Message from Selene Castrovilla, RA

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Cover Art by Diana Ting Delosh
Hello Long Island Members,

It’s been a long winter, but all the better to appreciate the spring.

We’ve been striving to provide you with great programming and want you to be engaged, and informed and supported by your Long Island team. Let us know how we may assist you.

Please share with us your book birthdays, awards, and publishing accomplishments and we’ll promote them in our quarterly newsletter, the Brag Page, website, and social media platforms.

Our Kid Lit News has a new e-mail address: Scbwilnewsletter@gmail.com. Contact Stephen Martin and RM Rivera if you’d like get involved or want to give feedback.

We’re also looking for new and exciting venues. Let us know if you have any in mind!

This is a photo from a team appreciation get together at my house. These are some of the wonderful volunteers who make everything possible. Thanks to everyone who pitches in—much appreciated!

Hope to see you soon.
May your writing and art blossom this spring.

Sincerely,
Selene

Selene is the Regional Advisor for the SCBWI Long Island Chapter. She is an award-winning author of picture books and YA novels. She has an MFA from the New School in New York City. “Selene is a writer worth watching,” said Jacqueline Woodson, 2018 Newbery Honor Winner.

http://selenecastrovilla.com/
Diana Ting Delosh contracted the art bug at the age of two when she first nibbled her way through a box of crayons. She has been happily doodling since then. Her final art is a hybrid of traditional media, ink on watercolor paper, and Photoshop. Diana’s illustrations have appeared in educational textbooks, e-books, picture books, and kid’s magazines. Her writing has been published by *Ladybug* and *Highlights / High Five* magazines. Diana received the Highlights High Five Pewter Plate for Puzzle Poem in 2008 and the SCBWI Magazine Merit Honor Award for Illustration for her art in *Ladybug* magazine in 2002. Currently, she lives on Long Island with her husband. She is inspired by the rabbits, squirrels, birds, and other critters that visit their backyard. Diana is a member of the following professional children’s publishing groups: SCBWI LI, Long Island Children’s Writers & Illustrators, and Children’s Book Illustrators Group.

**Thanks for illustrating the cover for this winter edition of the SCBWI Long Island Kid Lit News. How did you come up with the idea?**

I love drawing animals, so I knew the cover would have animals. It was just a matter of what they were going to be doing and would they be wearing clothes. As it’s for a winter issue, I decided that animal friends building a snow-critter would be a fun concept. Then I realized that this newsletter would come out in March, which led to spring colors and adding an early crocus peeking out of the snow.

**Can you describe the artistic process and tools behind creating your work?**

I start by making lots of thumbnail scribbles in pen/pencil. Then I pick one to do a full-size sketch on tracing paper and mess with it until it’s ready to share with my crit group or submit to a client. Then, on to final art. I decide how many layers and transfer the elements to Canson 140 lb watercolor paper using my trusty light box. For this illustration, I decided on 3 layers: (1) background sky, (2)animals, snow-critter, and snow, and (3) kite.
Sometimes, I save a step and ink the lines with a brush while on the light box, mount the art to my drawing board with blue tape and paint with Higgins colored inks as if they were watercolors, scan all elements then put together, and enhance the whole using Photoshop CS6 and a Wacom Tablet. Some details, like the kite string, whiskers, were drawn in with the Wacom.

You recently finished a book, Lily & Company. Tell us about the process of creating the illustrations. What was your technique? Did you have to revise the sketches or illustrations?

Like this cover, the illustrations for Lily are hybrid, traditional and digital. Except the art for Lily has a heavy black line as opposed to my current softer outline. As Lily was an indy author project, all the animals and elements were on their own layers. Working with layers allows me to make corrections without too much heartbreak. I envisioned younger animal characters. Tom Gardiner, the author, disagreed. I had to revise a few sketches to age up the animal characters. I also had to change a salmon pink beta fish to a navy blue. So thankful for Photoshop and my Wacom.

Did you always want to be an artist?
I always drew, but as a kid, I wanted to be a biologist, at least until ninth grade bio, when we had to kill and dissect our bullfrogs. I couldn’t! That’s when I decided to be an artist.

Tell us about other work you have done in the children’s book field.
I’ve illustrated for educational publishing and e-books. My illustrations and writing have appeared in Highlights High Five and Ladybug magazines.

Tell us about your involvement with SCBWI? How has it helped you?
The SCBWI has helped me connect with art directors, editors, and agents. Most importantly, it has helped me find my tribe.

