



## **COOKING THE BOOKS : JUNE 2025**

**A revision tool you won't want to miss!**

### **Portugal : A Foodie's Heaven**















Dear

Good food *always* puts me in a good mood. Especially when it's visually appealing, too!

I just got back from a trip to Portugal and I was blown away by the diverse culinary scene. Stunning landscapes, amazing people and of course, food to die for. (*Spoiler Alert: I'm still alive!*)

Here's a fab breakfast we ate at Avocado Restaurant in Obidos, Portugal. [Obidos](#) is little medieval village between Lisbon and Porto. We strolled the cobbled streets, walked along the castle walls for great views and sampled even more pasteis de nata (Portuguese custard tarts).

Sharing a few more highlights on this trip :

From the top:

- 1) Livraria Lello : An old (magical!) bookstore in Porto
- 2) The village of Obidos as seen from the castle walls.
- 3) Monument of the Discoveries: On the northern bank of the Tagus river where ships departed to explore trade with India and the Orient.
- 4) Sitting with Portuguese writer, Fernando Pessoa, in Lisbon, Chiado District.
- 5) A yum dessert at the Flow Restaurant on the last day.
- 6) And my fave, looking through a keyhole at the Pena Palace in Sintra.

Came away with lots of wonderful memories and ideas. And now I want to write a story set in a castle. So much potential.

Any settings that have inspired you? Do share.

## What's up with me...



Search our

Catalogue ▾

for

author, title, or keyword

[SEARCH](#)
[READ, LISTEN, WATCH ▾](#)
[EXPLORE ▾](#)
[SERVICES ▾](#)
[PROGRAMS & EVENTS ▾](#)
[YOUR LIBRARY ▾](#)


Registration opens:

June 26th, 2025



## Scary Stories: Writing Workshop for Kids



Wednesday, July 16

12:00pm - 1:30pm

[Add to Calendar](#)

[Squamish Public Library](#)

Community Meeting Room

For kids ages 9-12: Beat the Summer Heat with a Chilling Adventure in Writing!

What do an astrologer's deadly warning, a haunted lake, a mysterious Ouija board, and a valley crawling with rats have in common? They're all gateways to spine-tingling stories just waiting to be told!

Join award-winning author [Mahtab Narsimhan](#) for an electrifying workshop where you'll uncover the secrets to crafting scary stories that leave your readers wide-eyed and breathless.

In this workshop for brave writers aged 9-12, we'll dive into character, plot, setting, and conflict—the building blocks of every unforgettable tale. Bring your imagination, your love for thrills, and most importantly... your courage. Are you ready to give your readers goosebumps? Let's write some stories together!

### About the instructor:

[Mahtab Narsimhan](#) is an author based in Squamish. Writing, her fifth and final career, has been the most rewarding. It started with a humble diary in 2004, about life back home in Mumbai and morphed into the beginning of *The Third Eye*—the first book in the Tara Trilogy. There were lots of rejections before she got published. She met each of these rejections armed with a positive attitude, and chocolate. Lots of it. After four years of persevering, *The Third Eye* was published in 2007 and won the Silver Birch Fiction Award in 2009. Mahtab hasn't looked back since.

I'll be doing an in-person workshop on writing scary stories at the [Squamish Public Library on July 16th](#) from 12–1.30pm PT.

I've done a number of these workshops these past few years. I'm inspired by how enthusiastic kids are about using their imaginations to come up with cool plots, characters, and settings.

**If you're local to Squamish and have a tween aged 9–12, I'd love to see them at the workshop! There's still time to register.**

## I'm not a writer...I'm a rewriter!

Rewriting is nothing more than **re-visioning** your idea. And have I got a nifty tool for you!

The template below is one I often use, AFTER, I've written the first draft of my story. It gives me a distilled view of the plot, the characters and how often they appear (or disappear) through the story, the conflicts and *especially* the pacing.

Once I've worked out the changes using this grid, I go back to revising the manuscript. Highly recommend you give this a shot and let me know how it works out.



☐

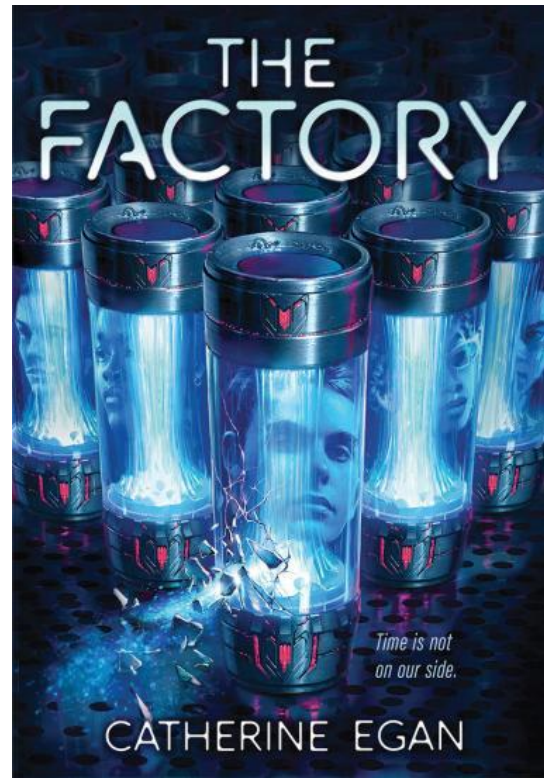
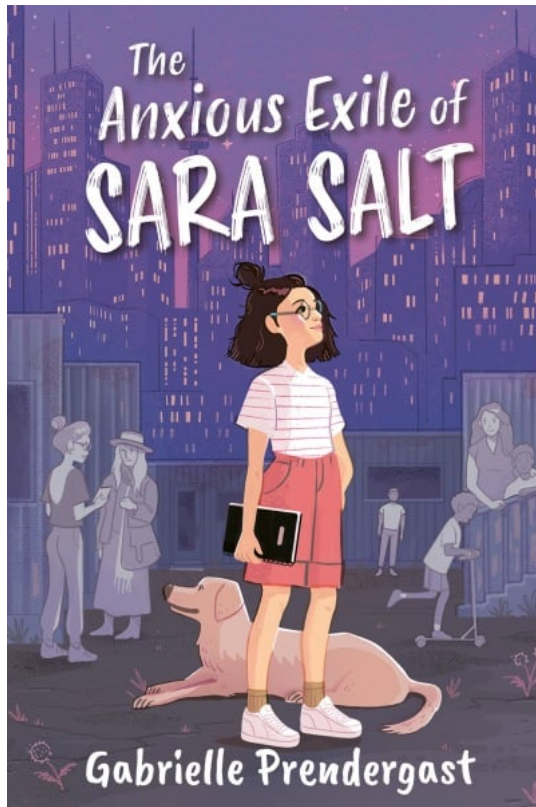
Feel free to tweak this to suit your writing style. If you add any more columns that help you, send them my way.

