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THE POET'S CORNER

Anthologies to Rebuild Community



Janet Wong

DURING THE EARLY WEEKS of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, people came together to help each other as never before (or since). We checked on our elderly neighbors and went grocery shopping for them. We banged pots and pans to support health care workers. There's even a poem about that: "City Song" by Marilyn Garcia. Reading it transports us back to that time.

City Song

by Marilyn Garcia

Every night at seven o'clock
we climb the stairs right to the top.
We see the city's empty streets
and break its silence with our BEATS!
AND BANGS! AND CLANGS!
AND CHEERS! AND CLAPS!
Our SHOUTS! AND STOMPS!
AND FINGER SNAPS!

To show we know how much they give
so
WE CAN BREATHE
so
WE CAN LIVE.

Note: During the COVID pandemic in Spring 2020, many people went outside and made noise to thank health care workers at 7pm each evening.

Copyright © 2020 by Marilyn Garcia from *HOP TO IT: Poems to Get You Moving* (Pomelo Books).

I miss seeing that spirit of unity, especially in our war against the coronavirus. I'd like to suggest that we need to return, on a community level, to highlighting the COVID heroes and victims in our neighborhoods—and that doing so in student anthologies can unify us while also providing lessons to boost social emotional learning (SEL) and literacy skills. Here are 10 steps to guide you.

Step 1: Contact Local Hospitals

Contact the community outreach department of your local hospital to let them know that your students are creating a book to honor health care workers and COVID victims. See if your students can be connected via email with volunteers, hospital staff, or families with stories to share.

Step 2: Find Project Leaders

Many teachers have been creating classroom anthologies for decades, usually as books that are printed out on computer printers and stapled at night by the teachers themselves. The twist that I'd like to propose is that these books should be published professionally. You can let Amazon do the printing and binding. And let someone else take responsibility for this project (ideally two or three people); you have enough to do.

Your PTA can reach out to your local chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) to find project leaders who are familiar with self-publishing (also called "indie publishing"). Look for authors who can work with your PTA for a reasonable fee. There are thousands of indie authors nationwide; your region must have

some. If your PTA cannot find local experts, I can recommend poets from the #Anthologies101 courses that I teach with Sylvia Vardell (see “Curious About Curating?” in the Resources section [Vardell, 2021]). Any of these poets could supervise a project like this via Zoom with a limited budget.

Step 3: Choose a Printing Company

You can work with a local printer, but printing a simple black-and-white book will usually cost at least \$3 per copy with a minimum order of 100 copies. If you don't have a local printer that is willing to delay payment, using a print-on-demand company is the economical choice. Companies that use print-on-demand technology include Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), Ingram Spark, Lulu, and Blurb; you can find several reputable companies in the blog post “12 Best Self-Publishing Companies” by Scott Allan (2020). I've had experience with a few companies, and I feel that the best option for beginners is KDP, the self-publishing or “indie-publishing” branch of Amazon. KDP has its limitations, but I'm going to use it as the example in this guide. If you want to use a different company, the steps are very similar.

Step 4: Create New Accounts

Ask your PTA to establish an email address and Amazon account for this project, such as YourPTANameBooks@gmail.com. The password for this account will need to be shared with the project leaders. After the email account is set up, creating a new KDP Amazon account is as easy as entering that email address at KDP (with the same password for project access).

Step 5: Divide Into Teams

Have students choose teams. Make sure that all students have a meaningful job. Allowing students to be on more than one team is one way to accomplish this. Ask your PTA to recruit parent volunteers to support the project leaders in helping each team.

Team #1: Account Management (3–4 students)

This team will create the basic KDP entries, including the book description on the Amazon listing. They will also work with project leaders to do the actual uploading of the interior PDF and cover PDF.

Team #2: Editorial (5–6 students)

Their task is to create the content for the book: (a) collecting and choosing student poems and art that showcase health care heroes and that personalize COVID victims and (b) writing supplemental text for the front matter (copyright notice, etc.) and back matter (poem credits, etc.).

Team #3: Design (5–6 students)

This team will work closely with the editorial team. Their task is to arrange the content of the book after the editorial team has collected it. The design team will decide on the layout, placing text and images in an interior PDF and cover PDF. The project leaders and parent volunteers can help these students become comfortable with Pages, Word, or online “click and drop” design websites such as Canva—or the adults can do this work themselves with design input from students.

Team #4: Sales and Marketing (3–4 students)

This team will create paper and digital materials to advertise the book in your community and on social media. They will also send emails to encourage local leaders to buy the book.

Team #5: Financial (3–4 students)

This team will handle all financial matters, with the help of the PTA treasurer, including monitoring sales and royalties and deciding how to use book profits.