How important is it for an artist to have an online shop?
I think it’s optional. I opened my shops because I was looking for a way to make “passive income” from excess art in my flat file. Of course, I also make art specific for my shops. So much for passive income.
Cards: https://www.greetingcarduniverse.com/dianascards
Gifts: https://www.zazzle.com/deloshdesigns*
Prints: https://wingedrabbit.imagekind.com

How long does it take to build up a fan base?
I’m not sure if I have a fan base, but I have 2,561 followers and counting on Twitter. How many are
actual fans is hard to say. My thoughts about social media are to find a platform you enjoy posting on and do it on a regular basis. Treat people like people vs. potential buyers. And yes, being on Twitter has led to opportunities and sales.

Do you have a creative space? What do you keep there?
My studio is a teeny spare bedroom in my home. It’s crammed with my large drawing desk, desktop computer, two printers, scanner, light box, flat file, other files, too-small bookcase, books, art supplies, and odd things, like my lucky cat collection. I’m surprised I can close the door.

What is the best time of day for you to create?
Anytime when I’m alone and the house is quiet. Which is rare. So it’s good that I’m not too picky.

Where do you go for inspiration?
I find museums, exhibits, and events inspiring, but I could also just wander about online or take a walk in the real world. Sometimes a random image sparks the solution to your illustration quandary.

What is one of the favorite pieces of art that you have created?
Currently, it’s My Whale Friend.

Are there any writers or illustrators that have influenced your work?
In random order—but not sure if their influence is evident in my art or writing:
Illustrators: Quentin Blake, Maurice Sendak, Beatrix Potter, Richard Scarry, Tomi Ungerer, Robert Quackenbush, etc. So many good people; hard to name just a few.
Writers: Jane Yolen, Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, Neil Gaiman, etc. I could go on and on.
What are you working on now?
I’m wrangling a picture book dummy and working on portfolio art.

What advice can you give to other illustrators to help them make a strong portfolio?
I’ve heard a lot of art agents and art directors say to curate your portfolio and to only show your best work. Show you can do expressive characters in a lot of different poses, doing different things.

Do you have any advice for our artist members?
Be prolific. Work on your weak points and build on your strengths. Find a crit group. Share/show your work, create, promote, submit, repeat. Good luck, everyone!

To Learn More About Diana. Go to these links.
Website: http://dianadelosh.com
Twitter: @dtdelosh

“The SCBWI has helped me connect with art directors, editors, and agents. Most importantly, it has helped me find my tribe.”

Diana Ting Delosh

Stephen Ingram is an author/illustrator working toward his first picture book. He has always been fascinated with how art can convey both story and emotion in a single picture. A librarian by trade, with degrees in education and art, Stephen works in pen, ink, and watercolor. He is the assistant illustrator coordinator and an active member in the new Long Island SCBWI chapter. http://stepheningram.com/
I am a lifelong New Yorker, but my first SCBWI conference was this past summer in L.A. I came away with new tools and connections to propel me forward as a picture book writer. I arrived at the 2019 Winter Conference in New York with both anticipation and expectations, and it did not disappoint.

The Golden Kite Gala Awards Presentation provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hear an address by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor who spoke of how she became a children’s author in addition to her myriad accomplishments. She said that many members of her extended family are medical professionals. At one gathering, a very young niece asked Justice Sotomayor, “What do you do to help people?” It got the justice thinking that she wanted to connect more with individuals. Imparting her love of books to children through writing her own stories provided that one-on-one connection. She gives a signed copy of her book to each child who attends her events. She did the same for us. Each attendee received a signed copy of Turning Pages, Justice Sotomayor’s inspirational picture book that tells her life story of overcoming obstacles through determination and education. She got everyone to consider what inspired us on our own creative paths and how we renew that inspiration each time we sit down to work.

“The Picture Book” with illustrator Marla Frazee, agent Rubin Pfeffer of Rubin Pfeffer Content, and Allyn Johnston, VP and Publisher of Beach Lane Books, was my first intensive breakout session. They spoke of how the page turn is a narrative device in the
picture book and how illustrations can change the emotional temperature of the reader. Case in point: *Where The Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. When Max returns to his room after being with the wild things, his dinner is waiting for him. The presence of a piece of cake provides a visual cue that Max is not in trouble anymore. Children read illustrations as fiercely as they do words. As an illustrator, Marla mused, “Things happen when you’re lost in someone else’s words.”

