



NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL  
SINGAPORE

# BEYOND WORDS :: YOUNG AND YOUNGER 2011

## Bring your stories to life

### Call for Children's Literature Manuscripts

For the young, stories never stay on the page. It used to be that words and pictures tumbled from books thick with magic, heavy with the scent of new paper that led us to secret worlds within.

Today, stories have found fresh ways to come alive.

In the hands of an expert digital producer, images dance to the touch of our fingers, words shape-shift at the push of a button. In the hands of a theatre and media producer, stories are crafted in light, sound and drama for the stage and screen.

If you have a story for the young that you wish to see in print and pixels (and later, possibly stage and screen), we want to hear from you.

As long as you wholly own the rights to your work – whether unpublished or out-of-print – we want to see your original manuscripts for **children's picture books, chapter books and young adult (YA) fiction**.

The future of publishing is here. Will you seize it?

### 1. What is Beyond Words?

Beyond Words is a new initiative brought to you by the National Arts Council (NAC). It aims to encourage the creation of high quality literature from Singapore that can potentially leave its mark in the international marketplace across multiple media.

Beyond Words kicks off its pilot phase, *Young and Younger*, with a focus on quality children's literature in the following genres:

- a. Children's Picture Books
- b. Chapter Books and Young Adult (YA) Fiction

For each genre above, up to **5** selected manuscripts will be developed by our appointed publishers into print, eBooks and/or apps. But it doesn't end there. Your manuscript will also be pitched to interactive multimedia designers, as well as film, TV, animation and theatre producers. If selected, your work will be made available not just in print and pixels, but also for the stage and screen.

## 2. Can I apply?

Yes, as long as you:

- Are an individual writer with an original manuscript for the young;
- Are a Singapore citizen or Permanent Resident (PR);
- Write in English; and
- Own all the rights to your submission, whether it is unpublished or out-of-print.

Note that you cannot submit work that is currently in print/circulation. Published authors may submit either unpublished works or works that are out-of-print.

## 3. Is this scheme for unpublished or published authors?

It does not matter where you sit on the publishing spectrum, whether you are an emerging or first-time writer, or a writer with countless titles to your name. Everything depends on the merit of the manuscript you submit to us.

## 4. Can I submit a manuscript for a book that is part of an existing series?

Yes, as long as you own all the rights to the new work and you are not legally obliged to publish your book with your previous publisher (if any).

## 5. How do I apply?

Your application must include the following items:

1. **Application form:** Fully completed.
2. **Synopsis:** 4 printed copies of:
  - A 50-word synopsis for children's picture books; or
  - A 1-page plot and character summary of the work for chapter books and YA fiction.
3. **Manuscript:** 4 printed copies of the complete typewritten manuscript, properly bound. Illustrations are not required.
4. **Curriculum Vitae of the Author**

The deadline for submission is **15 January 2012** for children's picture books, and **15 April 2012** for chapter books and YA novels. Late submissions will not be considered.

Submissions must be in hard copy and mailed to:

*National Arts Council  
Beyond Words: Young and Younger  
c/o Literary Arts, Sector Development  
90 Goodman Road  
Goodman Arts Centre  
Blk A #01-01  
Singapore 439053*

Alternatively, you may also drop off your application at the National Arts Council reception from Monday through Friday, 9am – 12pm or 2pm – 5pm.

## 6. What are the genres eligible for submission?

For *Young and Younger*, we are looking only for manuscripts in the following genres:

Genre	Description <sup>1</sup>	Target Age Group	Not Eligible
<b>Picture Books</b>	A picture book is a book in which the illustrations play a significant role in telling the story. Traditionally, picture books are 32-page books of 500 – 1,000 words. Plots are simple (no sub-plots or complicated twists) with one main character who embodies the child's emotions, concerns and viewpoint.	3 – 7	The following types of books are not eligible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baby books (lullabies, nursery rhymes, fingerplays)</li> <li>▪ Concept books (teaching alphabets, colors, shapes, numbers etc.)</li> <li>▪ Board books</li> <li>▪ Wordless books</li> <li>▪ Pattern books</li> <li>▪ Colouring books</li> </ul>
<b>Chapter Books</b>	<b>Junior Chapter Books:</b> Junior chapter books range from 45 – 60 pages (5,000 – 15,000 words), broken into 3 – 4 page chapters. Stories contain a lot of action, but paragraphs are short (2 – 4 sentences on average). Chapters often end in the middle of a scene to keep the reader turning the pages.	7 – 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children's non-fiction</li> <li>▪ Books targeted at the educational market (including assessment books)</li> <li>▪ Activity-based books such as trivia and quiz books</li> <li>▪ Instructional, self-help and personal development books for children</li> </ul>
	<b>Middle Grade Chapter Books:</b> These range from 100 – 150 pages (25,000 – 40,000 words). Stories are more complex (sub-plots involving secondary characters are woven through the story) and themes are more sophisticated. Such books lend themselves well to serialization as children get hooked on the characters.	9 – 12	
<b>Young Adult (YA) Novels</b>	Also known as teen novels, these are narratives generally read by children aged 12 and above. These manuscripts are 130 to 200 pages long (or 40,000 words	12 – 18	Same as above

