

Author Visits by: Jasmine A. Stirling



About Me:

Jasmine A. Stirling is the award-winning author of *A Most Clever Girl: How Jane Austen Discovered Her Voice* (Bloomsbury, 2021), winner of the IPNE Book Award, and *A Mighty Girl* and *Book Riot* Best Book of the Year. It is currently being translated to Mandarin. Her next book, *Dare to Question* (Union Square Kids, 2023), celebrates queer suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt's daring questions. Her third book, about the botanist who disguised herself as a man, and became the first woman to circumnavigate the world, is being illustrated.

Jasmine lives in an old house in San Francisco with her spouse, two daughters, and an absurdly adorable dog. Follow her on Instagram @jasmine.a.stirling.author, and learn more at www.jasmineastirling.com.



Descriptions of presentations
at www.jasmineastirling.com

Sample Programs:

Votes for All!
America's Democratic Journey

The Right to Read:
Book Banning and Censorship

Queer Through the Ages:
How Ideas about Gender and Identity
Evolved in the West

Writing Workshop: Write On!

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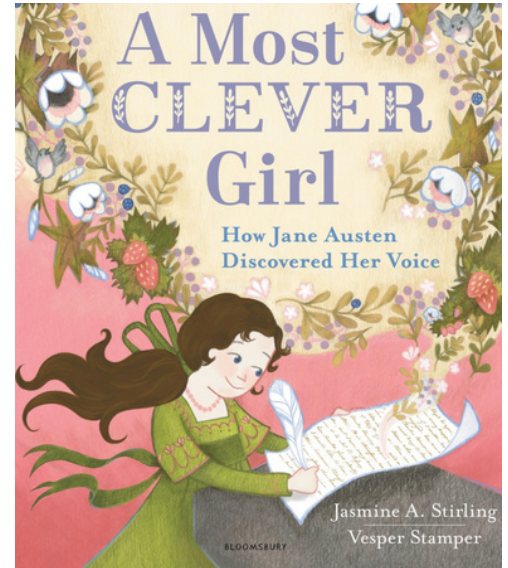
www.jasmineastirling.com

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"Jasmine's session was entertaining, engaging, and inspiring. The audience loved getting the benefit of her Austen research, as well as learning little-known details about how a picture book comes to life."

Inger B.
The Jane Austen Summer Program
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill



What an amazing presentation! The students were completely engaged. They loved learning about how a book is made, and were motivated in their own writing by your visit.

Vanessa G.
Elementary School Teacher
French American International School



"Thank you for your incredible conversation as the closing speaker for our Women in Leadership & Philanthropy symposium! We learned of the many ways leaders, writers, and everyday people create change, and came away motivated to do the same.

Cheryl V.
Director, Women in Leadership and Philanthropy
University of San Francisco



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Dare to Question Programs

Votes for All!
America's Democratic Journey

The Right to Read:
Book Banning and Censorship

Her Power,
Her Voice,
Her Vote!

Bold and Brave:
Adventures in Activism

Queer Through the Ages:
How Ideas about
Gender and Identity
Evolved in the West

Writing Workshop:
Tailor Your Words,
Write for Your Audience

A Most Clever Girl Programs

Jane Austen:
Literary Rebel

Imagination Unleashed!
Keep Creating, Keep Going!

From Ballroom to Boba:
The History of Tea in the West
(Great for tea parties)

Letter Writing Workshop:
Letters Through the Ages

Writing Workshop:
Your Words,
Your Voice:
Write On!

Writing Workshop:
Let's Write
Picture Books!

Successful Author Visits



[Read about the power of author visits from One Education >](#)



[Five reasons author visits are more than just cool >](#)

How to Host an Amazing Author Visit

A step-by-step guide for schools

Your students have been preparing for weeks: doing art, staging plays, and creating their own stories based on an award-winning author's book.

The day has finally arrived, and excitement levels are high. You watch as students participate in an engaging conversation with the author.



