

Authors' and Publishers' Use of Social Media in Children's Book Marketing

Marketing makes the business world go round, and social media marketing is a strategy that is more prevalent now than ever before. Companies and individuals alike use social media to market products and interact with customers on platforms like Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and Instagram. The publishing industry utilizes social media to advertise things like upcoming books and author events for all genres, including children's books, and it should be no surprise that this marketing tactic is the most effective when implemented by individuals who have a large following and can therefore reach many more eyeballs than those with a meager, or even average, follower count. Popular authors and celebrities both meet these criteria, and there are many celebrities trying their hand at writing children's books alongside already well-established children's authors. By looking at four books written by celebrities and two by big name children's authors and documenting the social media buzz surrounding each title, it will be possible to form a list of best practices pertaining to the marketing of all children's books on social media—good advice for all publishers and authors to consider when crafting their social media strategies.

A Necessity (or Lack Thereof) for Social Media Marketing of Children's Books

But first—is social media relevant in the marketing of children's books? After all, children who are reading picture books are not going to friend an author or publisher on Facebook, nor will they be scanning Goodreads for the next bestselling novel. Emma Walton Hamilton, children's book author, editor, and writing coach, says “for those of you who are wondering if social networking applies to children's book authors, the answer is a resounding YES” (Hamilton). This is because children's books need to be attractive to “both the child who will be at the library picking

out his or her book and the adult who will ultimately be the one to buy the book for the child,” says self-published author Tiffany Papageorge (Palmer). A children’s book reviewer for *The Guardian* (site member JBOO1698) cannot extol the virtues of frequenting and connecting on sites like Twitter and Tumblr enough, because “reading books and just saying, ‘That was good!’ is nowhere near good enough any more,” and nothing speaks so loudly as “to have the authors themselves taking a role in this...It says that our society applauds reading and it wants to connect with them” (JBOO1698).

There are many social media platforms, and each one functions differently. Social media birthed BookTube (YouTube), Bookstagram (Instagram), and Booklr (Tumblr). The spoofs on these names reflect the thriving book community that lives on each platform: BookTubers are citizens of YouTube who make videos dedicated to books; Bookstagram is made up of Instagram users with accounts dedicated to the same; Booklr is the (virtual) area of Tumblr where book accounts thrive. These and other book-related fan bases thrive on social media because they exist in an atmosphere catered to them; social media is a hive where people can indulge their passions and share them with others. It follows that of the millions of people who use social media to talk and learn about books they like, many will use this same method to choose books for their children. Mom blogs, book reviewers, and nation-wide book clubs live online; sites like Twitter and Facebook are where parents share thoughts, stories, and advice with one another; Goodreads has multiple book clubs made up of those searching for great books for their children (one group that stands out is “1,001 Children’s Books You Must Read Before You Grow Up,” with over 1,000 members). It could prove extremely detrimental to a book’s success to ignore an area so highly frequented by those who make the decisions about what their child reads. So, yes, social media is important in book marketing. Even children’s book marketing.

Why These Celebrity Authors?

A general viewpoint in the publishing sector is the belief that celebrity authors write mediocre—or even blatantly bad—children's books. *Deadspin* columnist and author Drew Magary claims that any children's book written by a celebrity will be subpar (what he *really* says is that "celebrities write children's books because they're too stupid to write full books and they think anyone can write a children's book," which is a good example of the more harshly worded opinions on the subject) (Magary). Magary's belief is one shared by many others in the realm of children's books.

Though celebrity authors are incessantly ridiculed and mocked by others in the children's publishing community, they are capable of writing that which rivals the quality of books put out by traditional big name children's book authors. In a post that directly addressed Magary's, Tom B.—a father blogging about his experiences in trying to find great books to flesh out his child's library—agreed with his general sentiment but pointed out four celebrity authors that qualified as exceptions. Celebrities like comedian Michael Ian Black, actress Julianne Moore, actress Jamie Lee Curtis, and singer, songwriter, and parodist “Weird” Al Yankovic are four names that are spoken highly of—specifically by Tom B., but they also receive praise from all around the children's publishing sphere. What makes these celebrities' books stand out from other celebrities' books that are less respected (and often downright insulted)? According to Tom B., these books understand kids' sensibilities, stay away from being too “sarcastic, meta, or too clever for their own good,” as well as refraining from making any references that children will not understand for years to come (B., Tom).

While lacking in what Tom B. sees as cheap humor, devoid of “fart jokes and sarcasm,” what these books *do* have is wordplay; they are clever and fun and there is no clumsy rhyming to trip parents up—Yankovic, especially, as a songwriter, has knowledge of rhyme and meter. They exist in a “snark-free environment”; though some of these celebrities may be known for their cynicism, all are able to cordon that off and write something aimed purely at children (Tom B.). Perhaps most

importantly, these four celebrities all teamed up with amazing collaborators: their illustrators include Peter Brown (*Mr. Tiger Goes Wild*), LeUyn Pham (*Before I Was Your Mother*), Laura Cornell (*Good Night Pillow Fight*) and Wes Hargis (*I Need My Own Country!*). Other aspects of children's books viewed favorably are the right amount of text—"large swaths of text on each page" is paramount to "a medieval torture device"—nothing too formulaic or repetitive, and nothing that is a movie or television tie-in (Magary).

Why These Traditional Authors?