<sup>1</sup> Source: Laura Backes, [“Understanding Children’s Book Genres”](#)

and above). Plots can be complex with several major characters, though one character should emerge as the focus of the book. Themes should be relevant to the problems and struggles of today's teenagers.

### **7. Do you have examples of titles that fit the above categories?**

Yes, the [Red Dot Book Awards](#) lists titles by genres, as do the bestseller lists of Amazon and Barnes and Noble. The categories only serve as a guide and reference to consumers (e.g. parents, caregivers, educators, teenagers etc). If writers want to submit their published books to any book awards, please consult the organisers regarding the award guidelines and categories.

### **8. What do you look for in a children's picture book?**

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question or to the two questions below. There will always be manuscripts that don't follow the rules but which surprise and delight. However, the following pointers might be helpful for you:

- Ensure that your story has a plot and a narrative with a beginning, middle and an end.
- Picture books are usually based on one very strong idea/theme that often reflects the child's world.
- Avoid preaching or talking down to by adult characters in the story.
- Avoid too many characters. Create a distinctive character of your own.
- Be sure to have enough scene changes to allow for varied illustrations.

### **9. What do you look for in a chapter book?**

As with all other books, we look for a story with a unique voice, a great plot and great characters that convey a bigger idea. And of course, a book that simply cannot be put down. The best chapter books are those that invite children to use their imagination and gain a better understanding of themselves and the people around them. Some suggestions include:

- Creating characters and settings that are relevant and relatable to your readers.
- Less is more; tell a compelling story but keep it simple and age-appropriate.
- While the writing and sentence structure should be simple, it shouldn't be simple-minded.
- The main character and a minimal number of secondary characters must be well developed.
- Stick to a single story line and get right into the action.
- Avoid taking on a preachy tone.

For older readers in the 9 – 12 years old bracket, the above applies as well but the plot and characters can be more complex than in fiction for younger readers.

## **10. What do you look for in a young adult (YA) novel?**

The best YA novels appeal not only to teenagers, but also to adults. We look for incisive, sophisticated and compelling novels. A few tips:

- Plot and characters must be well-developed and may demonstrate greater complexity than fiction for younger readers.
- Avoid crowding your novel with an excess of adult characters who may distract from the young heroes or heroines in your novel.
- Angle your novel to the specific age group you want to target i.e. teenage characters and their family units for the 9 – 12 year-olds who are just emerging into teenage-hood, and teenage issues for the 13 – 18 year-olds.
- Unlike picture and chapter books, YA novels are decidedly wordier, so pay particular attention to typographical and grammatical errors, as well as inconsistencies in plot continuity and voice.
- Content may contain strong themes and elements, but should not contain any sexually explicit, disparaging, defamatory, libellous, obscene or other inappropriate content. Any depictions of violence, nudity or sexual activity, drug/alcohol use or the inclusion of strong language must be at a level suitable for the intended audience and justified by the narrative or documentary context of the work, and not be gratuitous or exploitative.
- Material that promotes or incites or instructs matters of crime and/or violence is not permitted.

## **11. How will my manuscript be assessed?**

Submissions will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Originality and creativity of the work;
- Potential for adaptation to other media beyond print;
- Potential for local and international commercial viability;
- Readership appeal;
- Appropriateness of language and stylistic elements to the genre and target age group;
- Cultural and universal relevance of the work.

NAC will appoint a selection panel of book publishing industry professionals to shortlist and chooses the top 5 manuscripts in each genre. All decisions are final and NAC reserves the right not to disclose reasons for approving or rejecting an application.

## **12. Do I need to set my story in Singapore?**

You are free to set your story anywhere, though an Asian-inspired context is preferred. While we wish to nurture our own pool of uniquely Asian stories, it is just as important that your message should transcend borders and be universally relevant, regardless of where it is set.