Manuscript Outline: VOTR - May 31, 2018. TO ADD A.S. = Awareness Scene  
E.C. = Emotional Core

Manuscript Outline: VOTR - May 31, 2018. TO ADD		A.S = Awareness Scene E.C = Emotional Core				
Chp #	Scene #	Plot Points for Scene (min 3) / Turning Point in Scene	Start/End Page # for scene	Setting	Time Frame	Pages in Scene
1	1.	<p>1) In the forest - lost - sees a <sup>(sensory details)</sup> <u>black rat</u> run away - they both have a fever + another rat.</p> <p>2) Flashback of why they are here a camping trip. (cut expo)</p> <p>3) Lost 5 days + 2 have to go before someone starts looking.</p> <p>4) See a light in distance → <u>UP OR DOWN?</u> (Down)</p> <p>5) Steep hill → Valley + lamplight no electricity - <del>lost</del> rats seem to be heading down there. (Awesome!) - short description - they are cold, wet / dark</p> <p>6) Father-Son descend into valley EC → going to die without any friends - no one will miss him or miss him</p>	<p>1-5.</p> <p>1/4.</p> <p>(NO EXPO)</p> <p>To consider <u>little Geminiphosain</u> vs <u>clean break</u> vs <u>averse to outdoors</u></p> <p>to not walk him out.</p>	Forest - also	<u>Nighttime</u> <u>Night 1</u>	3-5.
			1st chapter	<p>Misc Notes</p> <p>→ Village hidden - Vishnu almost FALLS IN</p> <p>- Make Deyo odd but don't draw too much attention to appearance.</p>		
2.		<p>Other Black village - meet Deyo</p> <p>* Ratika add features - <u>Sinister</u> (too early) Introductions. Make him warm / friendly.</p>	<p>4 -</p> <p>6) Little use knowledge of survival skills - fellows the rat = food - can't catch.</p>	Outskirts of village.		



**I recommend!**



### **The Anxious Exile of Sara Salt by Gabrielle Prendergast**

This is the first time I came across the concept of selective mutism. Prendergast nails the voice of Sara who is sent away from home to stay with her elder half-sister Abby. It's because her young brother, Birdy, was born prematurely and needs all their parents attention and energy. Navigating life away from home, among strangers, is tough but with encouragement and resourcefulness, Sara manages to cope. This is a powerful coming-of-age story as Sara learns how to be heard through means other than her voice.

I highly recommend this book for classrooms (and at home) for those quiet kids who need just that extra nudge to express themselves!

### **The Factory by Catherine Egan**

What a ride!

This dystopian upper middle-grade novel delivers a heart-pounding thriller as young Asher Doyle figures out the mystery of the Factory, a top-secret research facility with his friends. He agrees to attend this one year-long program to help his mother and grandmother. But when he gets there, he realizes there's no resemblance to the brochure he was shown. And he's trapped.

Secrets abound and Egan expertly takes us through the events which get more sinister and dangerous for Asher and his friends. The end is thrilling and left me eagerly awaiting the next instalment.

Highly recommend!



# Some final words...

***"We understand death only after it has placed its hands on someone we love." ~ Madame de Staël***

Earlier this month my hard-working, generous to a fault (and overall sweet human being!) brother-in-law passed away due to a heart attack. It was sudden and devastating. All the more so because we'd spoken to him just a day before and made plans for the summer holidays.

The next few days were a blur as I spent time with my sister, niece, and nephew, all of us trying to come to terms with his absence in our own ways.

Life goes on but this tragic event has left us all changed and a little bit wiser. I'd like to leave you all with this thought :

**Don't hold your happiness and the time you spend with loved ones to ransom, against the fulfillment of some future goal. *Seize the day* and make the most of it *now*. None of us know what the next hour, or day, brings, let alone next year(s).**

***The present is truly a gift. Enjoy it.***

Please remember to [whitelist my email address](#).

I hope you enjoyed this newsletter, and if you did, please share it with others who might enjoy it. Or better yet, ask them to subscribe through my website.

[The Present.](#)

xo

Mahtab

## Stardust Stories

43 Britain Street, Suite A01,  
Toronto, ON,  
Canada

You received this email because you signed  
up on our website or made a purchase from  
us.

[Unsubscribe](#)

