

BULLETIN

SUMMER 2020



Creativity

Artist & Writer Tips

Amid the Hectic Times

BY PATRICIA PINSK

The world seems to have gone berserk. First COVID, then the murder of George Floyd and subsequent rippling effect, and the impending election. It's been challenging to deal with all the toxicity out there.

If you need to tune out all the noise and focus on being creative, fortunately you have lots of options. The best part; most of them are free!

FREE COLLABORATIVE DRAWING EVENTS

There are many collaborative opportunities through the standard social media channels like Facebook or Twitter.

It's a matter of joining some groups and taking part in collaborative sessions like Facebook's Comic Jam Hawaii or Vancouver Comic Jam. These events are open to anyone, once you've joined the group, and occur monthly.

Don't let the name "comic jam" scare you. These events are all about spontaneously drawing. If you want to prac-

tice generating quick ideas based on someone's previous drawing and text in a comic panel, this event is for you. Artists of all drawing levels take part—so it's a great way to network with pros if you want to learn new skills.

Many of these events currently use Zoom, which is easy to use. The best part about a live Zoom meeting is that you can communicate with thousands of creatives from all over the world. Note that the free version has limitations such as session length. So make friends with someone that has a paid subscription if you want to test-host your own events without committing to a subscription. It's best to use a paid subscription, as the video with the free version isn't encrypted (refer to Users On Free Tier Won't Have Encrypted Video).

Zoom has a few glitches. The main one is that if your internet connection isn't great, the video is choppy. If you're not the host, turn your video camera



MARISSA VALDEZ

off to help with that issue. Experienced hosts or moderators usually turn people's audio and video off at the beginning of a session for that reason. There is a chat box if you need to communicate with others or with a specific person.

If you're hosting an event, you can use any phone as a second camera in Zoom

For something like an illustration event, it's great to capture things from an overhead (or over-your-shoulder) shot of your illustration, plus a medium shot of your face. Participants can see both views, but can choose which one they want to see full-screen.

Along with Zoom, many online drawing events also use Aggie.io (collaborative painting/drawing application). Of the online collaborative tools, it's one of the easiest to use. Plus, it's free. You can collaborate in real-time once you set up an account.

With events like a comic jam, you share the link to your drawing (via Zoom chat) so others can collaborate on it. Each person who takes part needs to create their own layer to lock their sections of the drawing. Much like other graphics programs, you can copy, paste, import images and so forth. There isn't a Text tool, so it helps to have something like a Wacom tablet to write the text. There are alternatives to Aggie.io, but they all seem to have limitations of some sort.

Beyond collaborative Zoom events, there are other social media live streaming options like Microsoft Meetings. For collaborative story-writing tools, there is WriteAlong.io, but it's still in the Beta phase.

These tools are great for offering "live, innovative, interactive sessions" with umpteen friends and fans. It's a great way for you to connect with your social media followers and clients, and to promote your work.

AFFORDABLE CREATIVE ZOOM EVENTS

Unfortunately, most of the writer-specific conferences have come and gone for this year (Virtual Bronx Book Festival, WriteOnCon). You still have time

to partake in the following illustrator/writer events:

SCBWI Digital Workshops (free for members)—hour-long webinars with children's book creators, editors, and agents

SCBWI Conferences—all things related to writing and illustrating children's books with industry leaders

For a less participatory approach, there are plenty of resources for both illustrators and writers:

Harper at Home Authors, illustrators, and Harper staff share daily story times, learning materials, and activities with readers.

Ideal Exhibitions at Home Picture book creator Hervé Tullet invites kids of all ages to free their creativity.

Draw Every Day with JJK Art and drawing lessons with author/illustrator Jarrett J. Krosoczka.

Mo Willems invites you to Thank You Thursdays for quick illustration/performance videos.

Peter H. Reynolds gives daily live stream readings of his children's books on Facebook

Read, Wonder, and Learn! Kate Messner shares author readings, art lessons, and curricular resources.

Ask Me To Ask! Author/illustrator Debbie Ridpath Ohi hosts her series. Kidlit creators answer a question they've chosen themselves.

Virtual story-times and singalongs Penguin Random house hosts these readings and singalong events.

I hope you manage to get through these hectic times unscathed and can stay creative. Even though the world seems to be self-imploding around us, remember:

"Creativity involves breaking out of expected patterns in order to look at things in a different way." — Edward de Bono

Stay strong. Stay creative!

PATRICIA PINSK has written a lot of blog posts, newsletter articles and webpage content. She has also created artwork that's been exhibited, and published. Check out more at: www.patriciapinsk.com