



# The SCBWI Tokyo Newsletter

Fall 2005

*Carp Tales* is the bi-annual newsletter of the Tokyo chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). Contents include SCBWI Tokyo chapter and member news, upcoming events, a bulletin board of announcements relating to writing and illustrating for children, reports of past events, featured illustrators, author profiles, industry trends, interviews with authors and illustrators, and other articles relating to children's literature. For inquiries or submissions of news, articles, announcements, illustrations, or comments, contact [info@scbwi.jp](mailto:info@scbwi.jp). The submission deadline is May 1 for the spring issue and November 1 for the fall issue. All articles and illustrations in *Carp Tales* are © SCBWI Tokyo and the contributing writers and illustrators. The *Carp Tales* logo is © Naomi Kojima. For more information about SCBWI Tokyo see [www.scbwi.jp](http://www.scbwi.jp).

## Contents

<b>SCBWI Tokyo Chapter News</b> .....	2
<b>SCBWI Tokyo Member News</b> .....	2
<b>Bulletin Board</b> .....	3
<b>SCBWI Tokyo Listserv</b> .....	3
<b>Online Critique Group</b> .....	3
<b>Membership Information</b> .....	3
<b>Upcoming Events</b> .....	4
<b>Event Wrap-Ups</b> by Holly Thompson .....	5
<b>Featured Illustrator: Satoshi Kitamura</b> by John Shelley .....	8
<b>Time to Write</b> by Linda Gerber .....	11
<b>Science Writing for Kids</b> by Pamela S. Turner .....	12
<b>Breaking In: The Children's Magazine Market</b> by Suzanne Kamata .....	14
<b>Bilingual Storygami: A Tokyo Beginning</b> by Kathleen Weller .....	16

# SCBWI Tokyo Chapter News

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SCBWI Tokyo has had an active season with monthly events featuring local and visiting authors, illustrators and publishers. A core group of volunteers is responsible for all this productive energy. In addition to Co-Regional Advisors Holly Thompson and Naomi Kojima, and Assistant Regional Advisor and Illustrator Coordinator John Shelley, we welcome Keiko Okamoto as Treasurer, Joanna Meck as Publicity Assistant, Mariko Nagai as Events Assistant, and Rose Hoger as International Schools Liaison. Holly Thompson is *Carp Tales* editor, and Naomi Kojima is Japan Liaison.

The SCBWI website [www.scbwi.jp](http://www.scbwi.jp) features information about SCBWI Tokyo, an online gallery, a speakers directory, a member books section, FAQs, a volunteer page, listserv information, useful links for writers and illustrators, announcements of upcoming SCBWI Tokyo events, and this newsletter. Bookmark the site and come back again and again!

SCBWI Tokyo is always seeking new volunteers. If you are willing to help in any way, contact [info@scbwi.jp](mailto:info@scbwi.jp).

## SCBWI Tokyo Member News

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**Suzanne Kamata's** story "The Diver" will appear in the anthology *Summer Shorts* to be published by Blooming Tree Press in May.

**Naomi Kojima's** exhibit of illustrations from *The Christmas Songbook I and II* have been ongoing since October. Sponsored by publisher Kaisessa, the artwork from *The Christmas Song Book II* will continue until December 25, 2005 at Ginza Kyobunkan Bookstore, 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Narnia Hall, 4-5-1 Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, tel. 03-3563-0730 with a booksigning on December 3 at 2:00.

**John Shelley** is beginning work on a 32-page picture book with Front Street Inc., *The Boat in the Tree*, by Tim Wynn Jones. He has also been commissioned by Tokuma Shoten to illustrate the Japanese editions of the best selling "Children of the Red King" novel series by Jenny Nimmo. Shelley is now represented by Pam Royds and Caroline Knox in the UK.

**Teri Suzanne's** storyboard and songwriting work is featured in *Playtime for Toddlers*, a Benesse package with DVD, CD and two books published in September. Her scissor art illustrations appeared in the November/December issue of *Tokyo Families* magazine, and she has a bilingual column *Teri's Talk* in the quarterly *Japanese Journal of Well-being for Nursery Schoolers* that she writes in collaboration with a pediatrician.

**Kiyo Tanaka's** colored etchings, Images of the Stories by H.C.Andersen, Vol.2 *The Wood Nymph*, will be on view at Gallery Fukuyama (Myosho Bldg., #303, 1-23-4 Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Tel. 03-3564-6363), December 5-17, 2005, 12:00-19:00 (18:00 Saturdays, 17:00 on Dec. 17). This exhibit follows a visit by Tanaka to Odense, Denmark, home of H.C. Andersen.

**Holly Thompson's** article *Cultivating Connections in Rural Japan* appeared in the November-December SCBWI Bulletin.

**Youchan's** hyper book adventure tale of an inventor, talking rocket and two cats, *The Adventure of Marron and Milk*, was published by Ohanashi Ehon Club (Softbank Creative Corp.) in September. Visit <http://www.ohanashiehon.com/ehon/?0159>.

# Bulletin Board

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**The Society of Writers, Editors and Translators (SWET)** features monthly guest speaker events in Tokyo; there is also a Kansai branch. For details visit [www.swet.jp](http://www.swet.jp).

**RBR New Center for Creative Arts** offers creative art workshops. For more information see [www.rbr-art.com](http://www.rbr-art.com) or stop by RBR, 1-5-15 Moto Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo (tel. 03-5475-6171).

**The International Library of Children's Literature's** exhibit *The Palette of Dream Colors* features winning works from the 14<sup>th</sup> Noma Concours for Picture Book Illustrations through January 25, 2006 at 12-49 Ueno Park, Taito-ku, Tokyo. Noma is an award for children's book writers and illustrators in Asia, Africa and Latin America. For information, visit [www.kodomo.go.jp/english/index.html](http://www.kodomo.go.jp/english/index.html).

**Niigata Bandaijima Art Museum** in Niigata City will hold an exhibit of 250 illustrations from 25 years of the *Kodomo no Tomo* series published by Fukuinkan Shoten, December 23-February 12, 2006. For more information see [www.lalanet.gr.jp/banbi/index\\_e.html](http://www.lalanet.gr.jp/banbi/index_e.html).

**Good Day Books** at 1-11-2 Ebisu in Shibuya has events of interest to authors and illustrators, including workshops in December by licensed origami teacher Kathy Weller (author of *Storygami*, this issue). For details visit [www.gooddaybooks.com](http://www.gooddaybooks.com).