["Why we love author visits" from a school superintendent >](#)

1

BOOK

Define goals, get approvals, sign contracts.

2

PREPARE

Get everyone in the school involved: art, projects, reading & book sale.

3

HOST

Greet your author, double check details, have fun!

The questions fill the room:

*Where did you get your idea for your book?
Have you always wanted to be an author?
How did you research and revise your story?*

Perhaps the author wears a historic costume, brings exciting props, or engages the students with activities and games that get them moving and thinking. When the author shares a passage from their new book, the children listen with fascination.



Author visits are meaningful events that foster enthusiasm for learning. Visits can tie in with specific curriculum goals, bring history to life, and make school memorable and fun.

When authors speak, students are inspired to read, write, and learn more about storytelling, research, and revision. But the success of such an event depends on effective planning.

BOOKING THE VISIT

What to know when setting up an author visit

Define your Goals

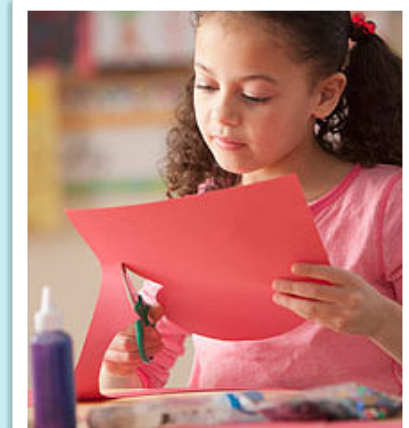
Schools bring authors in to motivate students to read and write, to support curriculum objectives, to bring history, science, or literature to life, to energize students and encourage them to follow their dreams, to promote empathy and respect for diverse points of view, and to get students more invested in their school experience. Decide what your goals are so that you can articulate them when getting

GET KIDS MAKING AND READING

In the weeks leading up to the author visit, ask teachers to do story times, writing exercises, research projects, and art projects based on the author's most recent book.

Students can assemble collages representing scenes from the book, outline a character's journey on a map or timeline, act out parts of the book in class, or write their own story inspired by the author's work.

Make sure the students read the author's book before the visit, too.



approval for the visit.

Identify Author(s)

Not all authors are dynamic and kid-friendly speakers, so do your homework!

- Seek recommendations from other librarians.
- Consider local authors (they are typically less expensive).
- Peruse author websites.
- Consider authors featured in reviews, best-of lists, and awards lists.
- Identify a genre or topic that is timely for your school, then seek out relevant books.
- Check out the authors of popular books in your library.
- Get a feel for authors featured at conferences or in interviews.

Choose Your Program

Decide how many presentations you would like: Are you aiming for a full-day visit (3 presentations), a half-day visit (2 presentations), Virtual or in-person?

To ensure a deeper connection between the author and students, and to accommodate developmental stages, consider splitting presentations by age ranges. For example, grades K-2, 3-5. Many authors have preferences for the size of group they will work with. Consider these when scheduling your visit.

Identify Potential Dates

Between holidays, school-wide events, and state testing schedules, schools are busy! So are authors, who often juggle day jobs and writing deadlines with author visits. Plan far in advance and offer a range of dates.

Contact the Author

Once you decide on an author you'd like to invite to your school, contact them to understand how they work, the cost of hosting them, their availability, and other relevant details. Don't be shy or nervous. Authors LOVE hearing from librarians and educators!

Provide the following information in your email to avoid back-and-forth questions:

- Your preferred range of dates
- Whether you're looking for virtual or in-person presentations
- Where your school is located
- The number of presentations, and for which grades
- Any additional request for the event day, such as a family literacy night, PTA presentation, a meal with the staff, etc.
- If the author lists their presentation topics on their website, mention your preference.
- Ask for their honorarium, including travel expenses.

Tip: Offer the author the option of doing the book signing at a time when parents will be present, to help get their books into the hands of more kids.