**Important Takeaways from Allyn, Rubin, and Marla:**
1. Know your audience. Who are you writing for and what will resonate with them?
2. The biggest component is EMOTION. Is it making an emotional connection to your young readers?
3. Will it withstand repeated readings?
4. What is the “hook” for sales and marketing?
   - Calendar-driven
   - Event-driven
   - Gift-giving quality
   - Universal
   - Topical
   - Dearth of things like it
   - Challenges everything
   - “Oh wow” factor
   - Instant classic
   - New talent

When it comes to authors including illustration notes in their submissions, Rubin doesn’t mind them but Allyn doesn’t want to see them at all. She feels they break up the story and impede the flow. Marla noted that, in the end, it’s not the writer and illustrator that are collaborating. It is the words and pictures.

As for second-guessing your place in the creative arts, Marla imparted this thought: “People devalue what comes easy to them. Because it’s easy for them, they think it has limited value.” It has great value. As Justice Sotomayor writes in *Turning Pages*, “Books are keys that unlock the wisdom of yesterday and open the door to tomorrow.” So go where your process takes you.

Suggested reading:
*Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever* by Mem Fox
*Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear* by Elizabeth Gilbert
Ali Arje is a former newspaper reporter and columnist seeking to publish her first picture book. A native of Brooklyn, she raised her children on Long Island, where she continues to reside with her husband. Ali received her MFA in creative writing from Hofstra University in 2013 and has blogged for the past dozen years at, http://onesanevoice.com/

Stayed tuned! Ali Arje’s follow-up article will share more of her amazing SCBWI Winter NYC 2019 conference experience in the next issue of Kid Lit News!

Learn more about the SCBWI conferences click here:
www.scbwi.org/annual-events-new/

SCBWI President Lin Oliver, Supreme Justice Sonia Sotomayor, and guest at the SCBWI Golden Kite Gala.

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Dear Comma Questioner,

The Oxford comma only matters sometimes, and that’s why there’s so much talk about it. The Oxford comma, also called the serial comma, is the comma that appears before the conjunction in a series. *The Chicago Manual of Style* “strongly recommends this widely practiced usage,” but recognizes it is a style choice. Other style guides prefer the Oxford comma because using it in every circumstance leads to consistent writing. This newsletter follows Chicago style. You’ll see the serial comma used throughout.

Here’s why. The Oxford comma prevents confusion. Let’s look at an example: I introduced my boyfriend to my parents, John Travolta and Queen Elizabeth.

This could mean that John Travolta and Queen Elizabeth are my parents. I assure you that isn’t the case. I could rephrase the sentence to show this: I introduced my boyfriend to John Travolta, Queen Elizabeth and my parents.

I could also simply add the Oxford comma to provide that clarity: I introduced my boyfriend to my parents, John Travolta, and Queen Elizabeth.

Here’s another example: Peter packed some grapes, pretzel sticks, peanut butter and jelly in
his lunch bag. Without the comma, peanut butter and jelly seem to go together. Perhaps Peter has a sandwich. If so, the word and is missing before peanut butter. (Even then, the sentence would lack clarity, but that’s another issue.) Let’s add the comma. Peter packed some grapes, pretzel sticks, peanut butter, and jelly in his lunch bag. The items are separate. Peter will dip his pretzels into both peanut butter and jelly.

In sentences with longer phrases, a comma can help break up the sentence, adding a pause for readability or to show how dialog may be spoken. Here’s an example: John couldn’t decide if he should go to the supermarket, stop at the library to get the book on hold for him, or visit his friend first. The comma isn’t strictly necessary, but it promotes a pause in reading as a cue for the reader.

But if Oxford commas only help sometimes, why do we need to add them every time we write a series? Most style guides call for consistent punctuation. But this is where the hubbub comes from. The Associated Press prefers journalists not use the serial comma unless it helps avoid confusion in that particular sentence. That’s right! AP style differs from the others.

So how does a writer decide? Your intended audience can help you decide if the publisher is more likely to prefer it or not. Most book publishers use Chicago style. Journalistic publications are more likely to follow AP style. Of course, this is a style choice for each publication, so ask if your publisher has a style guide and follow it. But even if the comma isn’t preferred, always consider whether leaving it out will create confusion.

Happy writing!

Sincerely,

Debbie

Debbie Vilardi, is the Kid Lit News copy editor, and a global moderator for the SCBWI Blue Boards. She is a former teacher of English to speakers of other languages as well as a published poet and picture book author. She writes for book packagers and has written and copyedited for Front Vision, teen sci-tech magazine produced in China. www.debbievilardi.com
It’s Saturday afternoon. You’re meeting a friend for brunch and you decide to take your three-year old along with you rather than get a babysitter for two hours. You know that you have to bring something to keep them entertained while you chat with your friend, but you really don’t feel like carrying five different books. However, you’re certain that if you only take one, your child will want to look at the other four you left at home! Your solution: just take your tablet so that your child can look at any book they want.