## SCBWI Tokyo Listserv

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SCBWI Tokyo maintains an English-language Listserv (e-mail group). Participants are able to join a network that links members and supporters of SCBWI across Japan in an active online community. Members of the listserv receive up to date information on SCBWI Tokyo and announcements of events as well as share news relating to writing, illustrating and publishing for children. Everyone is welcome to post comments and questions of interest to the SCBWI Tokyo community. Membership in the listserv is open to both members and non-members of SCBWI. For details e-mail [info@scbwi.jp](mailto:info@scbwi.jp).

## SCBWI Tokyo Online Critique Group

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SCBWI Tokyo writer members are welcome to join the SCBWI Tokyo Online Critique Group. Critique groups provide support, encouragement, motivation and marketing suggestions. The SCBWI Tokyo Online Critique Group is for serious writers and writer/illustrators working on children's or young adult literature who would like to share their work with other writers for constructive feedback online. At this time all manuscripts must be posted in English. SCBWI Tokyo members interested in joining should contact [info@scbwi.jp](mailto:info@scbwi.jp).

## SCBWI Tokyo Membership

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Membership in SCBWI Tokyo is included in general SCBWI membership. To join SCBWI, visit [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org) and click on *About SCBWI*. Payment can be made online, by post with a U.S. bank-drawn check or by post with an International Postal Money Order. Benefits of SCBWI membership include eligibility for grants, free posting of illustrations and publicity of published books on the SCBWI Tokyo website ([www.scbwi.jp](http://www.scbwi.jp)), discounted admission to all SCBWI events and conferences, and much more.

# Upcoming Events

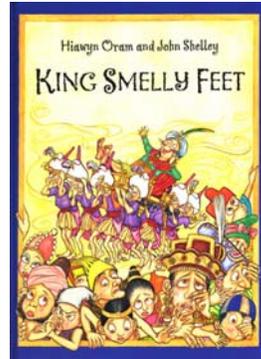
## January

SCBWI Tokyo and APL Tokyo present

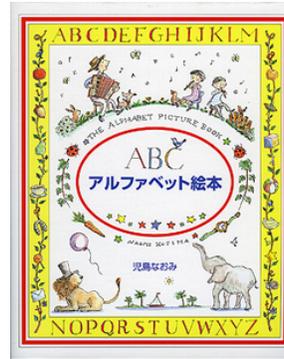
Story Tales Luncheon with SCBWI Tokyo Authors and Illustrators



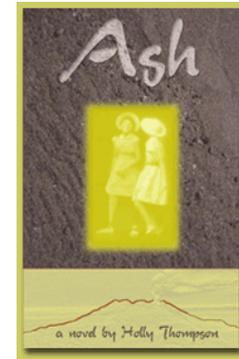
Kiyo Tanaka



John Shelley



Naomi Kojima



Holly Thompson

SCBWI Tokyo and the Association of Professional Librarians Tokyo team up to present a luncheon featuring four SCBWI Tokyo authors and illustrators who will share their work and discuss creative ways to explore books in classroom and library settings. Open to APL and SCBWI members; reservations required.

**Time:** Saturday, January 21, 2006, 12:00 noon–3:00 p.m.

**Place:** Italian Trattoria Piatto Piatto, 7-18-8 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo

**Fee:** ¥2,500 includes lunch

**Reservations:** Contact [apl\\_tokyo@hotmail.com](mailto:apl_tokyo@hotmail.com)  
Reserve early as space is limited!

## February

February 11, 2006. Kamishibai: Performance, History and Publishing of a Traditional Japanese Story Form with Etsuko Nozaka of the International Kamishibai Association of Japan and Kyoko Sakai, President of Doshinsha Publishing. Details to be announced.

For further details on all SCBWI Tokyo events,  
contact [info@scbwi.jp](mailto:info@scbwi.jp) or visit [www.scbwi.jp](http://www.scbwi.jp).

# Event Wrap-ups

by Holly Thompson

## A Discussion with Author/Illustrator Kiyo Tanaka June 18, 2005

Author/illustrator Kiyo Tanaka joined us at the RBR New Center for Creative Arts for a discussion of her background, artwork and sources of inspiration. Having attended a high school with an art program of study, she chose to study fine arts at Tama Art University in Tokyo and ultimately joined the picture book making circle there. A member shared a pamphlet of the Bologna Children's Book Fair, and as the Itabashi Art Museum holds an exhibit of artists from the Bologna event each year, the circle held a seminar about how to submit to the exhibition. In her final year of college, Tanaka's first submission to Bologna was accepted. Modestly she said, "I was lucky, I think." Her first experience attending the Bologna Bookfair in 1995 made an enormous impression: "I was very young and the atmosphere was very professional." She learned from her experience there how important it would be to know English if she wanted to be able to introduce her work abroad.

From then on she explored possibilities in printmaking and illustrating. Though she loves printmaking, she chose a career as an illustrator so as to have more contact with society. She received a lucky break with an opportunity to illustrate a book in the *Kodomo no Tomo* series by Fukuinkan Shoten, and after that she published *Okiniiri*, the story she'd submitted to Bologna in 1995 about a boy who goes to school dressed in his favorite (*okiniiri*) blue fish costume made by his mother. Her third book was another in the *Kodomo no Tomo* series and her fourth an amusing ghost story. She next collaborated on a fantasy book about going into outer space, and by then her career had taken off with another *Kodomo no Tomo* book about a tomato seeking a cool place to swim. She then illustrated *Ne, Dakko Shite*, with text by well-known children's writer Fumiko Takeshita, published by Kin no Hoshi, that involved much work with baby models. Of her style, Tanaka says, "I like watching the real world, so I like using very realistic images. I like old style buildings, so I put them in my works. I don't think my illustrations are very original; I take them from the real world." Visit the Kiyo Tanaka website at [www.oyikakanat.com](http://www.oyikakanat.com).



Kiyo Tanaka discusses her illustrations in *Ne, Dakko Shite*

## Dinner with Author/illustrator Keiko Kasza and Illustrator Masumi Kamiyama July 6, 2005



SCBWI Tokyo members with Masumi Kamiyama, far right, and Keiko Kasza, second from right.

SCBWI Tokyo members gathered for a dinner in honor of Fukuoka-born Indiana resident author/illustrator Keiko Kasza and Paris-based illustrator Masumi Kamiyama. This was a casual gathering at the Vietnamese restaurant Alice, and conversation ranged from individual work, to differences between Japanese, North American and European publishers, to how animals can and cannot be posed in North American picture book illustrations, as well as other tales of writing, illustrating and working with editors and publishers abroad. Kasza has published numerous picture books with Penguin Putnam, most recently *The Dog Who Cried Wolf*. You can find Kasza's books on the author pages of [www.penguinputnam.com](http://www.penguinputnam.com). Kamiyama's work is featured in the two series *Komori Mori* and *Kaitoh Dochi Dochi*, both written by

Sachiko Kashiwaba (Kodansha), and books she has written and illustrated including *Ochiba no Oyama ga Dekita Toki* published by Gakken. Visit her site at <http://homepage.mac.com/masumik/>.

