

Tools & Expertise from drydenbks

By Judy Bradbury

Emma D. Dryden is the powerhouse behind drydenbks, the innovative, multi-tiered editorial and creative consultancy service she created and launched last March. Dryden's career spans 25 years in publishing, during which she edited nearly 500 books for children and young readers. They included board and novelty books, picture books, poetry, nonfiction, middle-grade fiction, and young adult fiction and fantasy.

Most recently Vice President and Publisher of Atheneum Books for Young Readers and Margaret K. McElderry Books, imprints of Simon & Schuster, Dryden directed a staff of between 6 and 11 editors and the annual publication of more than 100 hardcover and paperback titles. About a year and a half ago, she was a victim of the economic downturn when Simon & Schuster consolidated management, cutting a number of its top-level children's division staff.

"During my tenure with Atheneum and McElderry Books," says Dryden, "the books I published consistently garnered prestigious awards, among them the Newbery Medal, Newbery and Caldecott Honors, National Book Award nominations, Coretta Scott King Awards and Honors, the Jane Addams Book Award, the *Boston Globe/Horn Book Award*, the Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award, and National Parenting Publications Awards." Dozens of books published under Dryden's guidance earned starred reviews and "best of" list distinctions, and many landed on the best-seller lists in such publications as the *New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, *USA Today*, and the *Washington Post*.

Serious Help for Serious Creators

With her new initiative, drydenbks, Dryden is turning her attention to helping serious authors and illustrators—published and unpublished—reach their goals of creating the best books

Services

Dryden offers a range of services in the children's publishing arena. Below are those directed at authors and illustrators. (www.drydenbks.com/services.html)

- manuscript or portfolio review and consultation
- manuscript evaluation with broad-stroke editorial suggestions
- line-by-line manuscript editing and detailed editorial suggestions
- manuscript revision follow-up
- synopsis or proposal evaluation and preparation guidance
- picture book dummy evaluation and preparation guidance
- career strategy consultation

they can, and advising clients on the marketing of their polished work.

"I have a deep understanding of the business of children's books within an ever-changing publishing landscape," Dryden says. "My expertise is working with authors to help them define, enrich, and craft their work to make it viable for the current marketplace. I am a skilled fiction, fantasy, and poetry editor whose interests range from picture books and graphic novels to humorous middle-grade, high fantasy, and edgy teen fiction—and everything in between! I want to help authors and illustrators tap their own areas of expertise."

She adds that "drydenbks has evolved since its launch. It's become a vibrant consulting firm, offering a

broad range of services to agents, publishers both foreign and domestic, and most recently, to those involved in digital publishing."

For authors, the heart of her business, Dryden offers "intense feedback and a purer kind of editorial dialogue" than she believes is readily available in the harried corporate climate of publishing today. She gives authors and illustrators her opinion of the viability of a project and valuable insight on the markets, although she is quick to point out that she is not affiliated with any agency or publisher. Dryden does not offer a guarantee of publication or representation, but she provides "the tools authors need to improve their work." She encourages those she works with to use her name when approaching agents and editors. "I'm reputable, and working with me demonstrates that an author or illustrator is taking his or her career very seriously."

Get In Touch

Business for Dryden has grown largely by word of mouth and through personal connections she makes at the workshops she presents. Her website, www.drydenbks.com, offers detailed information about the services she provides as well as "an expression of who I am, my approach, my manner, and how I communicate. I want people to be comfortable coming to me."

She can also be found on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, and on her blog (<http://emmaddryden.blogspot.com>). Dryden is eager to get the word out: "I plan to remain an active, vibrant participant in the children's publishing community and provide a service to as many people as possible."