As with most things in life, the easy way out isn’t always the best option. According to Ferris Jabr a writer for Scientific American, “most screens, e-readers, smartphones and tablets interfere with intuitive navigation of a text and inhibit people from mapping the journey in their minds.” In other words, the physical interaction with a book allows for a tactile experience that cannot be recreated by touching a screen. This tactile experience allows a reader to form a physical relationship with the book and story being told. Anne Mangen, the lead researcher of Norway's Stavanger University, told The Guardian, "When you read on paper you can sense with your fingers a pile of pages on the left growing, and shrinking on the right."

This physical relationship with books may enhance focus and memory. Amy Kraft,

Kid Lit News
former health and sci-tech editor for CBS News, cites several small articles that suggest that people who read short stories from a paperback book retained a better time-line of events in the story, as compared to people using e-readers or tablets. Other studies have shown that children who spent more than two hours a day looking at a screen received lower scores on memory and language tests. More comprehensive research studies are now underway to figure out the true effects of screen-time on the developing brain.

However, screens may not be that bad in all situations. Some children find reading to be a chore and don’t enjoy engaging with books; for these children e-readers prove to increase a child’s reading-time. Guy Campinile of 60 Minutes also states, “Individuals with poor eyesight or reading disorders like dyslexia can benefit more from e-books because they provide a range of options for changing the text size and spacing of lines.” Therefore, knowing your child and their specific needs for learning is important when choosing whether or not to go the route of e-reader or tablet.

So the next time you are heading out with your child and need to bring along activities for entertainment, stop for a moment to think about the best choice for your child, not the easiest choice for yourself. Taking the time to get to know your child’s learning style and whether an e-reader or tablet may be helping or harming their development can make a world of difference throughout their lives.

Helpful Links:
https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/
https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/aug/19/readers-absorb-less-kindles-paper-study-plot-ereader-digitisation

Diana Lomonte is a pediatric physical therapist from Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Through her experiences in seeing a growing number of young clients with developmental challenges, Diana has become a strong proponent of increasing awareness of the importance of physical fitness for even very young children, especially in a city environment. Diana is currently working on a book series of "Body Awareness Books." Diana hopes to make exercise, body awareness, and self-care easy and fun! 

dianalomonte.com
On a chilly but beautiful January morning, I grab a table at Panera and wait for middle-grade and young adult author, Lisa Buscemi Reiss.

Back in 2005, Lisa and I were in two small writing critique groups together, a picture book writer’s group, and group of picture book writers and middle-grade novelists. We were both members of the Long Island Children’s Writers and Illustrator, (LICWI) and SCBWI. Lisa enjoyed writing picture books, yet her real passion was writing middle-grade and young adult novels.

Our dreams win eventually, and we follow them, in different trajectories, on separate paths. Mine was to pursue writing and illustrating picture books, and Lisa’s middle-grade and young adult novels. Our wonderful writers’ group dissolved—it does happen.

Lisa and her husband, Mike, their two children, one dog, and two cats live in a quiet neighborhood in Suffolk County. During her childhood, Lisa disliked reading.

In the sixth grade, Lisa won her school’s writing competition and was awarded the Creative Writing award. At that point Lisa found her true love—writing.

The dining room is bathed in sunlight as I go over my notes. I look forward to catching up with Lisa. I haven’t seen her in years—what better time to conduct an interview and discuss her debut YA romance novel, The Cupid Crisis.
The Cupid Crisis will resonate with teenagers who've fallen in love, been betrayed, and then been dumped for the first time. Claire Parker, the sixteen-year-old protagonist, is nursing a broken heart. Lisa weaves a continuous theme in her novel, Shakespeare's; A Midsummer Night’s Dream, main plot and the subplots. Claire even makes a connection with the character, Helena, and her boyfriend troubles. Claire has also noticed the pesky, but symbolic, paper Cupid “stalking” her (the high school hallways are hung with Valentine's Day dance posters with cupids on them), arrow drawn, aiming for her. Is Claire doomed to fall in love again? There is an unexpected twist in this sweet romance. You're going to have read the book to find out.

Since the beginning of time, love has been the inspiration for great literature. Shakespeare wrote it best: “The course of true love never did run smooth.” (A Midsummer Night’s Dream – Act 1, Scene 2)

You got that right, Bill.