The two traditional authors whose books were chosen for this study are Sherri Duskey Rinker and Andrea Beaty, whose books were pulled from the *New York Times* Bestseller Children's Picture Books list. Three of Rinker's books are New York Times #1 Bestsellers, she has six star reviews from sources like *Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, and *School Library Journal*, and one of her books won the NAPPA Gold Award (Award-Winning). Beaty's books have gone on to receive awards and recognition such as two Parents Choice Awards and ranking on the Red Book Top 15 Children's Books list (Press). With these accolades, it is no surprise that these authors are well-respected in the children's book publishing industry.

Methodology

The four celebrity authors' books whose social media hype are to be analyzed are Black's *The Purple Kangaroo*, Moore's *Freckleface Strawberry*, Curtis's *Big Words for Little People*, and Yankovic's *When I Grow Up*. The two traditional, big name author's books are Rinker's *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site* and Beaty's *Ada Twist, Scientist*.

For each book, both the author's and publisher's social media accounts on four platforms were combed through, and if there was a page dedicated to the book or book series, that was looked

at also. In addition, I searched in general the title's hashtag and the phrase itself (though this is not possible on Instagram, where only hashtags can be searched) and analyzed these posts from the public to understand what they are discussing and posting about. If these types of posts differed from the author's and publisher's, then I combined the latter and what is happening organically with the general public to arrive at what the best practices for each book should be. This paper does not claim to be an exhaustive record of what is posted about the book online, but rather a comprehensive overview. At the end, I will combine each book's best practices into a master list of best practices for each platform.

Facebook

The Purple Kangaroo

The Purple Kangaroo was written by Michael Ian Black and published by Simon & Schuster.

Michael Ian Black posted nothing at all about the book on his Facebook page, and Simon & Schuster posted only a behind-the-scenes mockumentary of the book in which Black and his illustrator, Peter Brown, attempt to have a serious discussion about the book's creation, but Black is satirical and very much in his comedian persona.

A search encompassing all of Facebook revealed a lot of discussion and sharing of the mockumentary video. One public library recommended it, and another—Dwight Foster Public Library—brought in the Chief of Police to read the book to preschoolers at storytime and then posted pictures. Parents talked about how much their kids love the book, and many tell the anecdote of pulling it out of their Cheerios box. (*The Purple Kangaroo* won a contest and was given away for free in Cheerios boxes.) One educational page linked to Pinterest where there were crafting and lesson ideas for teachers, and a preschool teacher declared *The Purple Kangaroo* on her list of to-reads.

Black should be more active—posting about the Cheerios contest, interacting with parents, and posting a link to the mockumentary are all ways Black could have boosted his book's online presence. Simon & Schuster needs to post more than once—sharing book reviews and responding to parents would be a good start. There was also a missed opportunity in failing to reach out to the teachers and librarians who seemed willing to create publicity for the book.

Freckleface Strawberry

Freckleface Strawberry was written by Julianne Moore and published by Random House. Moore is active on Twitter, and this feed is linked to her Facebook, so while she is not active here, her timeline is still being updated.

Random House's Twitter activity regarding *Freckleface Strawberry*—though it's their Children's Books Facebook account—is scant. Two posts that the book has been released, an announcement that Moore will be attending BookCon 2015—other than that, their timeline is devoid of promotional material.

Activity surrounding *Freckleface Strawberry* elsewhere on Facebook was more lively. There is a musical based on the book currently making its rounds in children's theater, and alongside much hype about this, *InStyle* magazine posted about the book, as did *Huffington Post*, who included a video of an author interview. There was a post from a reviewer and advertisements for homemade children's dresses based off the story. One of *Freckleface Strawberry*'s friend has two moms, and there was a post that remarked favorably upon that.

Both Random House and Moore could have connected to the musical more; popular enough to be reviewed by the *New York Times*, it has too large an audience to ignore. Moore's timeline (though none of it was actually via Facebook) was busy; Random House, however, could have posted much more content. *Huffington Post*'s video was never shared by the publisher and there

were no reviews—either fan or professional—on their page. The appearance of two moms was a door that either Moore or Random House could have used to invite a LGBTQ conversation, but a door left closed.

Big Words for Little People

Big Words for Little People was written by Jamie Lee Curtis and published by Harper Collins. Neither Curtis nor Harper Collins posted anything related to the book on their Facebook pages.

This is reflected in, or perhaps causes, the lack of buzz around *Big Words for Little People* in Facebook's book community. There were three posts: a book account posted a video of Curtis talking about the book, a parent posted about her child using a big word as a direct result of reading Curtis's book, and one user recommending the book and shared a video of it being read to children.

The lack of enthusiasm on this platform by the public is likely connected to the lack of effort put in by both the author and publisher. The latter two need to post interviews and share reviews, to respond to readers complimenting it online; these actions will foster relationships and spark conversations.

When I Grow Up

When I Grow Up was written by Al Yankovic and published by Harper Collins. When it pubbed, Yankovic posted that the book was out, and that it had debuted at number four on the *New York Times* Bestseller List. Yankovic shared NPR's link to their review, and he gave locations of where he would be signing books along with a link to pre-order. *When I Grow Up* has an app, and Yankovic posted an app trailer and a book trailer and shared radio interviews.

Harper Collins's publicization of *When I Grow Up* is an improvement on *Big Words for Little People*, but only just. Besides urging their followers to vote for the app in the Best Kids Apps Readers Choice Awards, they shared one book review.