## Discussion and Scraperboard Workshop with Gregory Myers July 9, 2005

Sydney-born Gregory Myers gave an overview of his design and illustration career. Favoring scraperboard and pen and ink, Myers's intricate work can be seen monthly in the Japan Airlines in-flight magazine (international flights). At the SCBWI Tokyo event, Myers shared his portfolios and explained the



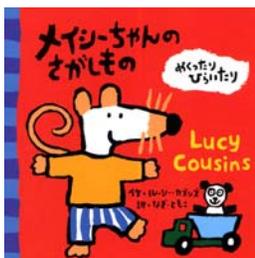
Participants display scraperboard creations with Gregory Myers rear center.

development of his style from his work at Canberra School of Art with Czech printmaker Petr Herel, to the year when he was awarded an Encouragement Prize in the 4<sup>th</sup> Noma Concours for Children's Picture Book Illustrations, to his Monbuscho Research Fellowship in printmaking in Kyoto, to his current freelance career in Tokyo.

Participants had a chance to practice the scraping technique on pieces of scraperboard that Myers had prepared, and everyone was intrigued and challenged by the reverse thinking required—instead of drawing shadows as with normal line drawing, on a scraperboard you draw

the light areas. We were joined at this event by Namrata Tripathi, an editor from Hyperion Books for Children (New York) who was able to give suggestions as to the sorts of books for which she felt Myers's illustrations might be especially suited.

## Dinner with Maisy Creator Lucy Cousins September 19, 2005



We were pleased to welcome British picture book author and Maisy creator Lucy Cousins with a dinner at the Lunetta Banquet Room of the President Hotel in Minami Aoyama Tokyo. Cousins was born in 1964 and studied at the Royal College of Art. Her first *Maisy* book was published shortly after she graduated, since which time she has enjoyed phenomenal international success, with more than 75 titles to her name and over 12 million books in print.



Co-Regional Advisor Naomi Kojima organized a classy affair with Maisy menus and name tags, a lovely multi-course organic meal complete with champagne and Maisy cake, and a photographer who presented each of the participants with a group photo at the end of the evening. Cousins talked openly about her beloved Maisy and other picture book characters, shared tidbits about her creative technique and her work routine, and patiently answered our endless questions about her books. Cousins was on a whirlwind tour of Japan with numerous book signing sessions, and we all felt lucky to have her join us in the midst of her busy schedule. She had just finished a time-consuming, long sought after Maisy word book, and she told us she likes to alternate work on Maisy books with work on other material. Her newest book *Hooray for Fish!* was well-displayed in bookstores during her visit. At the end of the evening, participants asked Cousins to sign various favorite Maisy books. Special thanks to Akiko Beppu of Kaiseisha Publishing for enabling SCBWI Tokyo to hold this event.



Lucy Cousins with Lunetta's baker.

## Of Modern Fairies and Enchantment with Gail Carson Levine October 1, 2005

In cooperation with Disney Publishing Worldwide Japan, SCBWI Tokyo presented *Of Modern Fairies and Enchantment* with master of the modern fairy tale, Gail Carson Levine. Levine was in Tokyo for the publication of her most recent book, *Fairy Dust and the Quest for the Egg*. Her novel *Ella Enchanted*, a 1998 Newbery Honor book, has sold more than 1 million copies. Other titles by Levine include the historical novel *Dave At Night*, an ALA Notable Book and Best Book for Young Adults; *The Wish*; *The Two Princesses of Bamarre*; and her Princess Tales books. She is also author of the picture book *Betsy Who Cried Wolf*, illustrated by Scott Nash (see below). Levine gives new twists to fairy tales and their worlds of princesses, princes, fairies, ogres, and monsters, weaving in fresh and witty interpretations of the age-old themes of greed, jealousy, death, love, courage and kindness.

Levine spoke of her early love of fairy tales and how she wrote enthusiastically as a child, but a disparaging comment from a teacher stopped her for a while. Later she wrote *Ella Enchanted* while commuting by train to work in Manhattan. She derives inspiration from fairy tales, particularly those that irritate her in some way. Levine's humor and frankness were in evidence as she deftly answered questions from an audience that included everyone from young fans to librarians to serious authors and illustrators. Levine says that she writes all her books for herself when she was a child. To aspiring writers she pointed out, "There is no such thing as a perfect book. There is always something wrong." Of the Newbery Honor award in 1998, she said she had never expected the award as she had never even expected to get published.



Gail Carson Levine, second from left, with SCBWI Tokyo event organizers.

## Manuscript/Illustration Exchange and Dinner with Illustrator Scott Nash November 12, 2005

The second SCBWI Tokyo Manuscript and Illustration Exchange was held at RBR New Center for the Arts. Newcomers as well as veterans attended, and in a mere two hours we managed to critique several picture book dummies, an illustrator's portfolio, text for a picture book and the opening chapter of a young adult novel in verse, as well as discuss some important issues for both illustrators and writers.

Afterward we were joined for dinner by Maine picture book illustrator Scott Nash and wife Nancy who had just returned from a week up north in Aomori Prefecture. Nash is involved in a project with sister states Maine and Aomori and will be collaborating with Aomori-born illustrator Toshiki Sawada on a forthcoming children's book. He expects to return to Japan for this project and hopes to do an event for SCBWI Tokyo at that time. To learn more about Scott Nash visit [www.scottnash.com](http://www.scottnash.com).



Scott Nash tasting premium sake.

*Holly Thompson is the author of the novel Ash (Stone Bridge Press; [www.stonebridge.com/ash/WorldOfAsh](http://www.stonebridge.com/ash/WorldOfAsh)) set in Kyoto and Kagoshima and is the Co-Regional Advisor of SCBWI Tokyo. She teaches creative writing and literature at Yokohama City University.*

# Featured Illustrator: Satoshi Kitamura

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## How a Japanese Children's Artist Won the Heart of the London Publishing World

by *John Shelley*

Born in Tokyo, illustrator Satoshi Kitamura moved to Britain in 1979. His spectacular debut picture book with writer Hiawyn Oram, *Angry Arthur*, won him the Mother Goose Award in 1982 (presented annually to the most exciting newcomer to British children's book illustration). Since then he has released a long string of successful titles, including *UFO Diary*, short-listed for the Smarties Prize in 1989, and *A Boy Wants a Dinosaur*, which has been staged as a children's play at London's Unicorn Children's Theatre. The Times Educational Supplement has said of his work, "Kitamura's originality lies in the imaginative use he makes of the cartoonist's art. Deceptively simple, it is at the service of a remarkable sense of design and real gift for narrative."