Maybe, it was Puck who enchanted Literary Crush (Lisa's publisher) with an invisible arrow prompting them to acquire Lisa's manuscript. It took them less than a week to send Lisa a contract. This fast turnaround time is unheard of in traditional publishing. I think, it proves three significant things: the publishing house recognized the magnitude of Lisa's talents, they loved Claire’s voice, and they believed the manuscript was sweet, original, and relatable to today's teens.

Ten minutes after I did, Lisa walks into Panera. It's a joyful reunion as we dine on soup and salad. We toast to her recent literary accomplishment. Being called an “overnight success” doesn't apply to her and neither does that phrase, “You've finally arrived.”

Arrived? Arrived from where? I've always wondered. I understand it's supposed to be a compliment used when a writer makes it into “the big league” of traditional publishing. Sportscasters use the term when announcing rookie athletes or MVP players. However, that phrase, to no fault of those enthusiastic supporters and loved ones who use it, washes over the real struggle and sacrifices authors must make to become published. Moreover, after a twenty-five-year professional writing career, Lisa hasn't arrived. Publishers are finally catching up to her—she's been discovered!

Congratulations Lisa!
Well, I can’t lie. It feels awesome.

Tell us about The Cupid Crisis? Who is Claire Parker?
The Cupid Crisis is about sixteen-year-old Claire Parker who is done with love! She’s been burned by her ex, who cheated on her with her ex-best friend. Her other best friend, Liv, wants to show her that she can be happy with love.

What inspired you to write The Cupid Crisis?
I wrote The Cupid Crisis for the Macmillan on-line platform for writers and readers called Swoonreads. The story was originally called “Cursing Cupid” and it had bits of Cupid’s perspective along with his fictional brother, Thaddeus’s. The story was also inspired by A Midsummer Night’s Dream. In the story, Claire relates to that old 80’s song, Love Stinks! She refers to it as her “life theme song.”
After a while, when it wasn’t chosen for publication, I took it down and began to sub it on my own. That’s when Literary Crush Publishing picked it up. It changed a lot, though. Literary Crush publishes clean teen romances.

Is that Literary Crush’s brand?
Yes.

The overall story had to change? Can you expound on that?
Well, Claire’s story, and her experience of being cheated on and not wanting to find love again was the same, but in the original version, Cupid was an actual character watching Claire from above. I gave him an evil brother, Thaddeus, and they interfered from beyond and it was sort of similar to A Midsummer Night’s Dream, in that Thaddeus would play tricks on the humans. But the publisher helped make it more contemporary. And stronger.

Do you think it’s crucial to read a publisher’s guidelines and read what types of books they publish?
Absolutely! You have to write to a publisher’s guidelines. It’s very important in this business. There is a lot of competition, so if you’re subbing a manuscript, it’s a waste of your time and their time to sub something they won’t publish. That only leads you to rejection.

How do you handle rejection?
You learn from it. You know the saying, “you can wallpaper a room with it?” It’s really true for me. I’ve collected so many, and it hurts, but it gets easier. Rejection is part of the writing life, so I’m used to it now. For me, my writing journey’s been over twenty years! I want to tell newcomers that getting rejected doesn’t mean that what you’ve submitted was trash, it just means it’s not good for them at the time, or maybe you do need to work on it more and hone your skills. You know, just keep going. Rejection doesn’t mean you’re not a good writer.

How many times has The Cupid Crisis been rejected?
After I took it off of Swoonreads, I subbed it to couple more publishers, and a couple of agents. So
maybe five rejections. Then I benched it for a while. One day, I was on Twitter and discovered Literary Crush, a new publishing house. I decided to send it to them (they asked for a synopsis and fifty pages). Two days later, they emailed and asked for the rest of it. Within one week, they offered me a contract. It's unheard of!

Wow! That is amazing! That is unheard of! Maybe cupid was behind that? [laughs]
[laughs] Cupid made his match work.

Yes, struck an arrow in your publisher's heart. They fell in love with your story.
That's cute! [laughs]

Could you offer any advice to new writers dealing with rejection?
It doesn't matter how many rejections you get. If you keep going, you'll make it. Of course, talent plays a big part, so learning and honing your writing skills is super important. Learn about the business of publishing, too. And remember, it doesn't matter if you get one rejection or five hundred—there is that one publisher out there meant to publish you. Just don’t stop trying!

