

The Picture Book

Graduate Certificate Semester



VCFA
VERMONT
COLLEGE
OF FINE
ARTS

Who should participate?

- Any alumna/us of the program
- Any current student
- Anyone with a relevant advanced degree
- Anyone with just a B.A. on a case-by-case basis

What's the format?

- Two residencies and one semester-long independent study.
- During residency, students will participate in a workshop focused solely on the picture book, with a faculty member workshop leader who is an expert in the picture book genre. This faculty member will also be the advisor for all the PB students.
- Each January, an author/illustrator will also join the faculty for part of the residency. He or she will participate in the picture book workshop, as well as give a lecture open to all MFA students.
- During the semester, students will work both on critical and creative work; exchange five packets of writing with their advisor; and participate in a biweekly online discussion board with their advisor and one another.
- In the concluding residency, participants will give a panel discussion open to all MFA students in which they will discuss the discoveries they have made during the semester through both their critical and creative work on the picture book.

Students who successfully fulfill all of the requirements will receive 16 graduate credits and a certificate indicating completion of the concentration, all of which will be reflected on their transcripts.

What does it cost?

Contact Jason Lamb at jason.lamb@vermontcollege.edu or (866) 934-VCFA ext. 8829

How do I apply?

(Current students and VCFA alumni contact Jason Lamb for instructions)

1. You must submit a critical essay, your transcripts, 1–2 letters of recommendation, the application form and the \$75 application fee.
2. Write a short application essay which explains why you want to participate in the PB semester, your goals for the semester, and what experience you have in this genre.
3. 1–2 picture book manuscripts (please do not include illustrations).

To apply please contact Jason Lamb, the Assistant Director of Admissions at jason.lamb@vermontcollege.edu or (866) 934-VCFA ext. 8829

See page 2 for faculty and student comments about the semester.

"I think more people -- even people writing YA -- should take the picture book semester. I have learned so much about different kinds of stories and reading experiences, compactness, sense of audience, voice, writing (or not writing) in verse. Every word counts and, because picture books are mostly read aloud, the sound of the language is important and the experience needs to keep both the listener and the reader engaged. The work is on a relatively small scale, but everything I've learned could also apply in some way to a longer piece. And the continuation of workshop through the online forum is invaluable. The class is like a mini-MFA program. In addition to learning about picture books, I'm going to learn how to give a VCFA talk -- very helpful practice for my fourth semester lecture." *Barbara Bishop, Student*

"The picture book genre requires a completely different mind-set than writing just about everything else, since it's based in a tradition of oral storytelling. As a novelist, I benefited in a number of ways: I learned how to think in pictures and how to consider the sounds of words and the sounds of the stories I wrote. I also learned some techniques in oral storytelling that I hope will be useful in school visits in the future. I recommend the picture book semester for writers of all kinds, even people who (like me) don't naturally gravitate towards the genre." *Jessica Powers, Student*



"In this intensive semester, the picture book is taken seriously for the particular art form that it truly is. Students and faculty alike are immersed in the twin elements that make a picture book work--the marriage of art and text and how the two combined make something even more powerful than their separate entities. The combination of the on-line workshop and one-on-one tutorials, students get the full range of group and individual interaction to make an experience that can only be called powerful." *Kathi Appelt, PB Faculty Advisor Summer 2009*

"The picture book semester has an energy all its own. The intense interactions on the class forum serve to inform and enrich the creative and critical work, so that the semester is remarkably more than the sum of its parts. Students not only produce far more work than they would otherwise, but they leap-frog ahead in terms of their own learning. I'd like to bottle the magic of the picture book semester and sprinkle a little over all my instruction. I also think that all writers, regardless of whether they intend to write a picture book or not, can learn from the study of this compact and often elusive story container." *Uma Krishnaswami, PB Faculty Advisor Summer 2010*

"This is a semester for organized play! Stretch yourself by trying poetry, non-fiction, rhyme, concept books, biography, cumulative stories, and more. I had so much fun stepping out of my comfort zone and attempting to write a little something of everything. Exclusively reading, writing, and studying picture books forced me to say what I want to say in the most succinct and best way I could - a skill I'm happily applying to the novel I'm working on now." *Skila Brown, Student*

"The picture book semester allows students to examine story on a micro-level which is beneficial for all authors. We had the most wonderful conversations about rhyme, beats, rhythm, story structure, audience and much more. Writing my paper and presenting for the picture book panel was an extremely valuable experience. The two tasks prepared me for my critical thesis and for the lecture I will have to give my graduate residency." *Anna Boll, Student*

