Hillary’s Chapter Book Pitches

[Chris Shumate](http://chrisshumate.me) [link](http://chrisshumate.me)

2/5/2016 09:28:40

Charlie is tired of sitting at home while his dad goes on hiking adventures without him, so he confronts his dad about him missing out, only to discover that some trails are exciting, but others are better left untraveled. +I’m hooked.

+Dad sounds like he’s on a mission and I’m curious how Charlie will fit into all of this.

+I love that we’re going to get to be in nature and get out of the neighborhood. +Sounds as if the trails hold some mystery.

+love the name Charlie.

* I bet you could replace with some of your verbs of being with juicy verbs. Notice you have lots of verb of being is/are/are. What does Charlie do at home? Does he really sit? I know it’s an expression but most kids this age don’t sit. Confronting dad seems a bit older YA almost. I’m wanting him to sneak, slip, scurry (note: strong verbs) into the back of Dad’s truck or van? Confronting suggests lots of talking versus action. How could you replace the word exciting? Generally, the word exciting or interesting aren’t interesting. How can you show us something exciting?

+exciting to see anything that will be an easy link to science and potentially even math

[Jill Siegel (pen name Jill Dana)](http://www.facebook.com/JillDanaBooks) [link](http://www.facebook.com/JillDanaBooks)

2/9/2016 19:03:09

BRUCE & THE WILDFLOWER is avoid the verb being a story about Billy, a wildflower, who finds unexpected friends and rises above his narrow-minded floral neighbors. A grandmother, a show dog, and a garden set the scene for an uninvited visitor who shakes up their scheduled, structured lives. How will Billy survive Gardening Day, why is it dangerous? I can understand if Billy were a weed that it would be dangerous. Some gardeners love wildflowers and don’t weed them others do are you implying that Grandmother will weed Billy? the day when Grandma pulls the weeds? Will Bruce help?

+this is very fresh. I’ve never seen a chapter book with wildflowers or flowers as the stars

+opportunity to get in a lot of STEM (science and math maybe not technology and engineering lol)

---Who is Bruce?

-My worries when hearing this pitch is that Grandma seems to be the one doing the action, weeding. How can a flower who can’t move be active? If flowers can move in your world can you let us know? Perhaps suggest the rules of the magic, a bit. Also, from the title it sounds as though Bruce is the star and the wildflower is the guest star.

+Okay, now that I now that the flowers can move (this is after our webinar), I’m feeling much better. You’ll want readers to get that you’re using a Toy Story like conceit. In other words, I’m assuming that the humans can’t see the flowers move?

Myrna Foster

2/9/2016 23:40:47

Anna’s brothers leave her behind to go treasure hunting again, but this time, she refuses to be left out. Anna borrows a few of their maps and packs her wagon with the essentials: her robots, marshmallows, camping gear—basically everything she’ll need to charm guardians of treasure, guardians that might be a teensy bit dangerous.

+treasure hunting is a great topic. Natural goal. With geo-catching big, treasure hunting in the air.

+Love that she has a robot

--unclear whether this is science fiction or fantasy. At first, I thought it was set during the Wild West because of wagon plus the camping equipment. Perhaps science fantasy. If it’s another world, I’d like to have a clue right away. For example, in world where kids have robots would it be a jet-powered wagon instead? Also, guardians of treasure sounds very fantasy, which I wasn’t prepared for. If I knew that Anna was an elf or a memory keeper or something that implied fantasy then I would get it. And by the way, I’m not telling you to make Anna an elf, just some tip what she is. She could be a Pegasus, for example. Not sure if human or not. Some clue as to the world-building. Are the guardians, giant owls? Are they spirits? Are they aliens? Some hint so I can get this world.

-what about tightening and using some stronger verbs. Instead of leave her behind. What if Anna’s brother’s ditches her?

+love that Ann is a such a spunky character and brave. Nice qualities!

[Rena Traxel](http://www.renatraxel.com) [link](http://www.renatraxel.com)

2/9/2016 23:52:12

For fans of Junie B. Jones and Judy Moody comes seven-year-old Gracie Lou. Determined to keep all her things, Gracie starts a backyard museum. The perfect plan until words spreads and the artifacts pile up. Now Gracie must find a solution without alienating all her friends, and before Mom finds out what really happened to the to be donated pile.

+love that you Grace wanting to do a backyard museum! This is so much fun. Something I haven’t seen or read and gives you lots of opportunity to have fun.

