

Lori Degman [she/her],

Lori will be accepting applications for: Rhyme, humor, fiction



Bio: Lori Degman is the author of the award-winning picture books, *Just Read*, 2020 – 2021 Illinois Reads Book List; *Cock-a-Doodle Oops!*, 2014 International Literacy Association Honor Book; and *I Zany Zoo*, 2010 Winner of the Cheerios New Author Contest and 2013 Illinois Reads Book List. Her other titles are *Travel Guide For Monsters*, *Like a Girl*, and *Norbert's Big Dream*, and the forthcoming *Travel Guide For Monsters: Part Deux* (co-authored with Jocelyn Watkinson, her 2020 PBChat mentee). Lori loves helping writers perfect

their rhyming manuscripts through her critique service and mentorships. Lori was a teacher of the deaf and now divides her time between writing children's books, doing kidlit-related stuff (like being a #PBChat Mentor), and babysitting her grandkids! Visit her at Loridegman.com.

1. You have two minutes to give a speech on anything! What would your topic be?

My kids and grandkids because I wouldn't have to think about it - I'd just speak from the heart.

2. If you could live in any film, tv, or book universe, what would it be?

Probably The Dick Van Dyke show because the characters are all thoughtful, genuine and funny - not in a forced one-liner way. And there are no cell phones.

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

It's impossible to pick five overall favorites so I'm going to narrow it down. I'm currently preparing a presentation on writing humor, so I'll share my five favorites I'm using for that.

7 Ate 9 by Tara Lazar and Ross MacDonald

Can U Save the Day by Shannon Stocker and Tom Disbury

It's Only Stanley by Jon Agee

The Legend of Rock, Paper, Scissors by Drew Daywalt and Adam Rex

Three Ninja Pigs by Corey Rosen Schwartz and Dan Santat

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

I think I'm most proud of the fact that I didn't give up! I'd started writing and then had to stop for about 10 years when my kids started school and I went back to teaching. There was no internet at the time (yes, I'm that old – not to brag), so I was out there on my own and I couldn't justify taking the time away from my kids and job. But, when my kids were in high school and didn't need me as much, I decided to give it one more try. Even though I received a lot of rejections, I kept going until I got published.

5. What about mentoring excites you most?

It's exciting when you give a writer feedback and she runs with it and creates something better than either of you ever imagined! It's even more exciting when mentees sign with an agent and/or sell a manuscript!

6. What are your strengths as a mentor?

I'm easy to talk to, so I think my mentees feel comfortable discussing things with me. I'm honest - I won't tell you I think something is good if I really don't so, when I say something positive - you can believe it. If you're a rhymers, I can help you perfect your meter and push you to find the best possible rhymes - all while creating a strong story arc.

7. What is your feedback/critique style like?

I point out the things I think are working and the things that aren't. I help guide the author through revisions and continue until the story is submission ready. I give thoughtful, honest feedback – there's nothing worse than saying something is good, just to avoid making the author feel bad.

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

My ideal mentee would be someone who writes funny picture book manuscripts – preferably in rhyme. I'd like to work with someone who has been writing for a while, so we don't have to spend too much time on the mechanics and can get through more manuscripts. I'd like to work with someone who can take constructive criticism without being defensive, but who will also not make every change I suggest if they don't truly agree with it.

9. Who are you not the best mentor for?

I wouldn't be very helpful to authors who write nonfiction or serious prose.

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

I will help my mentee develop multiple manuscripts and get them submission ready. I'll focus on tightening text, word choice, story arc, rhythm/meter, poetic devices, and editing while keeping illustrations in mind. I'm happy to help with pretty much any aspect of the writing/submitting/post publishing process the mentee wants.

11. What is your style of communication like?

I like to email because it's nice to have a written record of what we've talked about and I typically reply to emails within a day or two. I'm also happy to talk on the phone or do a Skype visit to help with communication. I'm a pretty casual person so it's usually anything goes.

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

I'm looking for someone who has invested in learning the craft of writing. Someone who has attended classes, conferences, workshops . . . to improve his/her writing. I'm also looking for someone with a good sense of humor – and if they're a pun nerd like me, that would be a plus!

13. What kind of mentorship experience do you envision for you and your mentee?

With former mentees, we've had frequent, open communication and I hope that will continue with future mentees. I want them to feel they can ask and share anything with me, without hesitation. I enjoy getting close to my mentees and I'm happy to say I've become friends and speak regularly with my former mentees.

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

Submit the manuscript that best exemplifies your writing style. Even if it's not your most polished manuscript – I want to get a clear idea of your writing style.

15. 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?

Write the type of stories that you would want to read – both when you were a child and now. Write an opening so alluring that the reader will want to turn the page and an ending so satisfying and/or surprising that they want to read it all over again.