How many times did you have to revise, The Cupid Crisis?
About five times, in total. It was hard for me because as the author, you’re very close to the story, so it’s difficult to see flaws. Even after I sent my publisher the "final" version, I still found things, so the next version became the final-final. Then I spotted more, and that was the final-final-FINAL. I'll probably always find flaws.

How difficult is it to write teen romance?
Kind of difficult for me because it's not the genre I usually write. I write more angsty, not-so-clean teen stuff. So this was a challenge, even in its original form. But my publisher and editor helped to make it stronger. I think they helped in making me a stronger writer, too.

Your stories have been published in children's literary magazines, and you have written and published a middle-grade novel, and now The Cupid Crisis is out in the world. What's next on the horizon?
I've been published multiple times in Pockets magazine, and I self-published a middle grade novel, The Curse of Amun-Ra, in 2009. That one is in my library and I'm so proud of that! I've got two other completed MG novels, and two other completed YA novels, one of which is being reviewed by an agent. Fingers crossed! I'm also about to begin a new teen YA romance novel. I'll always submit short stories to Pockets. I won their annual fiction contest in 2008. Next to having The Cupid Crisis accepted for publication, that was my biggest accomplishment in writing.

Some new writers want an agent right away. They think it's glamorous. Tell us about your writing
journey, and what new authors can take away from it?
My journey has been about twenty-five years. Back when I first started subbing, I would submit without honing my skills enough, and, of course, I got rejected. A lot. But I learned, and kept going! I went to many conferences (still do), and I have been in writers’ groups. I also do everything I can to learn the business.

You have to practice your craft, and keep writing, writing, writing. You can sub, but make sure it’s polished. Sometimes, I’ve gotten hand-written rejections that were very inspiring. My parents could never understand why that would make me so happy [laughs].

Yeah, I know, right, mine too! [laughs]
They could never understand what a “good rejection” was!

I know they all think it’s terrible.
They think it’s horrible, but no! You get a little hand-written note about your writing, letting you know you’re going in the right direction. It’s all part of networking, too.

Yes, that’s right. Networking is crucial. How do you network, Lisa?
Well, SCBWI plays a big part of that because through them, I’ve learned about their conferences, and have gone to so many. There is a plethora of information handed to you at these events. You’re meeting editors, agents, and other writers and illustrators. You’re communicating with each other and forming friendships. You take all that information with you—it’s priceless! I owe a lot of my success to SCBWI.

Do you see any new trends in the YA market?
I think there are a lot of stories dealing with transgender kids, a lot of sexuality now, and a lot of diversity, which is great. It wasn't there before. Oh, and mental illness—that’s a big thing.

Do you think there are enough books on mental illness, depression, suicide, etc., in the children’s book publishing market?
It’s coming up more. I haven’t done enough research on it, but I read quite number of books that deal with that. Julie Halpern is an amazing author who writes about her personal experiences. She’s one of the writers I adore. There are many others, but honestly, I think there could be more of those types of books.

Maybe that’s why a lot of teens tell their favorite YA authors, “You’ve saved my life.”
I think, for myself, I'm still a teenager in my head and have never forgotten what it felt like to be a
teenager. It's almost like an arrested development, in a way, and I'm a grown woman. I always go back to that when I write and draw on my personal experiences of anxiety and depression and I was also bullied when I was a kid, so I can easily tap into that.

My daughter is a teenager and she's been bullied at her school as well, so this hits home for me. She also suffers from anxiety. Really, so many people do. Today, though, social media plays a huge part in bullying, and it did for my daughter. After over a year, we took her out of school and she's homeschooling now. Today's kids are more empowered by the Internet, but they have it harder than we did. When I was younger, I'd write a letter to someone on a piece of paper, or I'd call someone on the phone. If I had an argument with someone, it was face-to-face. Today, people say things on social media that reaches hundreds, maybe thousands of viewers. So many kids are affected by these things. As I said before, we need more books on bullying and mental illness for kids. There is still today a stigma attached to mental illness. Bringing that into light through writing is huge—very important.

Will this be in your next novel?
Yes! The YA novel I just finished touches on addiction issues and ties into some mental illness, too.

Let's switch gears. If time travel was possible, what would you say to your younger self embarking on a writing career?
I think of this one often! I'd tell her that she's worthy of publication, an excellent writer, and to NEVER GIVE UP.

If you had the choice to do it all over again what would you choose—to be a fabulous celebrity hairdresser or a famous writer?
Writer, without a doubt. I actually came to this conclusion with my son—we had this discussion the other day. I love writing and doing hair equally, but my son asked me what I liked more, very quickly I said, “Writing!” I never admitted that to myself before. It's funny you asked that questioned.