*Satoshi Kitamura at work in his studio.*

Now living in North London, Kitamura's latest book is *Pablo the Artist*, released through Andersen Press in the U.K. Recently I tracked him down with a few questions.

### **Can you explain a little about your background in Japan?**

I was born in Tokyo in 1956. My upbringing was quite ordinary. It was just like any kid in the sixties, playing with mates after school till dark and reading lots of comics. I started to draw very young, influenced by my elder brother who was exceptionally good at art. I would spend the evening filling at least a sheet of paper with my drawings of imaginary machines, airplanes, dinosaurs or some such things before I went to bed every night. Also, I always carried a lump of oil clay (very similar to plasticine) in my pocket and would model all sorts of things (like dinosaurs and monsters) whenever I felt like it.

I had never thought of getting art training, even though I drew all the time. Neither did my parents nor my teachers. Anyway I got bored with school and left at 17. I started to illustrate professionally quite by accident when I was 19. A friend of mine who worked at an advertising agency asked me to draw for a magazine they were producing.

### **Can you remember any of your favorite children's books when you were young?**

Comic books by the authors like Osamu Tezuka, Shigeru Mizuki, et al. like everyone else in my generation. A little later Yoshiharu Tsuge. I discovered Winsor McCay in my mid-teens and was very impressed by his *Little Nemo in Slumberland*.

### **What made you want to be a children's illustrator and writer?**

For someone who likes illustrations and stories, a picture book is the most ideal medium, though it doesn't necessarily have to be "children's."

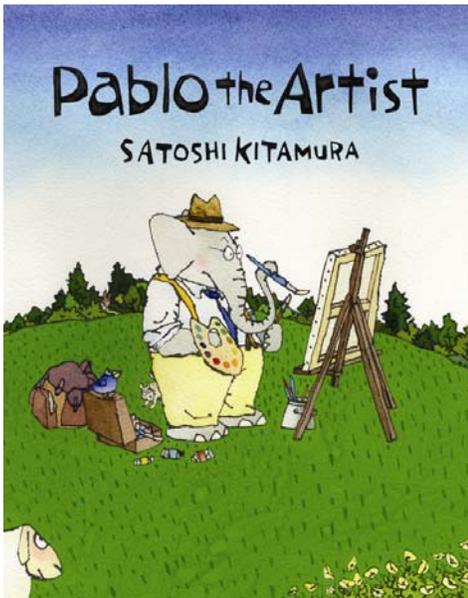
### **How do your own past experiences influence your work?**

I don't know. They must have, but it'll need a proper memoir to reconstruct it. I'll answer that question in 20 years time.

### **What made you decide to live in the UK initially?**

In my early twenties I wanted to go abroad and learn English, too. For some reason English was my pet subject since my early teens. So I came to London and somehow got stuck. It's a nice place to be. My English is all right though it could be better after all these years.

### **Could you explain something about the relationship you have with the Andersen Press and how it developed?**



I started to visit publishers with my portfolio in the second year of my first stay in the U.K. Generally I got good responses from the editors but nothing happened until I met Klaus Flugge (publisher and CEO of Andersen Press). He liked my drawings but at the time there was nothing for me to illustrate. He wasn't too impressed by the stories I brought. A little later I was a little short of money and took my drawings to a small gallery (The Neal Street Gallery) in Covent Garden hoping to sell some. The gallery offered to put on an exhibition. So I thought I'd have a show and go back home to Japan. At the opening Klaus came and handed me the text of *Angry Arthur* by Hiawyn Oram. Later that night I read the story and was so impressed that I immediately started to work on the rough sketch. Two weeks or so later when I finished I took the rough to Klaus's office and left it there. He asked me to come to the office next day. When I returned he gave me the contract and the check for the advance. Three months later when I finished the book and delivered it, Klaus looked through the drawings. As soon as he approved it, he rolled it up, wrapped and send it off to the color separator in Switzerland. A year and a half later the book won the Mother Goose Award.

### **What in your experience are the biggest differences between the children's book markets in the UK and Japan?**

A difficult question. I don't really belong to Japanese publishing. So I don't know enough about Japan. I think generally Japanese children's (picture book) publishing is much healthier and more interesting than it is in U.K. in recent years. In the last 15 years or so publishing and the book selling business have been swallowed into big business here. Everything is run by big companies and profit is the most important thing, although that is not the way publishing should be at all. I think publishing is not so monopolized in Japan as it is here. I do hope the diversity in publishing will remain in Japan.

**In your unique position bridging two separate cultures, Japan and the U.K., what advantages and disadvantages has this presented to your career?**

I never think of separate cultures. They are not so different. Cultures may look a little different sometimes but people are pretty similar everywhere. I see no advantage or disadvantage.

**Can you describe a bit about the techniques used for creating your books?**

Most of the time I draw in pen and ink and watercolor. I'll try and use something different.

**Which of your own books are you most proud of? Why?**

*Angry Arthur, Me and My Cat, and Igor.* Because I enjoyed and learnt something new from working on these books.

**Is there any advice you'd like to offer to new writers or illustrators beginning their careers today?**

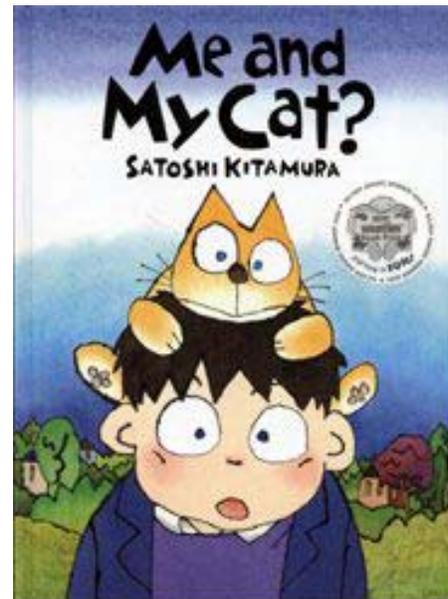
Nothing special. Just work hard, boys and girls.

**What are you working on at the moment?**

Four small books for very young children at the moment. I'm thinking about something very different for the next one but I have no idea what it's going to be like.

**What are your future ambitions?**

It is a difficult time to be ambitious but I'm trying not to be unambitious. I am always thinking of something new and interesting to do next.



