



**Stephanie V.W. Lucianovic [She/Her/Hers]** is the author of picture books: *The End of Something Wonderful: A Practical Guide to a Backyard Funeral* (Sterling Children's, 2019) with George Ermos, *Hello, Star* (Little Brown, 2021) with Vashti Harrison, and the just-announced *Hope Is* (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2023) with Kelsey Buzzell. Her debut middle grade novel, *The League of Picky Eaters* (Clarion/HMH) comes out Fall 2021. Stephanie lives in the Bay Area with her family, and she invites you to visit her at [StephanieLucianovic.com](http://StephanieLucianovic.com) or on Twitter [@grubreport](https://twitter.com/grubreport)

**Stephanie is accepting applications for:** writer of fiction, NF-adjacent fiction, lyrical NF bios.

**Stephanie is accepting applications from:** unagented/unpublished creators AND agented creators who are not yet published

**1. What's one non-publishing-related career that you wish you could have?**

Park Ranger or the equivalent sort of job that has me outside in natural spaces taking care of the environment. When I lived in San Francisco, I volunteered with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy doing trail restoration and I loved the physicality of it — of being outside and working with my hands and body. It was therapeutic and got me away from my computer, which is very important.

**2. If you could have dinner with one person, dead or alive, who would it be and why?**

My grandfather, Larry Clemmons. Although he had a university degree architecture, he was a joke writer for Jack Benny and Bing Crosby and was also a screenplay writer for Walt Disney until he retired in 1979. He wrote the screenplays for *THE JUNGLE BOOK*, *THE ARISTOCATS*, *THE RESCUERS*, *ROBIN HOOD*, and *THE FOX AND THE HOUND*. He died when I was in 8th grade, long before I would have a career as a writer. I wish I could ask him questions about his own writing career.

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

AND THEN IT'S SPRING by Julie Fogliano and Erin Stead; OUTSIDE INSIDE by Deborah Underwood and Cindy Derby; THIS HOUSE, ONCE by Deborah Freedman; AFTER THE FALL by Dan Santat; THE DAY YOU BEGIN by Jacqueline Woodson and Rafael López.

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

My not-published/on submission MG novel-in-verse: HUMMINGBIRD SEASON. I wrote it during the pandemic, about the pandemic. It flowed out of me very naturally and is full of pain, beauty, scars, love, and hope. It's the most real, most child-centered book I've ever written and I dearly hope it sees the light of day.

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

Having the chance to give anyone any amount of help I can to help them on their publishing journey.

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

I'm a careful and kind critique partner, I get excited easily, I am a great cheerleader, and I know a lot about the industry so I'm very happy to answer any and all questions — not just about writing but about the publishing world as a whole.

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

I like to highlight both the issues and the gems of a manuscript. I don't just give criticisms, I praise as well. I think it's very important to the writer's psyche and development do both. I'm not an extensive line editor but I may pull out errors in that sense if note them.

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

Flexibility, patience, and energy. But also someone who truly loves and respects picture books as being books for all ages — not just the youngest — and one who gets genuinely excited about their favorite (contemporary) picture books. Someone who understands that though they appear simple, picture books are actually quite difficult to write and execute well.

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

Goofy humor. I tend to have a wry and understated sense of humor as it is, but also, humor in the picture book business is incredibly subjective, and it can be difficult for me to tell what is truly funny vs. what is trying too hard to be funny. I like humor as part of a manuscript but only if it's necessary to the story. I'm also not the best person to judge rhyme. I've written it and I enjoy reading it but I tend to get too caught up in the beats and measure and then totally lose track of the story. I'm trying to get better at critiquing NF bios but it's also not my strongest suit.

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

I would first ask my mentee what they want/need from a mentor and try to work toward a common goal in that sense. I will read/critique one or two of the mentees chosen works and focus on developing their voice, story, word choice, and flow to get it/them in the best shape possible for submission. We would brainstorm our way out of any roadblocks, possibly read mentor texts, and strategize the best places/agents for their work. Along the way, I will also answer any industry questions and help them understand the very complicated world of children's publishing.

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

I'm best when conducting the business of writing over email: critiquing a manuscript using track changes and going back and forth like that. I can usually provide feedback on a manuscript within two weeks, unless family situations arise (I have two sons at home). Happy to set up periodic phone calls to discuss any industry-related questions.

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

I'm looking for a demonstrated understanding of how picture books are written. I'm looking for writing that shows the writer has read an extensive amount of published picture books in their chosen style — and not just the ones from their own childhood, also the ones currently on bookstore shelves! Also that the writer has written more than just one picture book attempt. You learn as you write — the more you write, the more you learn. I'd much rather spend our time together honing the applicant's craft, not having to convince them why a 2000-word picture book probably won't fly.

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

Pass it by a few critique partners if possible. Definitely read it aloud several times — you'll catch a lot of issues doing that — and proofread it to winnow out any accidental errors.

**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?**

There is no "talent" required to be a picture book writer. Anyone, who works hard at the craft and loves it (barring those times when they hate it because those exist too and are normal) can learn to be an excellent picture book writer. Don't question whether or not you have "the gift" for writing. I already know that you do because you're here and that means you want to learn. That's the only thing you need.