Harper Collins's dismal Facebook representation did little to curb the excitement of the public this time, however. In addition to the book review by NPR that Yankovic shared, both USA Today and the App Store posted about the app. Bookstores posted about the book and book blogs recommended it; teachers shared pictures of the book being read in class, and the different projects they did based on it. There were multiple videos of children who were reading and reviewing the book themselves, and an art account posted a child's painting about done after reading the book. The buzz around *When I Grow Up* spread so far that even those outside the education or book communities were vocal about it: a Star Wars costuming group posted about the book's release.

While Yankovic could have interacted with teachers and really tapped into the educational sphere more, it is Harper Collins who has the potential to improve the most. Though if your book has interactive or captivating supplementals (like an app or a play), it is beneficial to promote them, the publisher would have done better focusing on the book. Sharing reviews and lesson plans, interacting with teachers and parents, and sharing articles from big name publications like NPR are all strategies Harper Collins could have implemented.

Mighty, Mighty Construction Site

Mighty, Mighty Construction Site was written by Sherri Duskey Rinker and published by Chronicle. Rinker has an active official author page which posts original content and shares content from fans. She shared reviews written by big name publications like *Publishers Weekly* and *Wall Street Journal* and by popular book blogs. Rinker posted a television interview she gave and a photo of herself and the illustrator at the coffee shop where they wrote the book. Rinker also has a personal Facebook page, and posts about the book mirror those on her author page.

The book itself has a Facebook page heavily furnished with information. Their first post, back in December of 2016, touts *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site's* book trailer along with pre-order

links. The page shared the author's coffee shop picture and, the day before *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site* pubbed, hosted a livestream video of the book's editor and marketing manager discussing the first book in the series (*Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site*), then giving a sneak peak of the morrow's release. They responded to comments left on the video's post, interacting with their readers in a way that publishers in this study have yet to match. The book's page featured a picture of Rinker and a group of children at storytime, and shared an Instagram user's review. When the book debuted at number one on the *New York Times* Bestseller List, there was a congratulatory post with a picture of the two books and the physical copy of the list.

Chronicle's Facebook has the congratulatory post and photograph and the livestream video from the book's Facebook page. There were also two invitations to pre-order the book and receive a free plush toy—one included a photo montage of these items. While Chronicle did make an effort on Facebook, it does not hold up well under comparison to the author's and book's pages.

This book's online buzz was stronger than any analyzed so far. *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site* was read at Barnes and Nobles' storytime across the nation, and stores—Sarasota Springs, New York, and Independence, Missouri, just to name two—posted in the days leading up to the event and uploaded photos afterward. Independent bookstores and public libraries also posted about the book being read at their storytimes, and about their excitement at the book's release. These libraries and independent bookstores were also quick to recommend it and post reviews. Parents too reviewed the book, and documented their and their children's eagerness to read it. A local television station hosted a contest to win a free, signed copy. Fans posted videos of the book being read aloud, and many linked to the book trailer. On pub date, one fan shared *Publishers Weekly's* article about the new book. A healthy amount of educational content is available online thanks to teachers and educational pages reviewing and recommending it.

Rinker did well on Facebook, the best of any author analyzed in this paper; she could have reached into the educational market more, and she should have shared more reviews from established publications like *Publishers Weekly*. The PW article she shared focused on her first book; the only effort to promote the article about the second was made by a fan. The official book series's Facebook page also did very well; hosting the livestream, pushing the pre-order, and advertising using the book trailer are all effective strategies—though it, too, would have benefitted from some attention paid to the educational sphere. Chronicle has room for improvement: sharing posts from the author or book account is an easy way to post accurate, trustworthy content. Reviewers, bookstores, and libraries were out in full force for this book, and not sharing or interacting with them was an oversight.

Ada Twist, Scientist

Beaty has an author Facebook page with two posts: one is an activity that goes along with her book; the other is shared from a book account that ranked her book as one of their Favorite Picture Books of the Year. Beaty also has a personal Facebook page, but the only post related to *Ada Twist, Scientist* is Beaty wrote to a real scientist, saying there was a reference to her in the illustrations and inviting her to spot it.

Abrams Books has four different Facebook pages that posted about Beaty's book to various degrees. A & C Kids UK post heavily; back in January of 2016 they shared someone's post declaring *Ada Twist, Scientist* was on the 2016 Books to Watch list. They also shared a BuzzFeed article, "11 Unsung Science Heroines," and added to it that Rosie Revere, Engineer (a character from one of Beaty's previous books in the series) and *Ada Twist, Scientist* were in good company; they also gave a sneak peak at the book's contents for British Science Week. There were multiple posts introducing the title character and the cover image and some inside illustrations were posted as well. A & C Kids

UK shared the article, "11 Feminist Books to Read to Your Son, Because the World Needs More Feminists," because Rosie Revere made the list; they also shared *Publishers Weekly's* review, and the reviews of book accounts. On pub date, they posted two times—they welcomed Ada Twist to the team (with a link to buy) and gave a synopsis of the book, urging readers to complete their set.