*Originally from the U.K., John Shelley has been a resident of Japan since 1987. He has illustrated over 30 children's books for both western and Japanese publishers, and is the Illustrator Coordinator and Assistant Regional Advisor for SCBWI Tokyo. He currently lives in Yokohama. Visit his website at <http://jshelley.com>.*

# Time to Write!

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by *Linda Gerber*

When people learn that I'm a writer, they frequently say something like, "I've always wanted to write a book. If only I could find the time." I nod sympathetically. After all, I understand about time.

When my proposal for a series book with Puffin was accepted, I was told I would need to write on a tight schedule. They weren't kidding. I wound up with a contract that gave me just over three months to research, write, and pull together a 45,000-word novel. This was insanity, considering that during this same period of time, I would be traveling abroad with four kids and a dog, wedging in family visits, sports camps, swim lessons, doctor's appointments and house-hunting. It wasn't easy, but I did it.

The experience taught me a handful of tricks that made finding the time to write a wee bit easier.

- **Don't take time—make time.** Face it; for most of us with jobs, families and full schedules, there's not a whole lot of extra time lying around waiting to be claimed. We have to look for it. Be aggressive. Learn to prioritize. Look for time-wasters and vanquish them. Establish your writing time and make it sacred. If you don't consider it sacred, no one around you will.
- **Just say no.** Make peace with the fact that you can't be all things to everybody. Don't feel guilty about turning down requests and invitations that would take away from your writing time. Think of that time as an investment. Would you hesitate to say no if someone was constantly after your money?
- **Multitask.** Use odd bits of time throughout the day to tackle the non-writing parts of writing. Map out chapters at the kitchen sink. Tackle kinks in the plot while walking the dog. Create characters in the train, bus or car. Discover dialogue in the shower. Some of the most creative moments come when you least expect them. Use those moments to your advantage.
- **Don't look down.** Best-selling novelist Jennie Crusie gave this bit of advice at a recent conference. She likens the hesitation we face when working through a first draft to Wile E. Coyote of Warner Brothers Cartoon fame. In pursuit of the elusive Roadrunner, Wile E. often runs off the edge of a cliff, where he manages to tread air until he looks down and sees the reality of his situation. Then he crashes to the canyon floor below. And an anvil drops on his head. In other words, self-doubt is a time-stealer. Don't second-guess yourself. Once you've made the commitment to write, write. And don't look down.
- **Take small bites.** Break down your writing project into small, individual tasks. As prolific novelist and writing coach Anne Lamott says, write bird by bird—in other words, one step at a time. Don't let the enormity of a project make you "immobilized by the task ahead." Break it down. Commit to a small amount of time each day to write. Set an attainable word count. When your project doesn't feel overwhelming, it will be easier to tackle.

So what are you waiting for? Go forth and write! The time couldn't be better.

*Linda Gerber is a frequently overwhelmed youth leader, substitute teacher, volunteer coordinator and mother of four who lives and writes in Tokyo. Her upcoming YA novel about an exchange student in Japan Now and Zen (formerly titled The Fifteenth Stone) is scheduled for release by Puffin in August 2006.*

# Science Writing for Kids

by Pamela S. Turner

I think science writing is the greatest gig there is. While researching books and articles, I've gone on a tuna-tagging expedition, observed great white sharks, sat in a forest with gorillas, and gone behind the scenes at a fireworks show. Science writing requires a lot of nose-in-the-book sort of research, too. If tracking down a stray factoid sounds intriguing, science writing may be for you. If it sounds like term paper hell...you might want to stick to fiction.

Coming up with ideas is the easiest part of science writing. Writers are always told, "write what you know." To me this is boring. I believe in writing what I WANT to know. I wrote about the chemistry and computerization of fireworks shows for *The Christian Science Monitor's "Kidspace,"* for example, because I watched a Fourth of July show with fireworks timed to music. One of the rockets even made a smiley face in the sky. When I asked myself, "How do they *do* that?" I knew I had an article, and a seasonal article, too. Editors love seasonal ideas, in science just as in other areas. I once timed a piece on Indonesia's mimic octopus for Oscar week. I had a sidebar with "awards" for animal "actors" that mimic other creatures to avoid predators.

Ideas might come from local newspaper stories (maybe a local archeological dig can turn into a piece for *Dig* or *Highlights*). I also read *Nature*, a first-rate science journal, religiously. If you have worked with an editor before, you can say you are willing to develop his ideas, too. Do focus on topics suitable for kids. I personally think the evolution of menopause is fascinating, but I don't think I will be pitching that one to *National Geographic Kids*. Also, don't pitch gloom-and-doom environmental stories. These cause kids a lot of anxiety. It is okay to talk about problems, but you must also point out solutions and offer hope for the future. Dead dodos are simply depressing.

The next step is to turn ideas into stories, which means thorough research. Nobody wants to read a boring piece that was cribbed from *National Geographic* and *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Always

do basic background reading on your subject, though. The internet is useful for a first pass, but you should always critically evaluate the source for reliability. A faculty-written university website is usually a safe reference; a website put together by Mrs. Miller's third-grade class is not.



Once you have some background, find a real live expert to interview. Phone interviews are okay, but try to meet your subject in person if you can, and if possible, try to get into the field where the scientist is *doing* something. It will make your piece come alive. If your interviewee seems unable to get out of science-speak, try: "Since my readers are 8 to 10 year olds, could you explain that to me as if you were explaining it to a child?" Or ask about their childhoods: for instance, did the entomologist you are interviewing like bugs as a kid?

When it is time to pitch your idea to an editor (you might do this after basic research, or after you've interviewed your expert) first take a look at the

publication you are aiming for. Read as many of their science articles as you can, and then take the ones you liked the best and dissect them. Notice the length, use of quotes, reading level and tone. Then compile your pitch to the editor showing that you understand what he or she is looking for and proving you can deliver. Remember that photos are essential in selling nonfiction; it is best if you are proficient with a high-quality digital camera, but if not, figure out in advance where you might get some interesting images.

When you've gotten an assignment, look again at the articles you dissected. Think about your nonfiction article as if it were a fiction story: Is there a plot thread? Do you give a sense of character and setting? When you use quotes, try to save them for the more emotional aspects ("Spiders are magical creatures,") rather than the dry, factual stuff ("Spiders have six legs,") unless the factoid is surprising or unusual ("Spider silk is stronger than steel!").

Always remember that your goal is to make the editor love you. That means, do as much of the editor's job as possible. Hit the word count, reading

level and deadline. Study the publication—if the magazine uses subheads (a bit of text after the title) write one. Follow up any photo contacts. Offer to write captions for photos they decide to use.

