

Presentations & Workshops for the 2019-20 School Year

Making Nonfiction Fun (all ages)

From circus science to candy around the globe to animals that seem to come back from the dead, Alicia writes nonfiction books on all kinds of topics. In this presentation, she will share some amazing-but-true stories from her 100+ nonfiction books. Kids love to hear about unbelievable medical practices from thousands of years ago or reportedly haunted cemeteries around the globe. Using captivating photos and actual props, Alicia will draw on the content of her various nonfiction titles and discuss the research and writing process from the idea phase all the way to the finished book.

This presentation can be done in a small classroom setting or in an auditorium setting with an entire school. Over the course of this presentation, Alicia will cover the following topics (among others): constructing a bibliography, fact checking, and finding the cool gems of information that make a book more exciting to readers.

Creating A Good Story – Fiction Writing (all ages)

Fiction writing is often one of kids' favorite things to do in the classroom. After all, using one's imagination is fun. But what is it like to write fictional stories in magazines or fiction books? In this presentation, Alicia will talk about the process of creating believable characters. Examples will include the Nylund children in Alicia's *From Pizza to Pisa* and Amari Johnson from *A Time For Change*. She will also discuss the importance of creating "feel like you're there" settings. Other topics covered in this presentation are plot, the concept of show-don't-tell, and using sensory details in writing. While kids sometimes don't realize that authors have to research to write fiction, Alicia will share what the research process has been like for her various fiction books. These include her picture book *Francisco's Kites*, her three World Adventure titles, and her middle-grade historical novel *A Time For Change*.

Depending on the group size and time allotted, Alicia can also have this presentation be more of a workshop model which includes short writing exercises and sharing within a classroom.

Food Around The Globe

Everyone around the world eats. But the food that people put on their plates or grab from a street vendor can be wildly different depending on where they live. Alicia has written many food-related magazine articles and books, which will be featured during this presentation. An especially important focus will be Alicia's book *The*

World's Strangest Foods. She will also share food-related experiences from her international travels.

This workshop has two parts: 1) an introduction to researching and writing about food and 2) a demonstration and international food tasting event where the students can try about 20 different food items and beverages from all over the world. Alicia will bring all of the supplies to the school or library.

Having Fun With Science Writing (Grades 2-8)

From keeping people alive in space to finding out how smartphones work, science writing is both exciting and challenging. But what it's like to research and explain complicated scientific topics for young readers? What resources are helpful? And how do you keep readers engaged? Alicia has written numerous science books for readers in Grades 2-8. Her subjects have included toxic animals, the engineering behind building the Golden Gate Bridge, humanoid robots, and how/why volcanic eruptions occur.

In this presentation, Alicia will share her research process and examples of how to make scientific writing more than a dull list of facts. She will help students understand what resources are excellent and reliable and how to construct a bibliography. She will also talk about the importance of finding the cool gems of information that make a topic both exciting and accessible to all readers. In a classroom setting, she can do some short scientific writing activities on topics ranging from establishing a moon colony to circus science.

Think Like A Fiction & Nonfiction Author (Grades 4-8)

Venice, Italy is a city that captures the imagination of readers around the globe. Its scenery and culture are unique. Alicia has written a travel article in a kids' magazine about Venice. But she's also included this city in her fictional chapter book *From Pizza to Pisa* and her nonfiction book *Italy*. How does the research and writing process vary between fiction and nonfiction?

In this presentation, Alicia will talk about the process of engaging with setting and the importance of using sensory details in writing. She will share some of her favorite resources for writing about the world cultures, whether in Aswan, Egypt or Singapore. Looking at her middle-grade historical novel *A Time For Change*, Alicia will show the kinds of research tools that allow her to create an accurate, believable story. This presentation is designed to be more of a workshop model which includes short writing exercises and sharing within a classroom.

Writing Biographies (Grades 3-8)

Kids of all ages read biographies. But what is the process of researching and telling someone's life story really like? What resources are helpful? And which ones are not reliable? Alicia has written several biographies, from picture book biographies to middle-grade ones. Her subjects have ranged from ancient world subjects like Pythagoras and Moses to Renaissance figures such as Leonardo da Vinci and Ferdinand Magellan to American folk heroes such as Calamity Jane and Buffalo Bill to modern-day musicians J. Cole and Kanye West.

In this presentation, Alicia will share her research process and the best practices for conducting biographical research. She will also talk about how that process can vary depending on whether the subject lived long ago or is still alive today. She will help students understand what primary sources are, how to construct a bibliography, and how to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources (among other research-related topics). In a classroom setting, she can also help students working on their own biographies with their own research and writing. (This could also be turned into a two-part visit, where Alicia first visits and shares her research process and then returns to a school to help students as they work on their own biographies.)

Under Additional Presentation Topics –

Teacher/Librarian Presentations:

In addition to working with students, Alicia also does presentations related to her books for teachers and librarians. Please contact Alicia for more details. Previous presentations geared at adults have included the following:

- Around The World In 100 Books
- Having Fun With STEM & STEAM
- Having Fun With Primary Sources