Team #6: Logistics (3–4 students)

This team will order “author copies” of the book at a discounted price and handle direct book sales. They will also be in charge of ordering proof copies of the book.

Step 6: Create Content

Let students have fun and take the lead as they work in their teams. There are millions of books available on Amazon. If this one doesn't end up being as polished as you'd like, it's all right. The only people buying the book will be generous people who want to support your community.

Step 7: Order Proof Copies

After Team #1 has uploaded the files and filled in all the required fields, you can order a paperback proof of a book before it goes “live” for sale on Amazon. A proof copy will cost approximately \$10 (including shipping). Seeing the

work-in-progress as a paperback (rather than just on their computer screen) will help students decide if they want more content or different images. They'll also spot mistakes that they need to correct; there are always some mistakes.

Step 8: Approve the Book

When you're ready to go live, you simply click the "Publish" button; you'll have a free listing on Amazon within a day or two.

Step 9: Order Copies on Amazon

Your PTA will receive a royalty of up to 60% of the retail price for each book that is sold on Amazon. It might be as little as \$2 per book or as much as \$10, depending on the retail price that your students set and the wholesale cost of the book (affected by the number of pages and whether it is in color or in black ink only). It takes about two months before income will be received from KDP, but you can see sales in your account on the same day that Amazon receives an order. Send the Amazon link to school administrators so they can buy the first copies—and have an "unboxing ceremony" in your classroom where students can celebrate the finished book.

Step 10: Keep Track of Profits

KDP's preferred method of payment of royalties is ACH electronic deposit. Financial literacy is a curricular requirement in many schools, and students can learn more about money by keeping track of profits.

This is a short description of the KDP publishing process. You can find many excellent videos to help you along the way, such as "How to Self-Publish a Book Step by Step on KDP in 10 Minutes" by Dale L. Roberts (2020). It's easy to find blog posts on how to publish a book with KDP; for an overview, see "Amazon KDP: Complete Guide to Kindle Direct Publishing (Step-by-Step)" by Colin Dunbar (2020), or do a five-minute online search.

Better yet, let the kids do it. You have enough to do. •

Janet Wong is the author of dozens of books for children and the co-creator (with Sylvia Vardell) of *The Poetry Friday Anthology* series and *Poetry Friday Power Book* series. Her most recent book is *Good Luck Gold & MORE*. Email: janet@janetwong.com

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The Dragon Lode

The Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group invites interested members to apply to serve on the Notable Books for a Global Society Committee. The NBGS Committee solicits nominations for the award, reads and evaluates submissions, prepares an annotated list of winners for publication in The Dragon Lode and other publications, presents the books during the annual IRA convention, and conducts other activities to promote this award.

Call to Serve on the Notable Books for a Global Society Committee

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Membership in the Children's Literature and Reading SIG and the International Reading Association
- Interest in international and multicultural issues in children's literature

REQUIREMENTS

- Willingness to attend virtual and in-person committee meetings throughout the year
- Attendance for three years at both NBGS Committee meetings, held at IRA and NCTE annual conferences
- Willingness and ability to read and evaluate 300-400 books for children and young adults annually
- Ability and willingness to write annotations for publication in *The Dragon Lode* and to present the annual NBGS book list at the Children's Literature and Reading SIG session at the IRA convention

The committee consists of 10 members, including the chair and the co-chair, who must attend all meetings of the committee as noted above and perform all duties as directed by the chair. Three members are appointed annually in January by the president and the NBGS incoming chair from among candidates who respond to this call.

As far as possible, the committee members shall be representative of the SIG membership in terms of gender, regions of residence, and professions positions (e.g., classroom teachers, teacher educators, and librarians). Preference is given to applicants who have not served previously on the committee.

Interested applicants should submit letters of interest and curriculum vitae by post or email to:

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Join the ILA CL/R SIG

The Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group is a community of individuals who have an abiding interest in the development of literacy and in promoting high-quality literature. Our mission is to promote the educational use of children's books by focusing on recently published children's literature, supportive professional books, issues relative to children's literature, and current research findings. Membership typically includes pre-K through 12 teachers, librarians, teacher candidates, administrators, university professors, authors, and publishers.

Membership benefits include:

- Meeting and working with other literacy professionals who share interest in literature for children and young adults.
- Opportunities for national-level involvement and leadership.
- Two issues a year of *The Dragon Lode* journal.

Membership is open to all members of the International Literacy Association. Student members must be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program.

- One-year membership: \$25.00 (U.S.)
- One-year student membership: \$10.00 (U.S.)

**To join, go to the CL/R SIG website:
<http://www.clrsig.org/join-now.html>**

The Journal of the Children's Literature and Reading
Special Interest Group
International Literacy Association