

VIVIAN KIRKFIELD [she/her]

VIVIAN KIRKFIELD will be accepting applications for: fiction/nonfiction/prose/rhyme



Bio: Writer for children—reader forever...that's Vivian Kirkfield in five words. Her bucket list contains many more words – but she's already checked off skydiving, parasailing, and visiting friends 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 town of Bedford, New Hampshire. 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 where she hosts the #50PreciousWords International Writing Contest and the #50PreciousWordsforKids Challenge. Her

nonfiction narratives bring history alive for young readers and her picture books have garnered starred reviews and accolades including the Silver Eureka, Social Studies Notable Trade Book, Best NSTA STEM Book K-12, and Junior Library Guild Selection.]

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

How we are never too old to follow our dream. How jumping out of a plane empowered me to jump into the world of writing for children. And how everyone can succeed in their heart's desire if they embrace the 5Ps...Passion, Preparation, Practice, Patience, and Perseverance.

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

Hmmm...I'm a huge fan of the Outlander series, but I don't know that I'd be brave enough, although I guess I would always do whatever had to be done wherever I was. But, like Claire, I'm sure I would miss flush toilets and hot showers.

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 nonfiction 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.

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 except from July 9-21 when I will be out-of-town and out-of-the-country on a road trip to Prince Edward Island, home of Anne of Green Gables.

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

A very positive one, for sure! We will be partners with one goal – to help the mentee follow their own path to realize their dream to become a traditionally published author.

14. 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!

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?

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

