



Writer for children—reader forever...that's **Vivian Kirkfield** [She/Her] in five words. Her bucket list contains many more than five words – but she's already checked off skydiving, parasailing, banana-boat riding, and visiting critique buddies all around the world. When she isn't looking for ways to fall from the sky or sink under the water, she can be found writing picture books in the picturesque village of Bedford, NH where the old stone library is her favorite hangout and her young grandson is her favorite board game partner. A retired kindergarten teacher with a masters in Early Childhood Education, Vivian inspires budding writers during classroom visits and shares insights with aspiring authors at conferences and on her blog, [Picture Books Help Kids Soar](#) where she hosts the #50PreciousWords International Writing Contest and

the #50PreciousWordsforKids Challenge. She is the author of Pippa's Passover Plate (Holiday House); Four Otters Toboggan: An Animal Counting Book (Pomegranate); Sweet Dreams, Sarah (Creston Books); Making Their Voices Heard: The Inspiring Friendship of Ella Fitzgerald and Marilyn Monroe (Little Bee Books); From Here to There: Inventions That Changed the Way the World Moves (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) and the upcoming Pedal, Balance, Steer: Annie Londonderry, First Woman to Bike Around the World (Calkins Creek/Boyd's Mills & Kane). You can connect with her on [her website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), or just about any place people with picture books are found.

Vivian is accepting applications for: Picture book writers – fiction or nonfiction, prose or rhyme.

Vivian is accepting applications from: unagented/published creators AND agented creators who are not yet published

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

Something with horses, for sure. As a kid, I read tons of 'horse' stories – Black Beauty, of course. And also all the Walter Farley chapter books. I think I'd love to have owned a ranch where troubled/abused horses could be sent to be rehabilitated/healed.

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

Mahatma Gandhi – the tag line for my #50PreciousWords contest is: Magic Happens When You Make Every Word Count...and I think this amazing human made magic happen with so few words. And since I've had a love affair with Indian food from the very first date with my late husband over 50 years ago, I think my dinner with Gandhi would be amazing on so many levels. 😊

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

1. The Little House by Virginia Lee Burton (first book I remember my mom reading to me when I was very young)
2. The Rough Patch by Brian Lies (perfect book for dealing with loss, whether you are a child or an adult)
3. The Journey/Return/Quest trilogy by Aaron Becker (totally in love with the concept of these wordless books)
4. The Remember Balloons by Jessie Oliveros (beautiful story that touched my heart)
5. I Ain't Gonna Paint No More by Karen Beaumont (The humor is fabulous, the rhythm and rhyme are addictive, and the illustrations are joyful)

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

In the fall of 2017, I signed the contract for a picture book biography compilation with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. I had two of the stories complete, but only eight months to research, write, and polish to submission-readiness the other seven. Thanks to my amazing critique buddies who were always ready, willing, and able to give me feedback, the nine stories were on the editor's desk by the deadline: May 1, 2018.

5. What about mentoring excites you most?

The idea that excites me most? Helping someone else follow their dream and build it into reality. This has happened many times with my #50PreciousWords Writing Challenge...and it's a thrill to hold a book in my hands that got its start from a 50-word entry.

6. What are your strengths as a mentor?

I'm EXTREMELY patient and kind, but at the same time I am diligent in pointing out where a manuscript needs changes. I have a pretty good ear for the rhythm of a manuscript and its marketability. And I never give up!

7. What is your feedback/critique style like?

I'm kind, but honest. I look at the big picture of the story, but I also pay attention to the details. I have to admit that I sometimes 'hijack' the story, providing examples of alternate words or phrases that might, in my opinion, move the story forward more smoothly.

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

I guess I'd like to work with the person who needs me most. 😊 I enjoy working with people who are passionate about their writing journey and who embrace revision.

9. Who are you not the best mentor for?

I could probably work with anyone. 😊 I love to write in rhyme, free verse, and prose...and both fiction and nonfiction. Humor is not my strong point...although I love humorous picture books.

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

During the mentorship, I hope to read the mentee's body of work (up to five manuscripts) and we can decide which to move forward with at this time. I love critique and plan to provide feedback on the manuscript/query/cover letter/pitch and also on any revisions the mentee does. I also plan to share my experiences in this publication process (with the editorial team/publicist) and how I've used social media for marketing and promotion both before and after I got book deals.

11. What is your style of communication like?

Style of communication? Frequent...I try to always be available to the kid lit community and will almost always respond within 24 hours.

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

I'll look for a unique story idea or an old story idea told in a unique way or from a unique perspective. I want to see that the applicant is making writing a priority, even if he/she has family and/or job obligations or health issues. It doesn't need to come first (and in fact, it shouldn't in many cases), but I need to see that efforts have been made to take classes/attend webinars/participate in the kid-lit community/and most of all, write and revise.

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

I hope to read a story that touches my heart in one way or another and that I feel will touch a child's heart...a story I feel I can be helpful in making smoother and stronger and ready for submission so that an agent or editor will fall in love with it and buy it!

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?

The only failure is the failure to keep trying. So, follow your dreams, because nothing is impossible if you can imagine it!