Sometimes our passion needs life support, so we have to take a job to support our passion. What do you do?
I do hair. That's my day job and has been for about thirty years! I love doing hair. I write early in the mornings and on my days off. It's about keeping a balance, really.

What is your favorite holiday?
Thanksgiving. It's the beginning of the wonderful Christmas season. I still choke up when I see Santa on the sled at the end of the Macy's parade and the funniest thing is my kids are always like, "Meh." And there's me, jumping up and down like a little girl. [laughs]
Share why Christmas is more than just a holiday to you?
It’s a state of mind. It’s an entity all by its self. If it could be a living, it would be. I don’t know how to explain it. It’s huge in my life. I have a lot of great Christmas memories. It’s harder now because my family has moved away. That’s very difficult for me, and I actually get a little sad around Christmas. Also, it goes too quickly. That’s partly why I love Thanksgiving, because it marks the beginning. My tree is still up, by the way [laughs].

It’s January twenty-fourth—it’s still standing? [laughs]
(laughs) I haven’t had time to take it down! But I don’t really want to put it away.

This year we had to get an artificial Christmas tree (a family member is allergic), but it’s not my jam. However, I insisted it had to “look” real.

Mine has to be an artificial Christmas tree because I put it up on my mom’s birthday, November 14, and I keep it up through January. If it was a real tree, it would end up looking like Charlie Brown’s tree.

You post your Christmas tree photos on Facebook. Your tree is spectacular.
Thank you. It’s all ornaments, hundreds of them. They all have a memory. No one is allowed to put the tree up but me because I have to look at every single one. Each has a memory attached. Hey, maybe there’s a story in there somewhere...

Thank you Lisa, for the interview and hanging out at Panera’s with me.
Learn more about Lisa, The Cupid Crisis, and Literary Crush, go to the links below.

Help Links:
Lisa Buscemi Reiss https://lisabuscemireiss.com/
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/LisaBuscemiReiss/
Twitter: @LisaBuscemiReiss
Instagram: lisa_buscemi_reiss
The Cupid Crisis https://literarycrushpublishing.com/read-our-books/
Literary Crush https://literarycrushpublishing.com/
Twitter: https://twitter.com/crushliterary

RM Rivera is the co-editor of Kid Lit News and the Writer Coordinator for the chapter. RM works as a freelance graphic designer and illustrator. Her artwork has been seen in galleries around the Tri-state area. She has illustrated two children’s books. She also teaches art to adults and children. Contact RM Rivera at: scbwilinewsletter@gmail.com
Fear not, this thing called Social Media, for it is your ticket to the world!

A bit melodramatic? Perhaps. But there is a smidge of truth in that. As writers and illustrators, we want to share, discuss, connect, and continue to learn our crafts. And social media is a quick and effective way of disseminating information. I’m Roseanne Frank and I’m the Social Media Manager for SCBWI Long Island.

For years, I wrote short stories and flash fiction, and—who would have thought—both proved to be a perfect segue to a longtime ambition. In January 2018, my New Year’s resolution was to get serious about writing picture books. I joined SCBWI, attended SCBWI Long Island events, and quickly found my SCBWI critique group. In August, I was asked to manage the social media platform for the chapter. I couldn’t pass on this opportunity, a new SCBWI chapter with so many possibilities. I wanted to share my excitement about the many talented people on the island and the fabulous events planned and unite our kidlit community through social media.

Here’s how you can connect with SCBWI Long Island:
Twitter: @SCBWILongIsland
Instagram: @scbwilongisland
Facebook: SCBWI Long Island

The main form of communication is through Twitter. I am on Twitter more than any other platform, and agents and publishers post their most up-to-date submission openings, info, and Manuscript Wish Lists. To unite and engage members on a more personal level, we started two new hashtags on Twitter:

#SCBWILIevents: Whenever we have any event, author signing, discussion panel, or Meet the Editors, you can follow along with snippets from the event. They are not deleted so you can refer to their wisdom in the future. Sometimes you’ll find you don’t need their info just yet, but you may.

Kid Lit News
For our SCBWI Long Island members, we started a hashtag to find a critique partner. Just post what you write and what you’re interested in reading/critiquing and you can find a match. Connect through DM after that for privacy. And since writers are largely an introverted breed, you don’t even have to meet in person. (However, my SCBWI critique group blows that myth right out of the water—you know who you are).

And if you have a book birthday, please be sure to contact me so we can post, promote, and celebrate with you!

