

Picture Book Editing Template

Write His Answer Online Christian Writers Conference, June 2026

A guide for editing picture book manuscripts in preparation for submission and/or publication. Topics can be addressed in any order, and often with repeated focus as you mine for gold in your picture book text. 😊

The Basics:

Aim for:

- ☐ 32 pages (shorter is possible, but always in multiples of 8)
- ☐ 14 to 15 page spreads
- ☐ 400-500 words (or shorter)
- ☐ Publisher and submission guidelines:
 - ☐ Font
 - ☐ Pagination
 - ☐ Potential submission opportunities

Perspective and Voice:

Who is telling your story?

Have you tried another perspective?

Who has agency in your story?

Language, Imagery and Illustration:

Language

Consider how you can strengthen the language used in your text:

- ☐ Pacing and flow
- ☐ Language choices:
 - ☐ Repetition?
 - ☐ Rhyme – yes or no?
 - ☐ Rhythm?
 - ☐ Patterns?
 - ☐ Word play?
- ☐ Have you done a read aloud?
- ☐ Have you listened to someone else read your story aloud?

Illustration

Consider the role illustrations will play in your picture book:

- ☐ What illustrations are needed?
- ☐ Does each page warrant a new illustration?
- ☐ Are there elements of story that need to be carried by the illustration only?
- ☐ Have you overwritten what can be shown in the artwork?

Storyline, Page-turns, and Sub-themes:

Take a close look at your picture book text:

- ☐ Check story arc
- ☐ Is there a satisfying beginning, middle, and end?
- ☐ Analyze pacing, tension and conflict
- ☐ Examine page-turns (Is there a reason for readers to turn the page?)
- ☐ What are the stakes?
- ☐ If faith is included, how does it contribute to the story?

Submission and Publishing Preparation:

Final preparation before submission or publication will depend on publishing model chosen:

Independent Publishing	Traditional Publishing
☐ Finalize manuscript to highest standard ☐ Get manuscript edited and proofed before sending to illustrator ☐ Prepare illustration notes as necessary ☐ Negotiate with illustrator and additional freelancers to bring book to completion.	☐ Finalize manuscript to highest standard ☐ Meet publisher/agent expectations according to submission guidelines ☐ Include illustration notes only where necessary ☐ Be prepared to liaise with publisher on edits, revisions, illustration roughs etc.

NOTE: Authors should engage with written contracts regardless of publishing path. If independently publishing, written agreements/contracts with illustrators, designers, formatters, editors etc. are always advised.

Additional Notes:

About the Presenter:

Penny is an award-winning Australian author of more than 30 books for children. Writing as Penny Reeve, Penny Jaye, and Ella Shine, she writes picture books, junior fiction, children's Bible studies, and young adult fiction, always striving to empower young people to respond to the complex, fascinating, and sometimes difficult world we live in.



Penny has a Master of Arts in writing and literature and is undertaking her doctorate research on spiritual questioning in young adult fiction. She was a 2022 ADM Senior Research Fellow, has delivered keynotes at the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference, and teaches Writing for Children at Tabor University, Australia. An experienced speaker, workshop leader, and conference presenter, Penny has a particular interest in equipping Christian children's writers.

Some of her published work includes the picture book *Can God See Me?* (illustrated by Shannon Melville), the *Pet Sitter* series of chapter books (collaboratively written with Cecily Paterson under the pen name Ella Shine), and a gripping novel for upper YA, *Out of the Cages*.

For more information, or to contact Penny visit www.pennyreeve.com

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