### 13. What dates do I need to be aware of?

There are 2 separate schedules for picture books vs. the chapter book / YA fiction category as follows:

	Children's Picture Books	Chapter Books and YA Fiction
Open Call	15 Nov 2011	15 Nov 2011
Deadline for Submission	15 Jan 2012	15 Apr 2012
Announcement of Results	15 Apr 2012	15 Jul 2012

### 14. Why do you have 2 different deadlines for the 2 categories?

We recognise that picture books require a shorter time to write than chapter books or YA fiction, hence the 2-month window for children's picture books vs. the 5-month window for chapter books and YA fiction.

### 15. Do I need to illustrate my work as well?

If your work gets selected, our appointed publisher will choose an appropriate illustrator for your manuscript.

### 16. Who are your publishers? How many manuscripts will you select for each category, and what adaptations can I expect?

Our appointed publishers are:

Publisher	Genres	Target Number	Adaptations
Marshall Cavendish (International) Asia	▪ Children's Picture Books	5	Print
			Enhanced eBooks (or apps)
Straits Times Press	▪ Chapter Books ▪ Young Adult (YA) Fiction	5	Print
			eBooks

### 17. Will the appointed publishers also be producing the digital adaptations?

They will be managing and overseeing the whole process, but both publishers will work with carefully selected digital publishers to adapt your work digitally.

### 18. Why are picture books adapted to apps but not chapter books or YA fiction?

Apps by nature are highly interactive media that depend on the illustrations to engage a user. Picture books thus lend themselves well to adaptation to apps, unlike chapter books or YA novels which possess fewer illustrations. These last two genres will hence be adapted to eBooks only.

### 19. What about other adaptations like theatre, film, animation, TV and interactive multimedia?

NAC will facilitate the pitching and matchmaking of successful manuscripts with local theatre and media production companies and overseas literary agents. The producers and literary agents will decide if the work can be adapted. If your print/digital book receives critical acclaim and/or commercial success, the chances of adaptation to these media will be much higher.

## **20. Can I submit multiple manuscripts?**

Yes, you can. However, between the 2 categories of picture books and chapter books/YA fiction, we can only support a maximum of one title per category per author.

## **21. Who owns the rights to my work?**

The writer owns the copyright to the work. Publishing, translation and distribution rights however will reside with the publisher for 10 years, while electronic rights will remain with them for 5 years. All other subsidiary rights (e.g. merchandise, theme park, animation, film, TV, theatre etc.) will remain with you until you or your agent successfully negotiates a rights sale with buyers (e.g. media or theatre producers).

## **22. What makes Beyond Words so different from other publishing or writing grants?**

The key difference is that selected works are taken through a structured pathway that includes print and digital adaptations, as well as matchmaking with stage and screen producers for potential adaptation. In addition, Beyond Words is characterised by publishing contracts that favour the writer, especially in terms of rights ownership and royalty escalation pegged to book sales.

## **23. Will this cost me anything?**

No. Other than your personal costs in applying for this scheme (e.g. printing of manuscripts, postage etc), there are no additional production costs for the writer.

## **24. What happens if my work is selected?**

Once your manuscript is selected, your publisher (either Marshall Cavendish or Straits Times Press, depending on the genre) will sign a contract with you for the print and digital production of your book. The publisher will then go on to appoint illustrators for your work (if you don't already have one). The print and digital production schedule will take approximately 6 months from the date of announcement of the results.

The finished print and digital products will then be launched at various platforms, including potentially the Singapore Writers Festival 2012, Frankfurt Book Fair, Bologna Children's Book Fair and Words Go Round 2013 (a pre-Singapore Writers Festival school event), among other things. Your work will also be made available on both local and international distribution platforms, including the Kindle, iBookstore, iTunes app store, Kobo, Nook etc.

Networking sessions will also be held with theatre and media producers to interest producers in potentially adapting and producing your work for the stage and screen.

## **25. What happens if my work is not selected?**

You are free to publish the book in whichever way you feel is best for it, whether it is through the traditional publishing route, digital publishing, self-publishing or even getting a literary agent to represent you. Other grants you or your publisher can apply for include the [Publishing and Translation Grant](#), which supports up to 50% of your qualifying costs for publishing and promoting your book.

## **26. Can I ask for feedback if my work is not selected?**

We expect to receive a large volume of submissions and regret that we will not be able to offer feedback or reasons for not selecting any manuscripts.

**27. Is the book contract for this initiative similar to those offered by other publishing houses?**

Yes, the contract is drafted according to or better than prevailing market terms.

**28. Will this scheme ever be open to other genres or languages?**

In time to come, yes. In future phases, we hope to open the scheme to fiction and graphic novels, and potentially to writers in the Mother Tongue languages.

**29. Who do I contact if I have more questions?**

For enquiries, please contact:

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