Abrams and Chronicle Books posted less than A & C Kids UK, and everything they posted was either the same or shared from that of the UK account. These posts were the 2016 Books to Watch list, the 11 Feminist Books list, a post announcing the three-month countdown to pub date, a link to pre-order, a post introducing Ada Twist, and the post from pub date welcoming Ada Twist to the team and providing a link to buy the book. Abrams Books did not post at all, but Abrams Kids posted considerably. They invited fans to see the author and get an illustration signed at Book Expo America, flaunted *Ada Twist, Scientist* being on the cover of ABA's 2016 Young Reader's Catalog, linked to an author interview—all before pub date. They hosted a blog tour, where bloggers could share videos of science experiments to prove how fun science could be. They posted that the book debuted at number one on the *New York Times* Bestseller List, invited followers to join the author on Twitter for a chat, and another time at the National Convention Center. When #AdaLovelaceDay and #DayoftheGirl fell on the same day, Abrams Kids took the opportunity to push the book more; they also took advantage of #UniversalChildrensDay, #PeriodicTableDay and #WomensHistoryMonth. They posted about awards (like the Parents Choice Awards) won and linked to articles from important publications like *Wall Street Journal*.

This huge amount of attention given to this book by the publisher is matched by the enthusiasm seen by Facebook users. Parents eagerly awaited the book's release and shared early reviews, many who pre-ordered posted their excitement at the book's arrival; in general, parents were quick to recommend and share their reviews and opinions with their general feed and groups like "Books for Our Daughters." Because of its topic, this book got a lot of traction with educators

and teachers. Because it is a STEM-based book, many of the posts came from accounts like STEM Kids Chicago. Teachers posted reviews and lesson plans, and three posted a picture of them dressed up as the series' three main characters for Halloween. Educational pages like Gravity Bread posted links to their reviews and lesson plans, as well. Verified account A Mighty Girl gave away three signed copies of the books in their first-ever giveaway, and bookstores posted links to their reviews and an NPR article. Picture Hooks, a non profit organization, posted that *Ada Twist, Scientist* was listed as one of "25 Diverse Children's Books to Countdown the Holidays and Spread Kindness"; the main character is a person of color and a budding scientist, so there was much chatter and praise to this effect.

Though the author did not contribute a lot of content on this platform, it was made up for in the vast number of posts made by the combined Abrams accounts. The publisher did a good job focusing on education and teachers and promoting where and when the author was having events. Of all publishers analyzed in this paper, Abrams did the best job promoting their book via Facebook. What Abrams did especially well—something that no other publisher has done so successfully, if at all—was to watch for and incorporate current events, trending hashtags, and relevant articles. There is little Abrams could have done to improve their Facebook presence.

Facebook Best Practices

- Push the pre-order
- Respond to/interact with parents
- Respond to/interact with teachers and librarians
- Link to author interviews or videos of the author
- Share reviews from teachers, book blogs, and especially big publications like *Publishers Weekly*
- Post the book trailer

- If a publisher or author has multiple Facebook pages, utilize all of them. Focus the main push on the children's publishing page and the author's official page, and use the others as supplementals.
- Watch for relevant articles, events, or hashtags you can use as an excuse to mention the book

Instagram

The Purple Kangaroo

Neither Black nor Simon & Schuster posted anything on Instagram about *The Purple Kangaroo*.

Searching #ThePurpleKangaroo hashtag got three hits. Laredo Library and a Bookstagram account, Little Book Station, both posted an image of the book cover, and an improv club used the hashtag to attract traffic to their advertising free tickets to one of Black's live shows.

With such a unique title, this book makes a great hashtag. Posting original photos and regramming (sharing Instagram posts from other accounts on your feed) others' would have been a great way for Black and Simon & Schuster to spark interest.

Freckleface Strawberry

Julianne Moore did not post about *Freckleface Strawberry*, and it would appear that the Random House Kids account did not either, though it is difficult to say definitively since searching for phrases is impossible. If they did post about the book, they did not utilize the hashtag.

A platform-wide search of the hashtag brought up a large number of posts, all pertaining to the musical.

In the future, posting photos of book events and cover reveals would boost awareness. Both Random House Kids and Moore should consider this, though especially Random House as they have an account dedicated to this genre and Moore posts infrequently. When posting about their book, Moore and her publishers should use hashtags to tap into existing conversations, like the one surrounding the musical.

Big Words for Little People

Curtis has a very active Instagram, which made it difficult to scroll back to the time of publication (2008), but Curtis does not shy away from posting about her love of literature. There were at least five posts of her newer children's book, *This Is Me*, with a #ThisIsMeBook hashtag. It is likely that Curtis posted about *Big Words for Little People*, but if so she did not use a hashtag.

Harper Collins's Instagram only goes back two years and ten months, so any activity around the pub date did not exist. However, they do post children's book pictures, though they don't appear to hashtag titles on a regular basis.

A search of the title's hashtag showed that one page in particular was catching people's eye: a page about the word "different." Pictures of this page were common and one bookstore had a photo of the quote painted on their window. Another popular word was "love," and there were two posts about this page. There was a picture of a father reading to his child and another of a kid's face as he looked at the pages. *Big Words for Little People* was one of the books discussed on the first season of a YouTube show called "Kids Book Weekly," and there was a mention of this on Instagram.

If Curtis's book were published today, it would likely be featured on Harper Collins's Instagram, but Harper Collins, like Random House, would benefit from consistently hashtagging their titles. Unlike Moore, Curtis is active on Instagram and should use it to her advantage by posting (and hashtagging) and regramming photos.

When I Grow Up

Yankovic's posts only dated back one year and two months; his book pubbed in 2011. Multiple posts about his show getting a second season on Disney XD seems to reflect his willingness to advertise on his behalf, however, and if his book were published today there would likely be posts.

