

Capturing Childhood Memories in Stories



August is Family History Month and Kids' Book Review is thrilled to have Hazel Edwards visiting to share her tips on creating picture books to capture special childhood memories.

One of the best gifts, is clues to memories.

Each birthday I create a photographic story for each child in our family. Why? An effortless history for that child. Plus the gift of the imagination. Creating a story makes it special, rather than just having an album of photos.

Recently I visited the Ronald McDonald Home for families of child patients and creating the 'journeys' of their children can be therapy writing too. Adults can make a book for or with the child.

Hazel Edwards' Tips for Creating Childhood Memory Picture Books

1. What interests the child at this age? 3-year-old Henry was interested in 'Hide and Seek', so that became 'Who is Hiding?' based on existing photos plus a couple of staged ones.

2. Write around the visuals you already possess.

3. Include visuals of all family members.

4. Choose a title to attract that reader (even if they can't read yet) e.g. I created 'Splash' as a learning to swim book, with a page added each week, culminating in swimming like a frog, with a chocolate frog inserted.

5. Format can be a simple, slip-in page in a spring binder, with big font for the writing alongside. Or it can be commercially bound.

6. Question and Answer is a useful format. One sentence per page. Make the font appropriate for the age group.

7. Hook them with the opening, 'Did you ever hear about the time...'

8. What went wrong? That provides the drama. Easiest problem is looking for a lost object.

9. Any sound effects? Three repetitions work best e.g. Boom Boom Boom.

10 Have a twist for the end. And use humour inbetween.

11. Want to do a mini history? Make comparisons between

then (your childhood) and now. What did you do on an ordinary school day? Rules? Games? Food? Homework? How did you get to school?

12. Length? Any story must be less than yawn length. Optimistically, attention span is one minute per one year. A six-year-old will listen for about six minutes, but only if there is suspense.

13. Multi-cultural stories. Add a second language, and read both aloud.

14. Tactile: Add a collage of 'feelie' objects e.g. feathers, hair.

15. In hospital, a story could be created around medical routines and maybe personalised by naming the equipment. e.g. A drip called Quentin.

For more information visit [Hazel Edwards' website](#) where you will find numerous resources including Hazel's e-books [Writing a Non-Boring Family History](#), which contains a chapter on writing for children, and [Authorpreneurship: The Business of Creativity](#), which suggests ways of formatting stories.

Hazel also recommends the following websites:

[Story Box Library](#) launches in August 2013. You can read a KBR guest post by Nicole Brownlee, founder of the Story Box Library, [here](#).

[Read To My Child](#) is a children's website, where stories are recited for kids in a simple and natural video format. There are many stories to choose from, aimed at pre-school aged children. *Who is Hiding?* will be available there soon.

