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**Writing Creative Nonfiction for Kids**

Sheila Seifert, the workshop speaker, is the editorial director of parenting content for Focus on the Family magazine and FocusOnTheFamily.com. She has written/co-written over 20 books and has over 1,000 freelance sales. One of her scripts was produced and then aired on PBS, and many of her other scripts were compiled and published in books. Her books include women’s historical fiction, juvenile fiction, ebooks on writing and more. Her most recent co-written book is Bible Kidventures: Stories of Danger and Courage. For over a decade, Sheila has taught writing, literature and reading as a university instructor. She is the founder of Kay’s Simple Literature, reading curriculum for public, private and home-school teachers.

**What do these terms mean?**

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**“Kids” Defined**

Though sometimes used to describe baby goats, “kids” in the publishing industry means children. Books for kids are called juvenile fiction. The age range for these books are 0 to 12 years old. The book market is broken down into:

- picture books
- beginning readers
- beginning chapter books
- junior novels
- books for 8- to 12-year-olds (or 9 to 13)

**Today’s Workshop**

Learn how to use fiction techniques to bring Bible and other true stories to life. Don’t get caught being boring as you write for elementary school children.

Workshop summary:

Good research, the balance between knowing what you can fictionalize and what you can’t, and choosing the right fiction techniques for your story makes good creative nonfiction for kids.
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**Creative Nonfiction Constraints**

**Dialogue:**
There is a fine line between creative nonfiction and historical fiction.

**Easy Literary Devices**

**Alliteration** is the repetition of a single sound at the beginning of words near each other. *Example: Bring me a bundle of branches.*

**Assonance** is the repetition of a single vowel sound within a series of words. *Example: Find more cores on the floor.*

**Hyperboles** are an exaggerated descriptions and often include two as words. *Example: He is as tall as an oak tree.*

**Metaphors** compare two things without using like or as. *Example: He is a bunny (if he really isn’t a bunny).*

**Onomatopoeias** are words that sound like their definitions. *Examples: buzz, sizzle, boom, meow*

**Personification** means giving an object a human quality. *Example: The wind lifted the girl’s hat and tried it on.*

**Similes** compare two things. Search for the words like or as. *Example: He ran just like a bunny.*

**Literary Device Example**

**Father and Sons**

*by Aesop, translated by V.S. Vernon Jones with an introduction by G.K. Chesterton*

A certain man had several sons who were always quarrelling with one another, and, try as he might, he could not get them to live together in harmony. So he determined to convince them of their folly by the following means. Bidding them fetch a bundle of sticks, he invited each in turn to break it across his knee. All tried and all failed: and then he undid the bundle, and handed them the sticks one by one, when they had no difficulty at all in breaking them. “There, my boys,” said he, “united you will be more than a match for your enemies: but if you quarrel and separate, your weakness will put you at the mercy of those who attack you.” Union is strength.

**Sticks and Strength**

*by Sheila Seifert, adapted from the Aesop fable “Father and Sons” published in Adventures in Odyssey 90 Devotions for Kids*

Once, there lived a family with five children. These kids quarreled about everything. They bickered over breakfast. They picked fights at playtime and squabbled over clothes, friends, and even toothpaste.

This brood of battling brothers and sisters fought so much and so often that their father finally yelled, “Bring me a bundle of branches!” Now that may seem like a strange thing for a father to say, but they did live near a forest, and he had a good reason.

Before long, they brought him the requested sticks and only squabbled seven times as they did so. Their father took the large stack and handed them to his oldest son.

“Break this heap in half,” he said. The oldest tried, but it was too thick to break.

The father took back the sticks and gave them to his second.

“Split these sticks in half,” he said to his daughter. She tried, but she couldn’t. So her father gave the bundle to each of his babes, but none could break the bundle in half.

Then the wise father handed each child a single stick.

“Break it,” he told them. Each broke their branch easily. He had them break more until the bundle of branches had been completely broken.

“If you stand side-by-side,” said their father, “your adversaries won’t be able to stop you. But if you bicker and battle and stand alone, you can easily be broken.”
Perspective and Structure

Daniel 1:3-4
Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family[a] and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king’s palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

Daniel 1:8
But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

Daniel 1:16
So the steward took away their food and wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

Daniel 2:9
[Nebuchadnezzar said,] “Tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation.”

Daniel 2:16
And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

Daniel 5:5
[After King Nebuchadnezzar’s death,] the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace.

Daniel 5:13
Then Daniel was brought in before the king.

Daniel 5:28
[Daniel said,] “Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Daniel 6:1
And Darius the Mede received the kingdom.

Daniel 6:10
[Daniel] got down on his knees three times a day and prayed.

Daniel 6:16
Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions.

Daniel 6:22
[Daniel said,] “My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me.”

How to Make Changes

1. Change the person: first, second, or third persons

2. Change the point-of-view, possibly not the main character.

3. Emphasis: Focus on one specific area or re-balance the emphasis of the nonfiction story (eg., Cinderella could focus on her relationship with her godmother).

Booklet Directions

Make a copy of the booklet for each student. Have them follow these directions to make their booklets:

1. Fold the sheet of paper in half the long way. The printed side of the sheet should be showing, and the non-printed or blank side should not be showing. Unfold.

2. Fold the sheet of paper in half the short way. The printed side of the sheet should be showing, and the non-printed or blank side should not be showing. Unfold.