Again, Harper Collins's posts go back only two years and ten months, so there was no activity around *When I Grow Up*'s pub date.

Unlike *The Purple Kangaroo*, this book's title is too generic for a simple search of the hashtag to unearth any book-related posts from six years ago, and a search of #WhenIGrowUpBook provided no results.

Much like the previous two books, Instagram activity surrounding this book should be better marked with the use of hashtags. From this example it becomes apparent that if a book's title is too generic, it could be useful to create a different hashtag by adding "book" to the end, as Curtis did.

Mighty, Mighty Construction Site

Rinker is very active on Instagram, and she posts a lot of photos related to her book. Of those analyzed here, she is the most successful author at utilizing this platform. The first appearance of *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site* was the cover reveal; the next was a picture of it on the first page of Chronicle's spring catalog. She posted a picture of herself with a group of children at a school visit, and another shot of her visiting children in which she said in her caption that she was grateful for "real moments of exchange" and loves "their joy, their honesty, their excitement, their limitless potential." Another group of kids she dubbed "Mighty, Mighty Awesome Fans." She posted a picture a child drew of her book's character; she posted a picture of the book on a pile of plush toys because if you pre-ordered from the publisher, you got one free. She gave a shout out to her favorite

local bookstore, tagging them and telling fans they could get a free signed copy there. Rinker also posts photos that are not hers; these are always used for promotional reasons and she always gives credit. These regrammed photos include the caption of the original poster: the book review.

Chronicle Books's Instagram posted four times about *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site*, which is more posts than any publisher so far. They posted the same picture as the author—the book on a pile of plush toys—with the same message: pre-order from us and get the toy free. They posted once more about pre-ordering and shared happily.ever.elephant's photo and book review, and then they posted both *Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site* and *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site* next to a copy of the *New York Times* Bestseller List, as these two books held spots one and two.

Rinker and Chronicle Books posted more on Instagram than did the author or publisher of any other book analyzed thus far; indeed, of the six, they were the most successful publishing house to marketing their book on this site. This is reflected in the many results of a search of the title's hashtag. There were eight posts of mothers reading the book to their sons; Barnes and Nobles stores across the country posted pictures of the book to advertise storytime—Princeton, New Jersey; Sacramento, California; Warwick, Rhode Island; Wilmington, North Carolina, just to name some. Bookstagram accounts posted reviews, and a local television station posted a picture of Rinker signing a book that they were giving away.

Rinker and Chronicle both did well on Instagram; between the two of them, they interacted with fans, highlighted the *New York Times* ranking, pushed the pre-order sales, and shared Bookstagram reviews.

Ada Twist, Scientist

The author has an Instagram account, but it is inactive; she has never posted at all. Abrams Books has an Instagram. There was a photo of a shelf in a bookstore dedicated entirely to them, and

all three books in the series were on display. Though there were too many posts under the hashtag to say definitively, this appears to be the only post of the books on their account.

There were a total of 560 posts under the title's hashtag, too many to completely analyze. A partial analysis showed multiple bookstores were posting about the book's arrival, there were pictures of the book being read to groups of children, over fifteen posts were of parents who were excited that their pre-orders came in, and there were more than ten posts of a child with the book. *Ada Twist, Scientist*, like *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site*, was used for storytime nationwide, and over ten stores had posts advertising the event.

Unlike Facebook, both the publisher and author dropped the ball on Instagram. Fans were as present and excited as ever, but no effort was made to direct this energy and excitement to purchasing or reviewing the book.

Instagram Best Practices

- Utilize hashtags. They are the only way your book can be tracked/found on this platform
Use the book's title if it's a unique title; if it's generic, use the title with "book" at the end
- Post photos of book events and author readings
- Regram photos of books—this is a great way to share Bookstagram reviews
- If a certain page or aspect of your book is popular, use it. Regram fan photos or post your own

Tumblr

The Purple Kangaroo

Michael Ian Black's Tumblr does not have any content about *The Purple Kangaroo*, published in 2009, but it does have one post regarding his next children's book, *A Pig Parade is a Terrible Idea*,

which came out in 2010. Though he has published a few children's books since then, none of these are mentioned on his Tumblr feed.

Neither Simon & Schuster's nor Simon & Schuster Children's Books Tumblr have content about *The Purple Kangaroo*.

There were no posts about Black's book that came up on a general search of Tumblr.

Perhaps this book is underrepresented on Tumblr because the author and publisher failed to appreciate the possible market value of the users on this site. Perhaps in 2009 the publishing industry was not as aware of or fluent in social media marketing. Likely, both. This book could have benefited from the author or publisher—both with active Tumblr accounts—posting about it.

Freckleface Strawberry

Moore does not have a Tumblr, and though Random House does, they did not post about it.

Freckleface Strawberry did gain traction on Tumblr, however, with one user posting an image of Moore with the book and fan account posted a photograph of Moore along with a quote about how she came up with the name "Freckleface Strawberry." There were two posts that were quotes from the book, and much of the other content was related to the musical.

Short of having Moore create a Tumblr, not much can be done in the way of improving her posts here. As for Random House, there is a conversation happening on Tumblr about not only the musical, but the book as well, and reblogging fan content or posting their own would likely have spurred the conversation even further.

Big Words for Little People

Jamie Lee Curtis does not have a Tumblr, and Harper Collins did not post anything related to her book.