Every publication requires fact-checking; I

usually run a final copy by an expert, and provide a footnoted version with references for all statements of fact. Don't skimp on research just because the audience is young children. I don't research or document an article for *Highlights* any differently than a piece for *National Wildlife*. If you can't back up a fact, forget it.

Once you've submitted an article, *always* request to see the article before it is finalized. Editors with the

best of intentions will sometimes make edits that change the meaning of your text. Once the article appears, be sure to send copies to the people who helped you (also thank them immediately after interviewing them). You'll be surprised how many times in the future you might need to call the same guy who studies lions in the Serengeti.

If you'd like to get paid twice for the same research (who wouldn't!) think about spinning your topic into an article for the adult market, or expanding an article into a nonfiction book proposal. Subjects with curriculum tie-ins are always good, as are new angles on popular subjects. My book *Gorilla Doctors* uses gorillas to introduce children to conservation medicine and epidemiology. You can also use article clips to land write-for-hire book assignments.

Above all, indulge yourself. If you find something interesting, you can make it interesting to others. Let your love of your subject show, whether it is bridge-building or buffaloes. Enthusiasm is contagious!

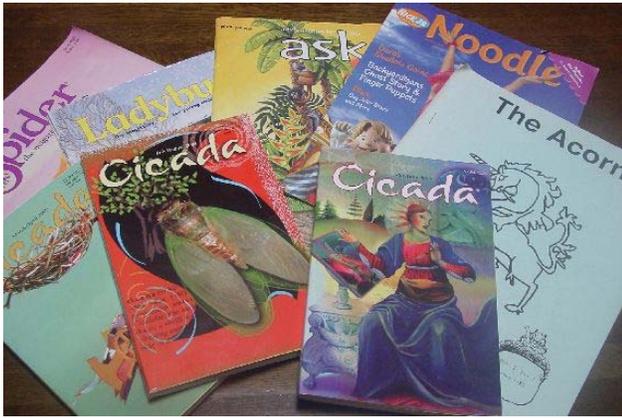
*Pamela S. Turner is the award-winning author of Hachiko: The True Story of a Loyal Dog (Houghton Mifflin, 2004) and Gorilla Doctors: Saving Endangered Great Apes (Houghton Mifflin 2005). You can visit her site at [www.pamelasturner.com](http://www.pamelasturner.com).*



# Breaking In: The Children's Magazine Market

by Suzanne Kamata

It has been said that getting a story published in a magazine is just as difficult as getting a book published. Well, yes and no. For one thing, writers are free to directly submit their work to top magazine markets, whereas many book publishers will only look at agented material. In both cases, good writing and good luck are required. For an edge on the competition, hang on to your lucky charms and follow a few simple rules.



## 1. Write an outstanding story.

Many award-winning published authors as well as talented beginners submit their work to magazines, so the competition can be fierce. *Cricket Magazine*, for instance, receives over 1,000 submissions a month. As a resident of Japan, you may have an edge in the foreign market. Americans, for instance, celebrate diversity, and children's magazines in the United States reflect this. There is an ongoing need for stories, poems, recipes and articles from other cultures. And while certain Japanese subjects such as Girl's Day and origami pop up pretty often in Western publications, others are still quite alien. *Setsubun*, for example, is the subject of many books and stories in Japan, but how many Western kids have heard of the February tradition of throwing dried beans at an ogre? However, even if you want to write about origami, there's a possibility that you could approach the topic in a fresh new way or reach a new audience. Readers grow out of

magazines and move on to others, so topics are often repeated. Although *Highlights* may have published a soccer story last spring, chances are they'd be open to a variation on the theme in a year or two.

## 2. Know your market.

Read at least one issue of the magazine that you plan to submit your work to in order to get a sense of what the editors are looking for. I had been reading *Ladybug* for over a year before I first submitted a story to the magazine. I read a story about a girl who got a haircut, another about a girl and her blind brother playing in a pile of raked leaves, a poem about a dad making soup. I knew that they tended to publish realistic stories about children in ordinary situations. The magazine also features stories about many different kinds of children. In fact, in *Ladybug's* guidelines, published in the *Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market*, editors advise contributors to "keep in mind that people come in all colors, sizes, physical conditions." On a visit to the United States, my daughter and her father went to the zoo and fed the giraffes. That gave me an idea for "Feeding Time," a story about a girl who goes to the zoo with her father and feeds the animals. An ordinary enough experience, right? To make my story a little different, and to promote a positive image of disabled children, I put the girl in a wheelchair. *Ladybug* accepted the story.

## 3. Follow the guidelines.

Read the Magazine Markets section of the SCBWI Publications Guide to Writing and Illustrating for Children, which is updated annually. Also, if you don't already own one, buy a copy of the *Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market*. This book is an invaluable resource as it lists guidelines for hundreds of book publishers and magazines. Check out the target age and the maximum word count for your intended market. Even if your story is a masterpiece, it will be swiftly rejected if it is over the word count. In fact, it may go unread. Likewise,

many magazines have a different theme for each issue. For example, in 2006, the British magazine *Aquila* will cover the Incas, climate change, llamas and camels, and New Zealand, among other things, while Australian *Comet* will focus on homes, pirates and green. Some magazines seek a very specific kind of story. *Kahani*, for example, only publishes stories about kids of Southeast Asian descent. *Humpty Dumpty* likes stories and activities about sports and good nutrition.

#### **4. Write a simple cover letter.**

Simple and brief is best. Don't worry if you've never been published before. Editors love to discover new writers. If you have been published, mention a couple of places where your work has appeared, but not all two hundred of them. Avoid self-deprecation, colored stationery, and irrelevant anecdotes, and don't explain the meaning of your story. Also, don't forget a self-addressed, stamped envelope or postcard. If you don't have foreign stamps, you can send an International Reply Coupon (IRC) with your submission. These are readily available at your local post office. Make sure the postal clerk stamps the coupon. (If you live in a small town like I do, your local postal workers may not be altogether familiar with IRCs.) Some editors are willing to accept submissions via e-mail, but unless this is specifically mentioned in the

magazine's guidelines, send your work via the postal system.

#### **5. Be patient.**

Remember, editors' desks are piled high. If you haven't heard from a magazine within the declared response time, don't worry. Rejections are usually speedy. If an editor is interested in a piece, it may take a while to come to a final decision. As former editor Pat Walsh writes, "A light prodding will not hurt, but one of the worst things a writer can do is push for the quick answer. It is never the one you want." He was writing about books, but this goes for magazines, too. Instead of checking up on editors, spend your time researching your next market, or better yet, start writing something brand new.