So now that you know who is behind the curtain, pop over and say hello. Retweets, quote tweets, and shares are always appreciated to build our numbers and reach more writers and illustrators. We’re a welcoming, inclusive, and fun group—attend our next mixer and you’ll see!

Roseanne writes under RB Frank. You can find more information about her writings at rbfrank.com or connect with her on Twitter @writingoutloud2, Instagram @writingoutloud; and FB @RBFrankAuthor.

“I was shopping in Sahadi’s, a middle-eastern grocery store in Brooklyn with my young grand daughter, Penny. I like to stock up on spices, teas, coffees—all sorts of foods—from there. A Muslim woman, wearing a head scarf, was on line next to me at the check-out counter with her son. Both children began to interact. *A Moon for Moe and Mo* was born. Two boys from different backgrounds are mistaken for twins while their mothers are shopping for the holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Ramadan. (The two holidays celebrate the new year. Every thirty years they occur the same time!) They have a chance meeting in a local park, become friends, and picnic, sharing each other’s holidays. It’s a celebration of how we are more alike than different.”

Jane was feature in our 2018 November issue of Kid Lit News PAL interview where we discussed her picture book, *A Moon for Moe and Mo*, her career, abstract paintings, and her life.
SCBWI Long Island Illustrator Events:

Sunday April 7, 2-4:30 pm: Tips & Critique with Senior Designer Aram Kim, Huntington Public Library, Huntington NY. You can register for this program on the SCBWI Long Island website.  
https://longislandny.scbwi.org/events/aram-kim-critique/

Sunday May 5, 12:00-1:30 pm: Studio visit with Jane Breskin Zalben, an award-winning author/illustrator—Port Washington NY. Keep an eye out for an e-mail announcement about this great opportunity.

Saturday & Sunday, June 1 & 2: SCBWI New Jersey conference.  
Sarah Hokanson, Art Director at Random House will be there among others.

SCBWI’s Monthly Newsletter Insight “Draw This” Prompt

Check your March INSIGHT for the “Draw This” prompt—due March 20th. Challenge yourself to submit (you need that new portfolio piece or post card).  
https://www.scbwi.org/calling-all-illustrators-2/

Check your April INSIGHT for the “Draw This” prompt—due April 20th. Challenge yourself again!  
https://www.scbwi.org/calling-all-illustrators-2/

Check your May INSIGHT. If you haven’t done it yet—submit to “Draw This” and post on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook.  
https://www.scbwi.org/calling-all-illustrators-2/

Please check back often. There are more exciting opportunities in the works!

Contact: Annina Luck, Illustrator Coordinator at <longislandny-ic@scbwi.org>

Annina Luck is the Long Island Illustrator Coordinator and lives in Huntington Harbor with her husband, Daniel, their cats Tom and Tux. She especially loves to bring mythology and Byzantine and Tudor art and history to life in her picture book and middle-grade projects. She is agented by Essie White of Storm Literary Agency.
March
Saturday 16
1-4pm
Unique Critiques with
Selene Castrovilla, RA
Seaford Library, 2234 Jackson Ave
Seaford, NY 11783
https://longislandny.scbwi.org/events/unique-critique-with-selene-castrovilla/

March
Sunday 31
1:30-3:30 pm
First Pages with Erica Finkel, Editor
at Abrams
Touro College, 1700 Union Blvd
Bay Shore, NY 11706
https://longislandny.scbwi.org/events/erica-finkel/

April
Sunday 7
2-4:30 pm
Tips and Group Critique with Aram Kim, Senior Designer at MacKids
338 Huntington Library, Main St
Huntington, NY 11743
https://longislandny.scbwi.org/events/aram-kim-illustrator-tips-and-group-critique/

Check our website, e-mails, and social media platforms for new events and announcements often. Contact us at www.longislandny@scbwi.org
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Photography, graphics and illustrations: Pixabay Free Images, RB Frank, SCBWI Metro NYC, RM Rivera, Lisa Buscemi Reiss, Selene Castrovilla, Diana Delosh

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Cover Art Interview: Stephen Ingram Drafting Table: Annina Luck
Go Ask Debbie: Debbie Vilardi

We'd like to give our heartfelt appreciation and thanks to our PAL members, Lisa Buscemi Reiss and Diana Ting Delosh, for allowing us interview them. A humongous amount of gratitude and love to everyone: our writers, our staff, and guests who volunteered and made the third edition of Kid Lit News quarterly stupendous! We keep getting better and better.

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