**How to Review for ACL – September 2022**

**Presenter name: Penny Peck**

Here is our agenda for today:

1. *Why we do reviews*
2. *Where to obtain the books to review*
3. *Reviewing tools*
4. *How to write a review*

*Ratings*

*Grade level*

*Diversity*

1. *How to submit the written review*

**Why we write reviews:**

Writing reviews is a skill that can help with many aspects of youth librarianship. For example:

* Reviews can help you with readers advisory and collection development
* Reviews can help you with writing your booktalks
* Reviews can help you when writing handouts for recommended reading (both online recommendations or paper handouts)
* Reviews can help you find Storytime choices
* Reviews can give you skills useful for book award committees, including the Newbery, Caldecott, Notable books, Beatty, Sibert, and many others.
* ACL reviews often are the first (or only) review journal to find concerns with books on California, and books exhibiting racial stereotypes.
* **Any other suggestions?**

**Where to obtain the books to review:**

Generally, there are three different ways to obtain books to review.

***Pick up books in person:*** My personal favorite is to pick up books at an in-person ACL meeting.

The other way to pick up physical ACL books is to contact Jessica Walker at [jwalkermlis@gmail.com](mailto:jwalkermlis@gmail.com) who can make up a box of books based on your interests. After you email Jessica your request, she puts together a box for you, to be picked up at Oakland Main.

***Obtain advance reader copies online:***  This is detailed on our website. Try [Netgalley](https://www.netgalley.com/) or [Edelweiss](https://www.abovethetreeline.com/) for e-ARCs you can download to your computer. This is free and easy to use.

***Check out new books from your library to review:*** Another way to obtain books is to borrow from your library. Perhaps you read a review in *Horn Book* or *School Library Journal* – place a hold and then read and review that book. Just be sure it is a new book (published within the last six months at most is a good guideline).

***After you obtain books:*** We’d like to prevent duplicate reviews. When you want to claim a book, post on Slack in the Reviewing channel and also email Beth at [bvuolo@gmail.com](mailto:bvuolo@gmail.com) . If you need an invite to Slack, email Eny at [eny.can.draw@gmail.com](mailto:eny.can.draw@gmail.com). This is only necessary for books obtained from Netgalley and Edelweiss, or checked out of a library. Not needed for books obtained from Jessica Walker or at an in-person meeting.

**Reviewing tools:**

The ACL website has a section on reviewing: [ACL Reviewer Information (bayviews.org)](https://www.bayviews.org/review-ratings-criteria/)

This includes the following:

* [Guide for BayViews Reviewers](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fVzpvzQVWG0kk2EswKhg1yD6dxLODnFJDiXsgS5ukCQ/edit)
* [Model Process for Reviews](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zEOLe-rY15w6mntO7mX39Qd7RdMCVj5xLjZMErrJe28/edit)
* [Ratings Rubric Fiction](https://docs.google.com/document/d/14iqHgt-_z9IDxlLgIe2JH_VpcNtlS5pceG-zSuOvuT8/edit), [Nonfiction](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V1vXJ1zldqxel-EiwzQ639ks-56a5PtgHlNj-s7THXs/edit)
* [Diversity Guidelines](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1oA4O1POwsC6dcq9-tHh_cpYlieqmA5-VSTi9muAZMzQ/edit#slide=id.p3)

The Guide for BayViews Reviewers goes into detail on what to put in a review, broken down by the type of book, such as picture book, reader, novel, and so forth. It also goes over the areas of the review form, which is how you will submit a review. It is a good foundational document that covers everything. It states:

**IDEAL CONTENT GOALS FOR REVIEWS:**

1. Reviewer’s opinion is clearly stated.
2. Review is succinct.
3. Observations relevant to library work are included.
4. Tone is professional, honest, and heartfelt.
5. Formatting is standard, following ACL Style Guidelines.

When you are ready to write your review, it may be easier to go to the [Model Process for Reviews](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zEOLe-rY15w6mntO7mX39Qd7RdMCVj5xLjZMErrJe28/edit) document, because it is a simpler step-by-step of what to include in the review. It goes over what each sentence of a review should cover.

If you still feel unsure about reviewing, be sure to read K.T. Horning’s [*From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children’s Books: Revised Edition,*](https://www.amazon.com/Cover-Evaluating-Reviewing-Childrens-Books/dp/0060777575/ref=sr_1_1?crid=Z43TCIF3MQ6L&keywords=from+cover+to+cover+evaluating+and+reviewing+children%27s+books&qid=1662147726&s=books&sprefix=from+cover+to+c%2Cstripbooks%2C133&sr=1-1)Harper, 2010. You can also sign up for a mentor who can go over your drafts before you submit them. **Who is our current member who arranges for review mentors?**

**How to write a review:**

***Content of the Review:***

As stated above, when you are ready to write your review, it may be easier to go to the [**Model Process for Reviews**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zEOLe-rY15w6mntO7mX39Qd7RdMCVj5xLjZMErrJe28/edit) document, because it is a simpler step-by-step of what to include in the review. It goes over what each sentence of a review should cover. Reviews in professional journals often devote several sentences to the plot; ACL tries to be much briefer on the plot, which is often covered in that first sentence.

***Ratings:***  There are two handouts on our website with rubrics on determining ratings (one for [fiction](https://docs.google.com/document/d/14iqHgt-_z9IDxlLgIe2JH_VpcNtlS5pceG-zSuOvuT8/edit), one for [nonfiction](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V1vXJ1zldqxel-EiwzQ639ks-56a5PtgHlNj-s7THXs/edit)). Write your review first and then decide on your rating. Often you will know what rating you have in mind, but that isn’t always backed up by your review. Be sure your review and rating go hand in hand, by pointing out strengths and weaknesses that lead to that rating.

***Grade level:***  ACL doesn’t have a specific guideline for determining grade level. One way is to look at the grade level given by *School Library Journal.* It is much more reliable than Amazon or Barnes and Noble for this. You can also use your own judgment, especially if you review for a long time, where you get the feel for what grade would be appropriate.

[***Diversity:***](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1oA4O1POwsC6dcq9-tHh_cpYlieqmA5-VSTi9muAZMzQ/edit)  In 2016, there was a helpful presentation with “suggestions & techniques for evaluating children’s books in a diverse world.” Our reviews should always include the racial makeup of the characters, gender/sexuality, and disability aspects of both the characters mentioned as well as those shown in the illustrations. Do not assume that if there is no mention of race that the characters are white. If race isn’t mention but the characters appear in the illustrations, describe their skintones.

**How to submit the written review:**

At the top of the ACL Reviewer Information area of the website, there is a link that says “Submit your review here.” Once you go to that online google form, just follow the instructions on how to enter the title, author, and other bibliographic data, ending with the one paragraph review you wrote and a brief annotation. Each section gives an example of what that area of the bib data should look like. The process if fairly step by step but if it is unclear, you can ask your review mentor for more information.

After the reviews are submitted and presented at the ACL meeting, they are published in BayViews (our journal), and published on our website in the blog area.

**What do I do with the books after I have reviewed them?**

The reviewer gets “first dibs” at purchasing any books they review ($4 for hardback books, $2 for paperbacks), or you can return the books at an in-person ACL meeting where they would go to the booksale table.

***Time for last minute questions or suggestions?***