



Below is information for teachers and librarians who wish to have Jen visit their school. ALL bookings are made through Jean Dayton at Dayton Bookings. Her contact information is listed at the end of these paragraphs.

Jen offers four (4) basic presentations for schools and other student groups:

**Talk #1: “Combining Fact & Fiction.”** (All grade levels.) This is an overview of Jen’s current books with an emphasis on how she combines research and imagination to develop historical and biographically-based stories and novels.

*Outline for this talk:* Begins with a brief look at the author’s childhood interests and what made her become a writer; then a glimpse into her current writing life and how she develops an idea into a book; samples of illustrations from each of Jen’s picture books and discussion of how artists interpret and expand upon the author’s words; excerpts from picture book texts to show use of literary devices and make the connection to poetry; discussion of the research and writing of Jen’s historical novel *THE TRIAL*, based on the 1935 Lindbergh baby kidnapping trial; additional slides showing research and writing of Jen’s contemporary novel *PIECES OF GEORGIA*, which incorporates the lives and paintings of the three generations of Wyeth artists at the Brandywine River Museum in Chester County, PA; list of Jen’s tips for young writers; Q & A..

**Talk #2: “The Magic of Picture Books.”** (Recommended for lower elementary grades.) This presentation focuses on Jen’s current *picture book titles*, which are all based on real people. It shows how she develops a story around each biographical subject (the painter Georgia O’Keeffe, the composer Olivier Messiaen, the poet Marianne Moore) and how she researches them. The creative process is emphasized, including the value of individual perspectives and the necessity of hard work.

Outline is *the same as* for Talk #1, but with additional slides and discussion for the picture books and with only a brief mention of the novels (to compare/ contrast the two types of books from a writer’s perspective.) Q & A.

**Talk #3: “Write What You Know, Write What You Love.”** (Recommended for middle schools and high schools) This talk focuses on Jen’s historical novel *THE TRIAL*, based on the 1935 Lindbergh baby kidnapping trial, and also on her contemporary novel *PIECES OF GEORGIA*, which incorporates the lives and paintings of the Wyeth family.

Outline: Brief overview of Jen’s childhood (she grew up in Flemington, NJ, the town where the Lindbergh baby kidnapping trial was held) and current writing life (she lives in Chester County, PA, not far from Chadds Ford and the Brandywine River Museum, where the novel *Pieces of Georgia* takes place); slides and discussion will focus on how Jen has incorporated autobiographical elements and her interest in the creative process into her novels; the themes of overcoming loss, personal and economic difficulties, and the power of friendship, explored in both novels, will also be discussed; Jen will read a few excerpts from each book; Q & A follows.

Talk #4 : “*Two Trials of the Twentieth Century*” (recommended for middle grades and high school) This talk focuses on the two novels Jen has written based on famous—and still controversial---trials: The 1925 Scopes Evolution Trial (book title: *RINGSIDE 1925: Views from the Scopes Trial*) and the 1935 Lindbergh Baby Kidnapping case (book title: *The Trial*). Jen will discuss how she became interested in these cases, what kind of research she did, and how she chose the structure, style, and narrative strategy for each story. Using archival photographs that depict the real/historical people, events, and places in each of these books, she will also discuss how she incorporated the fictional characters which appear in each novel. Q & A is encouraged afterwards.

Each of these presentations lasts approx. 50-60 minutes (can be adjusted to accommodate bell/class schedules) including a Question & Answer portion at the end. All talks are accompanied by Power Point slides, which Jen brings with her on a CD-R. The school is responsible for providing the following:

Any and ALL books for Jen to sign for the students while she’s there. Jen does not stock her own titles—they must be ordered by the school through a local bookstore, an on-line source, or through the publisher. Book orders should be completed and the books paid for by the students before Jen’s visit.

Laptop w/ Power Point software.

LCD projector and extension cord.

Screen and ability to darken the room.

Table for book display.

Microphone (for large group talks.) Podium is nice, but optional.

Directions to the school and any parking regulations.

Written schedule for the day, including times, approx. size and grade levels.

***Additional suggestions for getting the MOST from the author's visit:***

- 1) Teachers and students should view the author's website [www.jenbryant.com](http://www.jenbryant.com) to become familiar with her books and personal background.
- 2) Students should have read *at least one of Jen's books* previous to her visit. Librarians can make Jen's titles available in the school library a month or two beforehand.
- 3) All of Jen's current picture books and novels have excellent discussion guides written for individual or classroom use. For downloadable versions, just click on the book cover on her website and scroll down to where it says **Teacher's Guide**. For picture books, click on the cover, follow the prompts to "more information," and when you reach the publisher's website, click on the link for "**discussion guide**."
- 4) Before the visit, teachers should help their students brainstorm some questions to ask Jen. The best questions are those which *help students learn something new or useful about the writing process* (i.e. Jen is happy to answer questions such as "What's your favorite book?" but that's not very helpful to the kids in trying to better understand their own challenges in writing. Something like: "Do you use an outline?" or "How do you feel when your editor suggests that you to change something major in your story?" goes a lot further in helping them to have confidence in their own work once Jen leaves.)
- 5) Individual teachers might want to get creative and design special projects (book mark contests, drawings in the manner of Georgia O'Keeffe, skits based on scenes from the Lindbergh trial, a field trip to the Brandywine River museum, etc.) to supplement Jen's visit. In the case of the novels, they can also have the students do on-line research:  
<http://www.nj.com/lindbergh/> ; [www.brandywinemusuem.org](http://www.brandywinemusuem.org);  
or [http://www.tnhistoryforkids.org/places/scopes\\_museum](http://www.tnhistoryforkids.org/places/scopes_museum).

**To book a school visit, conference, or library presentation, please contact:**

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