There were no posts about Curtis's *Big Word for Little People* that came up in a general search of Tumblr.

Curtis's book was published a year before Black's, so speculation as to why his book is not discussed on Tumblr is relevant here. Again, either the possible market value of the users on this site was unappreciated or the publishing industry was not as yet aware of or good at social media marketing. Like *The Purple Kangaroo*, this book could have benefited from being posted about.

When I Grow Up

Yankovic does not have a Tumblr, but Harper Collins Children's Books's Tumblr posted about him twice: once they advertised a giveaway and then they shared a YouTube video about Yankovic's second book. This publisher's Tumblr activity, though meager, ranks the highest of all analyzed publishers.

Though a general search of this phrase provided results, they were unrelated to the book.

Published in 2011, this book comes a few years later than Curtis's or Black's, but the same suppositions can be made.

Mighty, Mighty Construction Site

Rinker does not have a Tumblr; Chronicle Books does, and they posted a quote from Rinker and about Rinker's other books, but there is no mention of *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site*.

A platform-wide search did not reveal much more; there was a negative review and the same quote that was posted by the publisher.

Rinker's book was published this year (2017), so does not fall in the same category regarding Tumblr usage as Black's and Curtis's. Therefore, it seems the lack of activity on this platform may be a result of limited time or resources; unlike the previous publishers, Chronicle is an independent publishing house with a smaller staff. If this is the case, I would recommend Chronicle sync their

lively Instagram feed to their Tumblr—their hashtags will carry over and their feed will be richer without them having to do extra work.

Ada Twist, Scientist

Neither the author nor publisher has a Tumblr account.

There is a conversation happening about *Ada Twist, Scientist* on this platform, however. A Booklr account posted that it would be a great gift and attached a picture of the cover. A bookstore (McNally Jackson) posted about it, and the fuckyeahchildrensbooks account (There is a "fuckyeah" account for all major fandoms; fuckyeahjerseyboys, fuckyeahsherlock, ect. This is a testament to the account's reach.) had a post about it.

Because Andrea Beaty and Abrams Books do not have Tumblr accounts, there is little that can be done to improve on this platform, though it should be noted that any effort made here would be time well spent; there is a conversation trying to happen amongst the fanbase.

Tumblr Best Practices

- Don't ignore this platform; Booklr is a thriving community. That being said, because Tumblr is the least utilized by all authors/publishers and appears to have the least organic activity surrounding these titles, perhaps a smaller effort can be made here. Booklr is an active community, but Tumblr users tend to be younger (18-29) and are therefore less likely to search for children's books.
- Reblog fan content, interact and respond to fans
- Connecting to Instagram can strengthen your feed; the hashtags carry over so posts will be searchable

Twitter

The Purple Kangaroo

Black was more proactive on Twitter than any other platform. A father said his kids loved "The Purple Elephant," and Black responded, correcting his mistake and thanking him. He joined the movement to get his book inside the Cheerios box, and he wrote back to a fan who asked what *The Purple Kangaroo* was about. As recently as 2016, Black responded to a mother's tweet about the book being a good bedtime story.

Contrastingly, Simon & Schuster's Twitter account dedicated to children's book, SimonKIDS, tweeted only three times—all in 2010. SimonKIDS publicized that the illustrator would be signing books in California and Seattle, they asked followers to check out Black's new book (though the link provided was defunct), and they tweeted that the book was *New York Post*–recommended.

Like Black, fans were more talkative about *The Purple Kangaroo* on Twitter than anywhere else. Parents tweeted that they were reading it to their kids. Some participated in the campaign to get his book in the Cheerios box; others shared his mockumentary video. SCIBA, an indie bookstore in Southern California, Arlington VA Public Library and the Manhattan Public Library tweeted about the book. It was discussed that Black would be reading at the Bronx Zoo—information that was not publicized by either Black or his publisher. Authors like Josh Funk and Bill Corbett tweeted favorably about it, and Funk linked to "Off the Library Shelf" choosing it for Picture Book of the Week.

Though Black was more active on Twitter than elsewhere, he could have done more. Simon & Schuster, too, did not advertise the book as well as authors, libraries, and parents did on their own. Tweeting about awards won and readings given would be a place to start.

Freckleface Strawberry

Like Black, Moore is more active on Twitter than any other platform. Moore gave some attention to the musical. When her newest book's pub date arrived (*Freckleface Strawberry* is a series), she tweeted about it. Like *When I Grow Up*, *Freckleface Strawberry* has apps, and Moore posted images of herself with her "monster" from the Monster Maker Game and invited kids to make their own and share with her. She responded to a parent and thanked an elementary school principal who read it aloud to students. Moore also retweeted a picture of her reading to students ("the kids were great"), and thanked a bookstore for featuring her book. Moore tags Random House often and gives them many opportunities to see the content she's responding to.

The *Freckleface Strawberry* book series and app have a Twitter account. This account tweeted when the app and each of her books become available, about a contest to win a personalized, autographed book set, and a video of Moore talking about her book on *Good Morning America*.

Though Moore gave Random House every opportunity to either retweet her, jump into the conversations she was having with parents and educators, or both, they never once took her up on it. In fact, Random House never tweeted about *Freckleface Strawberry* at all.

