

Program 2

Ann Grifalconi

Description of the Program

The way we tell a story is important. Our words create pictures in our imagination. What we say, we hear and what we hear, we imagine. Words describe a setting or the face of a character.

This program's guest is Ann Grifalconi, an author and illustrator of children's literature from New York City. She specializes in presenting realistic characters from other cultures. Her book, **The Village of Round and Square Houses**, is a Caldecott Honor Book and like many of her other books tells of African village life and traditions. She has also written about Mexican and Mayan people and is a pioneer in illustrating African-American children in her books and for others. She describes the writing and illustrating process using examples from her works.

Books are more than words. In many ways they are like art. For like an artist creates a work of beauty on a piece of paper; books also create pictures of new places and new people. The program ends as Ms. Grifalconi reads a poem from one of her books.

How an Author and an Illustrator Work on a Book

Describing how she works from an author's and an illustrator's standpoint, Ms. Grifalconi said she walks around in a daze until she is ready to do something then she jots it down. She showed the first draft of one of her books and tells children not to worry about their writing being sloppy. Writers should always carry a little slip of paper in their back pocket to jot down the beginnings of a story.

After a story takes shape she then types it on a typewriter, now on a computer. Then the story is laid out in the same way it would be in the book. This is especially important with a picture book. How many words will be with each image? On a double page spread one thought, event or time period takes place. A page turn is used to create suspense. Once she feels good about the words and their placement then she thinks of the images that will go on the page. She does the art work and sends it in.

As a writer and an illustrator, she can edit her writing so that the words don't do the same things that the image shows. Once the art work is sent in, the book is photographed with the words in place to give the author/illustrator a chance to make corrections before the book is published. Other books by Ms. Grifalconi include **Flyaway Girl, The Jazz Man, The Toy Trumpet, The Matter with Lucy, and Darkness and Butterfly.**

Questions and Answers

1. *What is your favorite part of illustrating a book?*

Ms. Grifalconi said her favorite part of illustrating a book is when she realizes that it is working and that the pictures are flowing together. This is when you know the story is going to work.

2. *How do you decide which scenes you're going to illustrate?*

She chooses the moments in the story that have some action in them and then decides if the illustration for each movement should carry across a double page spread or should be two separate illustrations

3. *Which do you find more difficult, writing or illustrating?*

Writing is more difficult since you have to carry the words around, not sure if it going to turn out right. Writing take longer because you have to get the right rhythm. You may write a story and realize it isn't right then you may go back to that story years later and be able to make it work.

Suggested Activities

1. Find books written and/or illustrated by Ann Grifalconi and bring to the class for students to examine. What do the types of illustrations say about Ms. Grifalconi? What do the students like most about her works?

2. Let students write a short story and lay it out as if in a book. How many words do they think should be on each page? Ask them to illustrate the pages. Discuss whether all the words are necessary if the picture shows the same things. How would they change the picture or the words.

3. Let students compare the works of other authors who also illustrate their own work. How do the words and the pictures work together? Is this different than in books that have a separate author and an illustrator?

4. Try the same exercise as in number 2 but let one student write a story and another student layout the story in a book format and illustrate it. How does the illustrations add to or change the story? Do the pictures show what the author had in mind when the words were written?

5. Explain that writing is a continuing process and that it has to be edited and rewritten as many times as necessary to get the story right. Discuss the editing and rewriting process as part of your language arts class.

6. Ask students to carry a paper in their pocket for twenty-four hours as Ms. Grifalconi described and jot down story ideas, interesting words, etc. on it. Discuss these jotting and if appropriate, turn one into a story.