

You Can Write a Story! A Story-Writing Recipe for Kids

Lisa Bullard

Deborah Haley Melmon, Illustrator

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At a kitchen table, a red-haired and dark-haired girl pull characters from a recipe file, settings from a cookie jar, and actions from an egg carton. Thrown into a mixing bowl, these ingredients will soon become a story. A smiling chef in a white jacket and chef's hat guides the reader through this cookbook, which makes writing fiction seem as easy as whipping up a favorite dessert—and as tasty.

Bullard, winner of a CBC Children's Choice Award for *Trick-or-Treat on Milton Street*, has written several series of children's books, including "All About Me." In *You Can Write a Story!* she divides the elements of fiction into easily digestible parts: characters, settings, and action (beginning, middle, and end). She does the same for the writing process: brainstorming, drafting, rewriting, and publishing. After thirteen short how-to chapters, Bullard shares a unifying story-in-progress of Pete the purple polar bear who dreams of moving to Hawaii. This book, with its tale-within-a-tale, will certainly inspire writers to get cooking.

Melmon has illustrated greeting cards and educational materials; this is her first picture book. Yet the reader would never guess, looking at her exuberant colored pencil and watercolor designs in tropical hues in Hawaii, and cool blues and grays in the North. Melmon captures the excitement of telling a story through her bold yet contained designs of Pete surfing and biplane piloting. Each page sports a different colorful border, and details such as cooking utensils, ingredients, and cookies unify the design.

This title is ideal for elementary teachers, homeschoolers, and caregivers who want to introduce a child to the elements of fiction writing. The prose is simple and direct with special terms in bold print, like "rough draft," and colorful sidebars provide useful hints, for example, "Use all five senses." A glossary of terms also makes it easy to find that missing ingredient. Like many a favorite recipe, this one is delicious; yet it's also calorie-free.

JEANNE M. LESINSKI (August 9, 2007)

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