Tip: If the author's honorarium is out of your budget, ask if there's any wiggle room.

Tip: Consider coordinating with other schools in your district to share an author on consecutive days, thereby splitting any travel expenses. Sometimes, authors will also reduce their per-school honorarium because back-to-back visits are more time efficient for them.

Get Approvals

Get approval for the visit and the budget from the school principal or other relevant decision maker. Every district and campus has a different protocol that should be followed. In addition to discussing objectives, discuss the budget.

Find the Funds

Funds for author visits often come from PTAs, school budgets, special fundraising efforts, benefactors, or grants. Before you request a contract from an author, get approval for paying their honorarium and travel expenses.

Sign the Contract

The author will send you a contract spelling out the terms of your agreement, including the honorarium, date of visit, travel fees, and other details. The author will likely not be able to hold the dates for you, so sign and return the contract as soon as possible. If your district requires a specific contract, let the author know ASAP.

Meet the Author's Needs

All authors vary in their presenting styles. Some use a slide projector, a microphone, or an overhead projector. Some prefer to make their presentations in small, informal settings, rather than large auditoriums. Ask the author well in advance how he or she would like the day's events to be organized.

Finalize the Details

Create a written schedule for the day of the event, and be sure to include relevant details. For in-person visits, they'll need to know:

- Where to park
- The times and locations of their presentations
- Whether and where you will be providing them lunch (note dietary restrictions)
- Technical details: what equipment will be tested and prepared, and who to contact if there are issues
- If allowed, whether photos or video will be taken

Tip: Please allow at least 15 minutes between presentations to allow student groups to exit and enter, and to allow the author to catch their breath.

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

How to get organized for the event

Congratulations! Your visit is booked!

It's time to notify all involved teachers and put the event on your school calendar. You might even want to alert your local media.

What next?

To get the most out of the experience, involve EVERYONE in your upcoming author visit!

The truth is, if students don't know who the author is or what they write, they will not be invested during the author's visit. Here are some ideas for nurturing the author-student connection while getting readers excited during the weeks leading up to the event:

Assign a Coordinator

Find one point of contact who will be the author visit coordinator. Typically this is the school librarian or a member of the school staff. This person should be the spoke of the wheel coordinating details and motivating teachers, administrators (including the principal), the PTA, parents, and other groups as the date of the visit draws near.

Prepare Students

The most important way to ensure a successful author visit is to make sure the students have read the author's books.

To prepare, the author visit coordinator can:

Prepare students: 4-8 weeks (or more) before the visit

- Have the school librarian order multiple copies of the author's books for the library and classrooms.
- Display the books in the library and classrooms.
- Ask teachers to do story times, writing exercises, research projects, and art projects based on the author's most recent book. For example, students can assemble collages representing scenes from the book, outline a character's journey on a map or timeline, act out parts of the book in class, or write their own story inspired by the author's work.
- Go deeper. For example, you could have a school-wide art contest based on the author's books. Perhaps the winner's artwork could be printed on t-shirts worn by staff on the day of the visit. Display all the art throughout the school in advance of the visit on posters, bookmarks, drawings, cutouts and crafts themed around the author's books.

- Choose a slogan based on the author's books and use that slogan to create a welcome bulletin board, posters, and art. Post the art around the school. To select the slogan, hold a contest. Perhaps the winner could receive a free book.
- Create author visit signs and flyers around the school featuring the book cover or characters from the book to build excitement and spread the word. (Consider having the author sign these for display after the event.)

Prepare students: The week of the visit

- Ask teachers to have students prepare a list of questions to ask the author and review the questions with the students. Select the top questions to ask the author during the visit.

Get Parents Involved

- Put an article about the event in the school newsletter.
- Promote the event on your school's website.
- As the day draws near, announce the upcoming visit on the school's outdoor road sign.
- Send home a flier.
- Tie in an evening component to the visit, include parents, and offer food! Some of the best-attended parent programs have offered food—even whole dinners—to attending families. I've seen food come from a variety of creative resources. One school enlisted a local grocery store to provide meals. Another got a cafe to donate the food. Or simply ask folks (perhaps a committee) to bring snacks & drinks to share.