*American Suzanne Kamata has lived in Tokushima Prefecture since 1988. Her writing has appeared in over 75 publications in the United States, Japan, Italy, Sweden, Canada, and the Czech Republic. Her writing for children can be found in the magazines Cicada, Ladybug, The Acorn and the anthology Summer Shorts (Blooming Tree Press).*

# Bilingual Storygami: A Tokyo Beginning

by Kathleen Weller

Storygami sprang from a request by Kristin Newton, creative director of RBR New Center for Creative Arts in Tokyo, that I introduce something creative combined with great books for children, inspiring them both to read and to create. Newton said, "I want to encourage children to use their imagination and to become excited about literary tradition by listening to stories. Reading to kids and getting them hooked on books is great. We don't really have any Japanese art classes here but if you wanted to incorporate making some origami that ties in with the stories you are reading that might be fun for the kids."

Because RBR already has classes in such areas as painting, scissor work, dance, sculpture and drawing, and because I love origami, I've started a Storygami (story plus origami) series with presentations once or twice a month. The audience includes children from Japanese and other cultures, so the sessions are as bilingual (Japanese and English) as I can make them. The short time per session (usually thirty minutes) and my limited Japanese skills make picture books ideal.

I began with Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (*Harapeko Aomushi*), using both the English and Japanese editions. I read both versions of the book to a mixed audience of children and parents, then we all (including parents) folded and decorated caterpillars and butterflies. Just following instructions to fold is fun but not necessarily creative, so I brought marker pens and turned the kids loose with them to decorate their insects. A couple of super-creative sisters decided to use tissues to make an egg and cocoon too, so they'd have the caterpillar's complete life cycle.



For the next session I chose the *Kodansha* bilingual version of *Urashima and the Kingdom Beneath the Sea* (*Urashima Taro*). Because of this book's small format, having a number of copies would have been helpful. None of these children had ever heard of *Urashima Taro* before, giving me the pleasure of introducing it to them and watching them react. Of course we made and decorated sea turtles.

At the RBR Halloween festival, I read *Don't Want to Go to Bed?* (*Nenai ko dare da?*) by Keiko Sena followed by origami owls, black cats, and ghosts. Parents and other adults gleefully joined in, and their origami was almost as good as that done by the children.

When I read Tolstoy's *The Gigantic Turnip* (*Ookina Kabu*), I expected that of all the characters in the story (grandfather, grandmother, grand-daughter, dog, cat, mouse, turnip), the mouse would be the most popular choice to fold, but everyone wanted to make the cat. One small girl and her mother thought the turnip looked delicious, so they also wanted to fold turnips, which we did.

Age doesn't seem to matter for Storygami—participants at RBR have ranged from age three to adult, and everyone has seemed to have a great time, both listening to the stories and working on origami creations.

Looking forward to more sessions (I'm having as much fun as the kids!), I'm trying as much as possible to find books available in both languages, preferably with identical illustrations. One way to do this is to go to a Japanese-language online bookseller's site such as Amazon, type a favorite author's name and select the kanji *washo* (和書, Japanese books) to get a list of what's available by that author in Japanese. Once Storygami becomes a steady twice-a-month routine, I'll need 26 pairs of books per year! All suggestions welcomed ([kathleen@mail.interq.or.jp](mailto:kathleen@mail.interq.or.jp)).

In no particular order, here are some of the books I've found so far for Storygami.

## Bilingual Titles:

***Urashima and the Kingdom Beneath the Sea (Urashima Tarou)***, by Ralph F. McCarthy, illustrated by Shiro Kasamatsu (Kodansha International).

***The Inch-High Samurai (Issun-boshi)***, by Ralph F. McCarthy, illustrated by Shiro Kasamatsu (Kodansha International).

***The Adventures of Momotaro, the Peach Boy (Momotaro)***, by Ralph F. McCarthy, illustrated by Ioe Saito (Kodansha International).

***The Moon Princess (Kaguyahime)***, by Ralph F. McCarthy, illustrated by Kancho Oda (Kodansha International).

***Kintaro, the Nature Boy (Kintaro)***, by Ralph F. McCarthy, illustrated by Suiho Yonai (Kodansha International).

***Who Hides in the Park (Koen de kakurenbo)*** by Warabe Aska (Tundra Books); quadrilingual: English, French, Japanese and Chinese.

***The 12 days of Christmas (Kurisumasu no 12 nichi)***, Japanese text by Natsue Washizu, illustrated by Emily Bolam, comes with bilingual and karaoke mini-disc (Fukuinkan Shoten).

***Santa Claus*** by Yukuo Murakami, English text by Patty Suzuki in cooperation with Vernon M. Gilbert (Kodansha).



## Titles available in both English and Japanese editions:

***Don't Want to Go to Bed?*** by Keiko Sena, translated by Peter Howlett and Richard McNamara (R.I.C. Publications). *Nenai ko dare da?* by Keiko Sena (Fukuinkan Shoten).

***The Gigantic Turnip*** retold by Risako Uchida, illustrated by Churyo Sato, translated by Richard McNamara and Peter Howlett (R.I.C. Publications). *Ooki na kabu* retold by Risako Uchida, illustrated by Churyo Sato (Fukuinkan Shoten). (These are matching editions.)

***Thumbelina***—various editions including *Read It Yourself Level 1 Thumbelina*, H.C. Andersen, illustrated by Jane Kochnewitz (Ladybird). *Origami ehon 1: Oyayubi hime*, origami by Reiko Aso, Ikuko Okada, Nana Yoshitake (Boutique-sha).

***The Three Little Pigs*** by Paul Galdone (Clarion, Scholastic). *Sanbiki no kobuta*, by Paul Galdone (Douwakan). *Origami ehon 2: Sanbiki no kobuta*, origami by Reiko Aso, Ikuko Okada, Nana Yoshitake (Boutique-sha).

***Little Red Riding Hood*** by Isamu Asahi, origami by Kyo Araki, Utako Okada (Heian International). *Little Red Riding Hood*, by Paul Galdone (McGraw-Hill). *Akazukin-chan*, by Paul Galdone, translated by Fumie Yuasa (Holp Shuppan). (matching editions) *Origami ehon 3: Akazukin*, origami by Reiko Aso, Ikuko Okada, Nana Yoshitake (Boutique-sha).

***The Three Bears*** by Paul Galdone (Clarion, Heinemann). *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, anonymous, origami by Isamu Asahi, Tomoko Tanaka, Satoshi Takagi, Hiroshi Kumasaka, Taichiro Hasegawa (Heian International). *3-biki no kuma* by Paul Galdone, translated by Hiromi Tada (Holp Shuppan).