3. Fold the lines that are halfway between the center fold and the edge of the paper into the middle; this time the blank side of the sheet will be on the outside. (The short, outside edge, on either edge of the sheet should be lined up with the center fold.) Unfold the outside edges only.

4. With a scissor, cut along the crease that has a dotted line on it in the middle of the page. Unfold.

5. Refold the sheet of paper in half the long way. The printed side of the sheet should be visible.

6. Push page cover-1 toward page 4-5 so the middle pages form a diamond. Push together so these front-back pages form: cover-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7.

7. Fold so the cover is on one side of the booklet, page 7 is on the back of the booklet, and all other pages are between them.

8. Your booklet is done.
Pretend you are Daniel. You live in Jerusalem, until Babylon’s king defeats your city. Then you and other young nobles are taken as prisoners. You are still the captive. Go to “K” on page 7.

The king recognizes you as a wise man. Then one day he has a dream. He wants someone to tell him his dream and what it means. When no one can, he orders the death of all his wise men. That now includes you. Fortunately God reveals the dream to you, and you tell the king. No one dies. You serve this king for many years. When he dies, others become king. You serve them.

What will you do?
Make a choice. Check the box.

Choice 1: If you serve God with King Belshazzar, go to “G” on page 4.
Choice 2: If you refuse to serve King Belshazzar, go to “J” on page 6.

The food isn’t made according to God’s Laws so you want to drink water and eat vegetables instead of it. The king’s servant allows you to be tested.

After ten days of eating this way, you look healthy. He lets you continue.

What will you do?
Make a choice. Check the box.

Choice 1: If in time you meet King Nebuchadnezzar, go to “I” on page 5.
Choice 2: If eventually you escape, go to “H” on page 4.

This makes the king happy. You are helped out of the lions’ den. Those who tricked you are thrown in. They do not survive.

The End

If you liked this story, you might like this book: Bible Kidventures: Stories of Danger and Courage
Jesus and Beelzebub (ESV)

14 Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled.
15 But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons,”
16 while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.
17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.
18 And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub.
19 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.
20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe;
22 but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.
23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

A Kingdom Divided

While Jesus was on earth, he cast out demons. One demon that he cast out had kept a man from talking.

Once the demon was gone, the mute man was able to speak. Everyone around Jesus was amazed.

But some, who were skeptical, said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebub.” (That is what they called the devil.)

Others wanted to see more miracles.

Jesus knew what they were thinking. He said, “A divided household falls.”

Jesus knew that no kingdom would last if it had people in it that worked against it. That is true for human kingdoms and the devil’s kingdom.

What some people were scared about was that Jesus had come from God. If true, then the kingdom of God was before them. They’d have to change what they did and how they thought.

Jesus told a story. Once there was a very strong man. He had all the weapons he needed to guard his castle and all he owned.

He kept his household safe until someone who was strong attacked him. This enemy won the battle and took all the man’s weapons, that the man had trusted to save him.

Jesus said, “Whoever is not with me is against me.”

Perspective and Structure

Once when Jesus cast out a demon, a mute man was able to speak.

This amazed some, but others said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebub.” (Beelzebub is a name for the devil.)

Jesus knew what they were thinking. He was not surprised. He said, “A divided household falls.”

This means that a kingdom has to work together. If it doesn’t, it crumbles from the inside. After all, it is silly for someone to work for, but against, the same group.

Jesus’ power came from God. This scared some followers because God’s kingdom was now being demonstrated on earth. Jesus told a story about what this meant to those who didn’t like how God’s kingdom worked.

Pretend you have a castle. You are strong enough to guard it. You have the weapons you need to protect it.

Your possessions are safe. What do you trust in? You trust in your strength and weapons.

Then one day, someone different attacks your castle. You use your strength. You use your weapons, but the enemy is strong. The enemy has more weapons. What happens?

The enemy beats you and takes all your possessions. Your strength and weapons were untrustworthy. What does this mean?

Jesus said, “Whoever is not with me, is against me.” Your trust should be in Jesus and not your own strength or possessions. That is what some of his followers didn’t like. They wanted to be in control.

Literary Devices

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Get a free copy
(for a limited time)

of the Bible stories partially brainstormed in this workshop, by searching for the manuscript by title (about a month from now):

“Who Is In Control of Your Life?”

at

TeachersPayTeachers.com!

Choose Your Own Kidventure!

Separate Bible Stories

Buy It Today!

With Bible KidVentures: Stories of Danger and Courage, you, the reader, are taken right into the middle of the action of your favorite Bible stories. In each story, you are the main character and what happens is completely up to you! Through your choices, you can receive great rewards, get into big trouble, or even lose your life. It’s your turn to witness Bible history in action by entering the story and choosing your own path.

Separate Bible Stories

I, ________________________________, understand that the brainstorm at the end of the Colorado Christian Writers Conference (2016) workshop about writing creative nonfiction for kids, which is taught by Sheila Seifert, is optional and is an opportunity into Sheila Seifert’s writing process. It is not a partnership, co-author agreement, or any type of business transaction or submission.

Material brainstormed and discussed in this workshop may be used in her manuscripts. These manuscripts may be sold personally, publicly, or commercially in print, on the web, as a PDF, or in the cloud or by any means now known or not yet invented.

I understand that I will not receive a fee, stipend, royalty, or any reimbursement or recognition for any part of my participation in this workshop or the brainstorming and writing process. All materials, brainstorming, writing, etc., belong wholly and solely to Sheila Seifert.

__________________________  ______________________________
Signature                  Date