Order Books

Author visits that include book-signing events create enthusiasm and excitement. This is the student's opportunity to exchange a few words with the author one-on one, and to receive a personalized and signed book. Some schools or PTAs purchase a copy of the author's most recent book for each student. However, many others do not.

Note: Book signings are not required for author visits. If your school prefers to skip the signing, you can still share the author's books with parents, and take advantage of the visit to get author-signed books shipped for free to the school. Work with the author on the option that is best for your school.

Here's how the author visit coordinator can get the author's books into the hands of students:

Order books: 6-8 weeks before the visit

- Send an email to all relevant families with a link to the author's books. Encourage parents to purchase books before the author visit to take advantage of free shipping and to have the books signed. The author will provide the language and link for this email.
- Print out the author-provided order forms for the author's books and work with the teachers to distribute a form for each student to take home. The forms will include a QR code for parents to order the books online and receive free shipping to the school before the date of the visit.

Order books: 4 weeks before the visit

- Send another order from home and remind parents again by email that the visit is coming up, in case they haven't ordered yet.
- Confirm with the partner bookstore that the books will arrive before the day of the visit.

Order books: Day of the visit

- Receive the books on or before the day of the visit.
- Call out the name of each student who ordered a book and write that student's name on a post-it note for the author to reference when signing.
- Give additional forms to the students who didn't order books in advance of the visit, but still want to get copies mailed to their homes.
- Post a QR code or link to purchase the author's books at the signing.

Publicize and Generate Excitement

Organize a publicity committee of faculty, staff, P.T.A. members, and students. Ask each member to find creative ways to promote the event. Plan to have a display of the author's books set up at the appearance. Have the committee send a press release or letter to your local media announcing the event and invite them to attend.

Request Checks

Leave enough time before the day of the event to request an honorarium and travel fee checks from your school or library, and file necessary paperwork and tax forms well in advance.

Host

Double-check details and join in the fun!

Set Up a Hospitality Crew

Make an author feel welcome by having a crew of teachers, parents, administrators, and students on hand to give a hearty reception to the author. Consider setting up a welcome wagon, creating 3-D displays and a welcome bulletin board, or asking the community to become involved by hosting a luncheon. Volunteers from the hospitality crew can chaperone the author on the day of the event.

As much as possible, Involve the WHOLE staff. Events tend to go well in schools where the principal takes the time to stop in and meet authors— even if only momentarily. It seems that when the principal is onboard, so is everyone else.

During the Presentation

- Test all equipment and check details on the day of the visit.
- Come up with a timekeeper agreement. It can be helpful and efficient for authors to have a 5 or 10-minute warning as the presentation time winds down.
- Provide the author with tissues and water.

- Time is precious, so instruct teachers to have the students seated before each presentation's start time.
- Require that teachers stay. Many authors incorporate curriculum that supports teacher efforts, so they need to know what the students are learning. Teachers help deter behavior issues, too.

TIPS

- Stick to the schedule that was discussed with the author.
- Before you ask the local press to attend the visit, or set up video cameras, make sure the author has agreed.
- Many publishers restrict what can be shared about a book. Check with the author before posting videos and photos on social media.
- If you're planning on socializing with the author outside of the visit, check with them first to be sure they are available.
- Make sure that there is enough time in between presentations as well as enough time to get the author to the airport (if relevant) after the appearance is finished.

Sources: This kit was compiled and adapted in April, 2023 by Jasmine A. Stirling using Donna Janell Bowman's "Step-by-Step Guide to Booking an Author Visit," 2023, Jamie Kyle McGillian's "Author & Illustrator Appearance Kit," published by Random House, and Kim Norman's "Tips For a Great Author Visit" on www.kinnorton.com.