude in the face of difficulties

and who is not afraid to be a little silly. Also, someone who is patient but is also not afraid to nudge me if I seem to be slow. I'm not a slacker, but I do have a new puppy in the house. LOL

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

Anyone who writes stories that are didactic or seem to promote a specific agenda. Also anyone who writes concept books that don't have a traditional story arc (though concept books WITH a story arc are more than welcome).

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

My primary focus will be to help my mentee get a manuscript (or two) into shape for the submission process. This will include critiquing multiple drafts if necessary--whatever it takes. I will also help them polish their query letters and find comp titles. And I will happily answer any questions they have about the industry in general and share whatever knowledge and experience I have with them to help them along the way. Basically--ask me anything!

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

I like using email, and I usually respond pretty quickly. For feedback/critiques I prefer using google docs. Face to face virtual meetings are also an option if my mentee thinks it will be helpful.

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

The most important thing is that their story connects with me. I'd love to work with someone who is enthusiastic about their future as a writer, who has some natural skill that just needs a bit of polish. Potential, not perfection, is what I'm looking for. And someone who loves reading picture books as much as I do!

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

When it comes to the application, be honest and be yourself. For the manuscript, a good story arc is important. For rhyme, it doesn't have to be perfect, but it also shouldn't be a struggle to read. Send a manuscript you LOVE enough to spend a lot of time on.

**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?**

To me, the biggest key to success as a picture book author is loving what you do. This gig can be hard, for a lot of different reasons, but if you truly love it, then you will be more likely to keep going in those times when it's not as much fun.