***The Monkey and the Crocodile: A Jataka Tale from India*** by Paul Galdone (Clarion, Houghton Mifflin). *Saru to Wani Jataka Monogatari* by Paul Galdone, translated by Yoriharu Kitamura (Holp Shuppan).

**The Hare and the Tortoise** by Brian Wildsmith (Oxford University Press). *Usagi to kame* in, for example, *Isoppu 12 monogatari* (12 Aesop stories), translated by Shinichi Yoshida (Taiheisha).

**Snow White** by Isamu Asahi, origami by Paul Jackson, Yasuhiro Sano, Nippon Origami Association (Heian International). *Shirayuki hime*, for example, *Shirayuki hime: hitori yomu meisaku (Snow White: read-alone famous works)* by Grimm, Taketeru Hikawa (Gakushu Kenkyusha).

**Hansel and Gretel**, by Isamu Asahi, origami by Isamu Asahi and Seiryu Takekawa (Heian International). *Hanseru to gure-teru* in, for example, *Gurimu Douwa (3-nen-sei)*, Yukio Tsuchiya, Gurimu kyodai (Kaiseisha).

**The Ant and the Grasshopper** by Albert E. Gamos and Sean Nelson, translated by Yuko Saito and Sean Nelson (Shinseiken). *Ari to kirigurisu isoppu monogatari—Hajimete no meisaku shikake ehon*, by Ryuuji Fujieda, (LaZoo: Gakushu Kenkyusha).

**Where the Wild Things Are** by Maurice Sendak (HarperCollins). *Kaijuutachi no iru tokoro* by Maurice Sendak, translated by Teruo Jingu (Fuzambo Publishing).

**In the Night Kitchen** by Maurice Sendak (HarperCollins). *Mayonaka no daidokoro* by Maurice Sendak, translated by Teruo Jingu (Fuzambo Publishing).

**The Tiger Who Came to Tea** by Judith Kerr (HarperCollins). *Ocha no jikan ni kita tora* by Judith Kerr, translated by Kouhei Harumi (Douwakan).

**The Mitten** illustrated by Yegevnny M. Rachov, translated by Risako Uchida, English text by Susan Matsui (Rabo Kyoiku Senta). *Tebukuro*, illustrated by Yegevnny M. Rachov, translated by Risako Uchida (Fukuinkan Shoten).

**Miss Rumphius** by Barbara Cooney (Puffin Books). *Rupinas-san: Chiisana Obaasan no ohanashi* by Barbara Cooney, translated by Yasuko Kakegawa (Holp Shuppan).

**Swimmy** by Leo Lionni (Dragonfly Books, Scholastic). *Suimii (Swimmy)* by Leo Lionni, translated by Shuntaro Tanikawa (Kogakusha; note that this company also publishes Japanese-language versions of 17 other Leo Lionni books, including *Frederick*).

**Sylvester and the Magic Pebble** by William Steig (Aladdin). *Roba no shirubesutaa to maho no koishi* by William Steig, translated by Teiji Seta (Hyoronsha).

**Spot's First Christmas** by Eric Hill (Puffin). *Korochan no kurisumasu* by Eric Hill (Hyoronsha).

**Guri and Gura** text by Rieko Nakagawa, illustrated by Yuriko Ohmura, translated by Peter Howlett and Richard McNamara (matching editions) (Tuttle Publishing; note other titles in this series: *Guri and Gura's Special Gift*, *Guri and Gura's Seaside Adventures*, *Guri and Gura's Winter Guest*, *Guri and Gura's Picnic Adventures*). *Guri to Gura*, text by Reiko Nakagawa, illustrated by Yuriko Omura (Fukuinkan Shoten: other titles in the same order as above: *Guri to Gura to Sumire-chan*, *Guri to Gura no Kaisuiyoku*, *Guri to Gura no Okyakuchama*, *Guri to Gura no Ensoku*).



**Little Daruma and Little Tengu** by Satoshi Kako, translated by Peter Howlett and Richard McNamara: Tuttle Publishing (matching editions) (other titles in this series: *Little Daruma and Little Kaminari*, *Little Daruma and the Little Rabbits*, *Little Daruma and Little Tiger*, *Little Daruma and Little Daikoku*). *Daruma-chan to Tengu-chan* by Satoshi Kako (Fukuinkan Shoten: note other titles in the same order as above: *Daruma-chan to Kaminari-chan*, *Daruma-chan to Usagi-chan*, *Daruma-chan to Toranoko-chan*, *Daruma-chan to Daikoku-chan*).

**Big Beanie's Bed** by Miwa Nakaya, translated by Mia Lynn Perry (R.I.C. Publications). *Soramame-kun no beddo* by Miwa Nakaya (Fukuinkan Shoten).

**Frogs Merry** by Juliet Kepes (Knopf, Random House). *Yukaina Kaeru* by Juliet Kepes, translated by Momoko Ishii (Fukuinkan Shoten).

**Three Little Kittens** by Paul Galdone (Clarion Books). *Itazura Koneko* by Paul Galdone, translated by Kie Nagai (Holp Shuppan).

**Make Way for Ducklings** by Robert McCloskey (Viking Press). *Kamosan Ootori* by Robert McCloskey, translated by Shigeo Watanabe (Fukuinkan Shoten).

**The Crane Wife** retold by Sumiko Yagawa, translated by Katherine Paterson, illustrated by Suekichi Akaba (Mulberry Books). *Tsuru Nyuoubou* retold by Sumiko Yagawa, illustrated by Suekichi Akaba (Fukuinkan Shoten).

**Harry the Dirty Dog** by Gene Zion, illustrated by Margaret Bloy Graham (Harper Trophy). *Doronko Harii* by Eugene Zion, illustrated by Margaret Bloy Graham, translated by Shigeo Watanabe (Fukuinkan Shoten).

**The Three Billy Goats Gruff** by P.C. Asbjornsen and J. E. Moe, illustrated by Marcia Brown (Voyager, Harcourt). *Sanbiki no Yagi no Garagaradon* by P.C. Asbjornsen and J. E. Moe, illustrated by Marcia Brown, Japanese text by Teiji Seta (Fukuinkan Shoten).

**Christmas in the Barn** by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Diane Goode (HarperCollins). *Umayu no kurisumasu* by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Barbara Cooney, translated by Ruriko Matsui (Douwakan Shuppan).



*Kathleen Weller, a bibliophile whose mother always said, "Get your nose out of that book!" is also a Japanophile, licensed origami and ESL teacher, and a Japanese dance natori (who sold her origami and other paper crafts to pay for dance classes). She spent a decade as a school librarian in suburban Toronto, during which time she also taught a course on children's literature and served as president of the school librarians' association.*



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