Even putting aside the many tweets about the musical, "Freckleface Strawberry" is an oft-mentioned phrase. Big-name organizations and authors, such as The Emmy's, Ellen DeGeneres, Angie Hawkins, John Contratti, Nafiza Azad, are tweeting about the book. John Schu, the Ambassador of School Libraries for Scholastic, and review account Baby Bookworm both favorably reviewed the book. Teachers, authors, and parents alike are exclaiming how good *Freckleface Strawberry* is for the classroom; one class did a comparison of the book and the musical, and one teacher used it to caution against bullying.

Moore interacted with fans and publicized her book well on Twitter. She interacted more than once with educators on the site, retweeted their content, and posted original content of her own. Even one retweet would be an improvement for Random House, but they would do well to

balance out Moore's focus on teachers and fans by retweeting authors', Ellen DeGeneres's, and the Emmy's favorable remarks.

Big Words for Little People

Neither Curtis nor Harper Collins nor Harper Childrens tweeted anything about this book.

Big Words for Little People is talked about a lot by the public, however. As with Instagram, the page discussing the word "different" is given a lot of attention (one parent says President Trump would do well to read it). There are videos of parents reading the book to children, and parents tweeting about picking it up at the library or reading it in their kid's classroom, and book accounts recommended it.

It is unclear why neither Curtis nor her publisher tweeted about the book, but the abundance of discussion when you consider it was all organic, that they were talking about it with no motivation, is impressive. Any mention of the book by the publisher or Curtis would have only pushed this discussion further.

When I Grow Up

Yankovic tweeted about his book only three times: he wished to promote his book "in honor of Groundhog Day," he announced its release, and he said it debuted at number four on the *New York Times* Bestseller List.

Harper Collins tweeted photos of the author at a book signing and a video of him reading an excerpt. They congratulated him on his debut at number four, and tweeted multiple times about the app.

Harper Children's tweeted about the cover release and gave an inside peek at the illustrations. They talked about Yankovic signing copies and gave the information on how to win one. Harper Children's tweeted that the book won Best Picture Book of 2011 on Goodreads and

retweeted a library that received fifteen copies of the book; they retweeted a *New York Times* article and Yankovic's interview with USA Today about the app; they also congratulated him when it won multiple awards.

Fans, too, were eager to talk about the app and the awards it won. Parents tweeted that they were going out to buy the book, that they liked the book, that the book touched them; three fan accounts urged followers to vote for his book on Goodreads, and three congratulated him when he won, including the sales director for Harper Collins Canada. A library in Michigan reviewed the book and tweeted about it four times; many praised the book, one writing it was written by "someone with talent." A reading account with over 15,000 followers applauded the book and linked to his review. One reader linked to a YouTube video of Yankovic reading his book, another linked to an interview he did.

Yankovic could have tweeted more about the book and any events; he could have responded to parents and reviewers, or retweeted Harper Children's congratulations on his Goodreads award—or even better, tweeted about it himself. The app was a hot topic with both the fans and the publisher, but Yankovic did not mention it at all. Harper Children's made an effort to keep his book relevant, but they could have conversed with parents and reviewers more, and they should have promoted the book signing.

Mighty, Mighty Construction Site

Rinker did not have as strong a presence on Twitter as she did on Instagram, only tweeting three times (to the same person) in a back-and-forth about the lack of female characters (in short, a mother was happy to see more of them in *Mighty, Mighty Construction Site* than *Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site*).

Chronicle Kids tweeted a link to follow if you were interested in pre-ordering, and then a celebratory tweet when the book debuted at number one.

Mighty, Mighty Construction Site, despite being poorly represented by its publisher and author, has a huge presence on Twitter. Ten or more parents since the book pubbed in February have tweeted enthusiastically, and, because of the national storytime assignation, more than twenty Barnes and Noble stores tweeted about the book. Independent bookstores and libraries were tweeting about it too; one librarian claimed, "It's a winner," another complimented its rhyme, another quoted a line from the book. There were many reviews from book and mom blogs, and children's authors like Maureen Grenier and Barry Gray, as well as the Ambassador of School Libraries for Scholastic and the Gaithersburg Book Festival tweeted about the book.

Rinker and Chronicle Books could have done better on Twitter. The willingness and eagerness of the *Construction Site* book series fan base could have been harnessed and used to further promote the book and spread the word. Taking their natural excitement and using it to influence others to pick up the book themselves is key. Retweeting the many tweets sent from bookstores—national chain bookstores and independents alike—and libraries would have been an easy way to promote the title, and retweeting the many reviews would have boosted the book's reputation even more.

Ada Twist, Scientist

Andrea Beaty does not have a personal Twitter account; her handle (@andreabeaty) is connected to an account dedicated to the book series. Beaty's tweets concerning *Ada Twist, Scientist* differed in an interesting way from those of the previous authors in that she almost exclusively jumped into conversations to mention the book. She joined one conversation between someone asking for a children's book recommendation and someone responding *Rosie Revere, Engineer* to say

that *Ada Twist, Scientist* was coming out soon. Another time she answered a middle school teacher's question regarding good books for a science classroom; he did not tag the author but did use the hashtags #scicomm and #ngsschat. On pub date, Beaty tweeted that the book was out ("and she's off!") and used the hashtags #stem #science #teched.

Abrams has two Twitter accounts, Abrams Chronicle and Abrams Kids. The former tweeted when the pub date was one month away and again when the book launched. Abrams Kids' only tweet was a response to the verified Emily Chancy ("interviews with influencers you need to know") saying they were glad she enjoyed the book and if interested in an interview with the author, to DM them.