+unclear how her artifacts piling up will alienate her friends. Do the artifacts belong to them and they’re getting broken?

I’m a big fan of Junie B. Jones and Judy Moody. Love a gutsy, spunky protagonist. The question is how can you make yours standout? Instead of just telling the reader that your character is like other iconic protagonists let her shine on her own. Use that space to also describe her unique way of looking at the world.

I’m just brainstorming here. What if your character is collector? Gracie, the collector. Some distinguishing characteristic that you could use over a series of four books.

+Gracie is a sweet name!

[Marianne Gage](http://www.melizabethgage.wordpress.com) [link](http://www.melizabethgage.wordpress.com)

2/10/2016 07:53:34

In the Kingdom of Killdary by the Sea, something goes terribly wrong for young scientist-in-training, Clarisse: she unwittingly wins the princess-and-bride-to-be contest of the new heir. I had to read this a couple of times. At first I thought it was going to be a story of Clarisse who wins the hand of a princess. It’s confusing to try to figure out how you can unwittingly become something. While I’m sure it will be clear in your story, it’s too complex for a pitch. This isn’t quite right but you’ll see what I’m getting at. Something like: when Clarisse, a budding scientist, becomes named as the princess and future ruler of Killdar-by-the Sea, she struggles to put science before her royal duties. See what I mean? The emphasis is on her struggle not how she got chosen. For the purpose of the pitch that’s not really essential Not abandoning science for a life of royal leisure, Clarisse uncovers an impending environmental disaster, saving not only the kindgom, but the true heir to the throne.

+love the lyricism here of the Kingdom of Killdary by the Seat

+love how right away we know that it’s in an alternate world

-how can you clarify that Clarissa is chosen as the next princess and will become rules of the land?

--Can you let let us know what the environmental disaster will be? It’s always wise to be more specific in a pitch.

+All of the STEM possibilities here are great!

June Smalls

2/10/2016 08:39:00

Andy lives at the zoo run by his father and he’s excited that other kids are moving in with their veterinarian mother, until he realizes they are girls. But there’s no time to worry about crushed dreams of skater buddies. Andy and the new girls must work together to help save a baby marmoset that refuses to eat.

+great setting

+fun that he lives at the zoo. Wonderful fantasy

+perfect for this age. New take on the pet rescue sort of book. Love that you have a vet character.

-unclear what it’s the job of kids to save a baby marmoset versus adults. Seems like a large responsibility for such young children. What if they have to find a lost marmoset instead and the whole zoo is looking for the animal?

-May want to consider making this a young middle grade. Have the kids be 9-10 and be a young middle grade versus an early chapter book. Of course, there is an incredible overlap between young middle grade and a chapter book but you may consider aging this up because of the concept.

--Worry that it’s a bit sexist. There are plenty of girls who are skaters these days. What if they’re better than him instead? And he doesn’t want them to show him up?

+love that you picked a marmoset. It’s not your typical animal but one that kids will love!

[Karlene Kay Ryan](http://www.karlenekayryan.com) [link](http://www.karlenekayryan.com)

2/10/2016 16:22:01

Ancestry.com should meet Katie. Katie loves spending times and adventures with her 96 yr old Great -Grandma Darlene and her Grandma K. The stories that Katie asks for when she visits each Grandma definitely place leaves on the family tree--not just names.   
Laughter, amazement, astonishment, wonder, surprise, a few tears and a lot of love. What's a Sixth grader supposed to do but go back for more? And Katie does in each chapter.

Karlene—what a fresh idea! Never seen anything like this.

-watch out Katie and Grandma K. Both use same letter (K) could be confusing.

-Right now it seems like it’s more like a series of short stories. Which is totally fine. I connected chain stories coming back. For example, Parker Peevyhouse’s *Where Future’s End* is a series of YA interconnected stories. Right now though if they are going to tell stories, Katie will not really be the protagonist; Instead it will be her grandmother and great grandmother as younger people who are the stars (which is kind of cool). If you want Katie to be a part of the novel, she needs to be an agent of change and have a mission beyond being a listener. Consider books like Amy Tan’s Joy Luck Club as a model but obviously you would need to make it way younger and much more simple.

--I might consider making this a young middle grade. So happy that you’ve signed up for our middle grade course because I think this is concept that work well for that age group. But a lot of the techniques you’re learning in the Chapter Book Alchemist course will help you with this manuscript, for sure.

+ Very very cool concept!