

GRADES
5+

LEARN TO ILLUSTRATE

Children's Book
Illustrations



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LESSON 1

What Do Children's Book Illustrators Do?

Illustrators are artists who bring the words of a story to life with drawings and paintings. They help the readers see what's happening in the story, whether it be about a dancing rabbit, a sneaky pirate, or a fantasy forest.

Some illustrators use traditional tools like pencils and paints, while others use digital tools like tablets or computers. Many illustrators use a mixture of the two. No matter which tools they use, their job is to make the story fun, exciting, and easy to understand through pictures.



HELLO THERE!

ABOUT THE ARTIST

I'm Shannon, a children's book illustrator who loves bringing characters to life! You might have seen my illustrations in the *Billy and Ella Mysteries* series or the *Little Hearts and Hands Big Book of Science Stories* published by The Good and the Beautiful.

I've known since I was very young that I wanted a career in art. That passion led me to earn my bachelor's degree in art education from the University of Akron. Now I get to spend my days doing what I love most: creating characters and bringing stories to life through illustration. When I'm not drawing, you can usually find me listening to music, reading a good mystery novel, or enjoying the beautiful outdoors of Ohio.



HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

WELCOME TO THE ART OF THE STORY: CHILDREN'S BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS

Have you ever looked at pictures in a storybook and thought, “I want to draw pictures like that”? If so, you’re in the right place! In this art course, we’re going to explore what it’s like to be a children’s book illustrator, someone who helps bring stories to life through art. After all, somebody has to draw characters like chickens wearing roller skates, rabbits with secret superhero identities, or even kid scientists inventing chocolate-flavored broccoli. In this course, that somebody will be you!

You’ll dream up a variety of characters, then choose one to develop, giving them a personality and figuring out how they would move, smile, frown, or even do a little line dance.

Characters need places to live! In this course you’ll learn about creating settings that help tell stories through shapes, colors, and visual clues. Whether it be a castle made of cookies, a jungle full of monkeys, or an underwater city made entirely of seashells, your creativity is the only limit on the worlds that you can invent!

By the end of this course, you will have a finished full-spread illustration that looks like it belongs in a real children’s book.

Together we will . . .

Invent your own special character. From silly to serious, you’re in charge of their style.

Design your character’s world, whether it’s fantasy, reality, or something in between.

Use your art to tell the story and show emotion, action, and plot hints.

At the grand finale, transform all you’ve learned into professional-looking pages.



SKETCH STOPS

Every so often during the lessons, we will take a “Sketch Stop.” This is a short, guided drawing break where you will follow step-by-step instructions to create a complete character. It’s like a separate mini lesson, where you can build with simple shapes and lines to create a variety of fun characters.

When you finish this course, you’ll have more than a finished illustrated book spread. You’ll have the skills, ideas, and confidence to keep creating your own characters and stories whenever you want!



HOW DO ILLUSTRATORS WORK WITH AUTHORS AND EDITORS?



Illustrators don't usually work alone. They are part of a team that includes the author, who writes the story; the editor, who helps make sure all the words and pictures work well together; and the publisher, who helps organize and prepare the book to be shared.

Here's how the process usually goes:

1

The author writes the story.



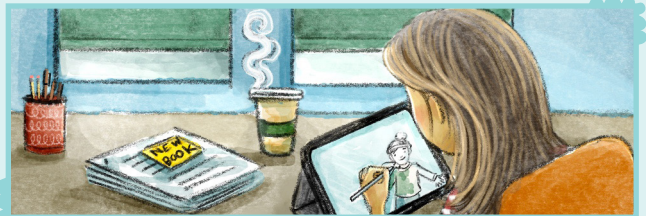
2

An editor, a publisher, or sometimes the author chooses an illustrator whose style matches the feel of the story.



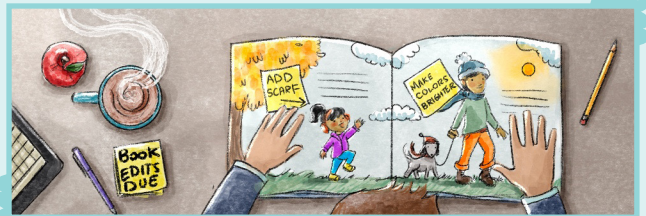
3

The illustrator reads the story and any notes from the team carefully, then starts sketching ideas for what the characters, settings, and scenes may look like.



4

The editor gives feedback along the way, making sure that the images support the story and match the author's vision. Finally, the publisher helps organize and prepare the book to be shared.



5

Working together, everyone makes the book the best it can be!



LET'S TALK SUPPLIES!

Before we dive into creating awesome characters and make-believe story scenes, let's talk about the art supplies you'll need. The good news is that nothing fancy is required.

Here's what you'll need for this course:

Drawing Tools

- **A regular #2/HB pencil:** It's also nice to have a mechanical pencil for creating fine lines, but it's optional.
- **A white eraser:** These don't smear as easily as other erasers. I like the brand Staedtler™. If you don't have a white eraser, a clean pink eraser will work as well.
- **A pencil sharpener**
- **A black pen or fine liner (Micron, Sharpie™, or gel pen):** Outlining your illustrations can make them pop.
- **A ruler for drawing straight lines:** I love using a small L-shaped ruler (called an L-square) for checking the correctness of the angles on my page, but a regular ruler will also work.
- **A sketchbook at least 5.5" x 8.5" or larger:** If possible, make sure the binding is on the side so that it mimics a real book layout.
- **Plain white printer paper:** When using pen or marker, putting an extra sheet of paper under your illustration can help prevent the ink from "bleeding" through.

Coloring Supplies

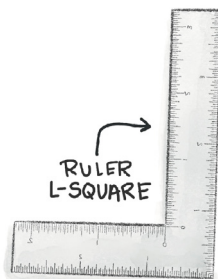
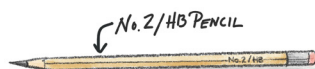
- **Colored pencils:** Prismacolor is great, but any brand will work. There are tons of fun ways to add color to your illustrations, but for this course, we are keeping it simple with colored pencils.

Books

- **Two illustrated storybooks of your choice that you enjoy:** These can be from your home collection or the library. Be sure the books have different illustrators. We will use these books later in this lesson to analyze the illustrations.

**Materials for continuing your children's book illustrations after you've finished this course (optional):*

- **A clipboard:** I like using these while drawing. That way, I can take my drawing anywhere and still have a hard surface to draw on. A desk or clean table works too!



SEARCH FOR SUPPLIES

Look at the image below to find and circle a few of the supplies from the previous page.






The *Good* AND THE *Beautiful*
goodandbeautiful.com



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