The conversation happening generally was dominated by education; by very nature, this book drew the attention of teachers, educational organizations, and elementary schools. One teacher shared a photo of Beaty reading at a large assembly, another read it to his class, and an educational account declared the pub date to be "a great day for children's literature." The educational buzz was followed closely by the posts from bookstores and libraries: receiving the books, recommending it to followers, how excited they were, their reviews—all were present in the weeks after publication. A special author interview was held by children's book author Danielle Herzog's children, and Barnes and Noble's verified BN Kids Blog tweeted about it. A bookseller tweeted that she had bad news and she had good news; the book was on backorder from Baker and Taylor! Parents, too, tweeted—praising, recommending, buying, discussing. Vera Sweeney, a verified Twitter user known for her very popular blog, talked about the book using the #MTBookChat hashtag—meaning "Mom Trends."

While Beaty did an excellent job searching hashtags and mentions of her past books to insert herself into conversations, she could have been more active. She showed a certain level of determination and internet-savvy, but this was not followed through with any consistency or goal;

where were her own tweets about visiting a school, or retweets of the many parents or educators who praised her story? Her publisher, adept at Facebook though they may be, did not perform well on Twitter. They, too, should have been responding to parents, teachers, and educational accounts who were praising and reviewing the book. They could have shared the popular author interview done by Herzog's children and taken advantage of the "Mom Trends" hashtag.

Twitter Best Practices

- Parents, librarians, bookstores, and other authors tend to lead the discussing about children's books. Interact with them somehow: retweet or respond
- Retweeting from bookstores, libraries, and reviewers spreads awareness and lessens the "business to consumer" vibe; these are real tweets from real people vs. tweets aimed toward selling a product
- Tweet frequently. A tweet's lifespan is less than a post on any other platform.
- Authors, retweet your publishers; publishers, retweet your authors
- If a big name (Ellen DeGeneres or The Emmy's) tweet about your book, retweet and/or thank them
- Connecting your Twitter to your Facebook is a great strategy for someone who is more active on the former than the latter
- If your book has an aspect that makes it timely or especially moving (Curtis's "love" or "different"), use it
- Advertise book signings and author events
- Search for hashtags as a way to join conversations

Conclusions

Social media marketing is free and effective, which may account for the effort put forth by small publishers (such as Chronicle) operating under a smaller budget than large publishers (such as Harper Collins and Random House). Whatever the reason, large publishers do not utilize social media as effectively as small ones; small publishers post more frequently, interact with their author and fans, and share more articles and reviews.

It also became clear that celebrity children's book authors do a poor job of promoting their own books. While traditional authors seem to share the burden of marketing and promotion with their publishers, celebrity authors give the impression that once the book is written their job is done. Even authors like Julianne Moore, who was active on Twitter, did not expand these efforts to other platforms. An assumption that because a celebrity has a pre-existing fan base means that the marketing team has less to do would be fallacious; a large fan base is not an excuse to do less work, but rather motivation to try even harder to connect with a huge group of people eager to spread awareness and buy an author's product.

A trend seen in all publishers' and authors' online behavior was to choose one or two social media platforms they obviously felt the most comfortable with and not stray too far. Instead, publishers and authors should use their collateral as much as possible, whether this means using the same posts verbatim, restructuring a post for another platform, or writing completely new content, it is imperative to market everywhere. These platforms have proven to have a strong book community and readers interested in having conversations about children's books. To ignore this group of consumers is a mistake. Syncing Twitter and Facebook is effective, as is syncing Instagram to either Facebook or Tumblr—something no publisher or author thought to do.

Finding reviews written by parents, librarians, *Publishers Weekly*, and bloggers was incredibly simple. There is no reason for publishers or authors not to find the same content I did and share it. Children's books are easy to review because of their short length and the inherent interest in them

from educators; even books without an obviously scholarly bent (think *The Purple Kangaroo* vs. *Ada Twist, Scientist*) are read in schools because, by nature, they teach a moral, a lesson, a point. Ignoring what the public says about a book becomes especially unbelievable when people of prominence like Ellen DeGeneres favorably mention it and neither the publisher nor author trouble to thank them or share their post. Author interviews, readings, and signings, too, should always be shared or mentioned by publishers and authors—an event that both parties undoubtedly know is occurring, and the sharing and broadcasting is astonishingly simple and effective. Of course, there are many aspects that make marketing children's books different from marketing YA or adult books, differences that provide a challenge. One of these differences is the marketing toward parents; instead of to the consumer, you must market to their gatekeeper. Another difference is the educational aspect, but far from being a hindrance, the inclusion of this marketplace should benefit all involved.

Children's book publishers need to change the way they utilize social media now—because of the fast-moving pace of social media, a change today can make a difference tomorrow. Social media is free, simple to use, and effective. Pull quotes are great collateral and are especially easy to come by in children's books because of the small word count; pictures are also one of the most important features on social media, and here children's books have the distinct advantage over genres like adult or YA. Most publishers need not even take the extra step of creating a social media account; often they have one, inactive though it may be. All they have to do is use it. Interacting with your audience (or your audience's gatekeepers) in this way will boost the prominence of your title and this can only benefit you.

A further study could focus on the social media activity of illustrators, equally responsible for the book's content. Attention could also be given to Goodreads and YouTube, which were linked to or referenced multiple times in posts on these four platforms.

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