

Library, School, and Book Club Events

Niki frequently visits library groups, teen groups, mother/daughter book clubs, and other groups.

If you're an educator, librarian, or book club coordinator and you are interested in having Niki come to your school or library, read through this information, then contact her directly at niki@nikiburnham.com. To ensure your message doesn't end up labeled as spam, use a specific subject header like, "Visit to Snohomish Teen Library Group."



Niki with the Canastota Librateens in Canastota, NY

What Kind Of Event Might We Expect?

Niki conducts different presentations, each geared toward the particular audience to whom she's speaking. Let her know what you think would most interest your particular group. If you have an idea that isn't listed here, feel free to ask about it.

- How Do Books Get Published? Niki discusses how books actually get onto bookstore and library shelves, taking listeners from the initial idea through the book's on-sale date. Visual aids include line-edited pages from Niki's own manuscripts, galleys, and even a few book covers that didn't make the cut. This presentation includes a fun discussion of how authors are paid through advances and royalties (sorry, but you have to know math to be an author!) with time for questions and answers. *For groups of up to 100. Forty-five minutes to two hours, depending on the needs of the group.*
- Writing Workshop This gives a classroom-sized group of aspiring writers the opportunity to learn from an active, published author. Niki gives students fun writing exercises that help with plotting, characterization, and description. Students are encouraged to ask

questions. *For groups of 10 – 25. Forty-five minutes to an hour. Writing exercises geared to the age of the students.*

- Book Club Discussion For teen reading groups and book clubs, this is a freewheeling discussion where readers can ask Niki anything they want about her books. It can include a discussion of how Niki plans ahead while writing a series (such as the Valerie Winslow series of books), where Niki got the idea for a story or part of a story, how she developed particular characters, or why characters acted in certain ways. *For groups up to 30. Forty-five minutes to an hour. Those attending should be familiar with at least one of Niki's books.*

What Will It Cost?

Local visits--within approximately an hour's drive of Boston--are generally under \$500 for a visit of two to three hours. For a full day visit, the maximum honorarium is \$1,000. Full day visits are generally done by schools and are broken into three or four sessions of 40 – 55 minutes each. These Boston-area fees include all travel expenses.

Outside the Boston metropolitan area, the honorarium will vary depending on the costs and time required for travel. Let Niki know your exact location and she will be able to quote a rate for your event. Payment is due on the day of the visit. Please let Niki know if you need an invoice for your records.

Since school and library budgets are tight, a good way to save money is to partner with another school or library to combine visits. For example, over one weekend in 2007, Niki visited three upstate New York libraries located within an hour of each other, saving each library more than half of what it would cost were she to visit each one on separate occasions.

Another way to save money is to apply for a grant from a non-profit organization such as Poets & Writers, which may help you defray the cost of an author visit. You can learn more by going to Niki's Poets & Writers page, which is located online at:

http://www.pw.org/content/nicole_niki_burnham

- If none of these are practical for your group, consider arranging to have Niki conduct a call-in question and answer session with you. This works best when your group is in a quiet room with a speakerphone or a computer with Skype installed. One person from your group, such as a librarian, acts as the moderator. Members of the group can take turns asking Niki questions over the phone. Though it's not an in-person visit, this can be a fun evening for a teen library group (especially in conjunction with pizza night or another teen group activity.) If you are interested in doing either a call-in session or a Skype videoconference, please note which you prefer when you e-mail to arrange your event.

How Should We Prepare?

Preparation makes all the difference in the success of an event. Here are some tips:

- Consider Your Setup. Is there enough space for the event? Can everyone see and hear a speaker at the front of the room? If it's a large group, might you need a microphone? (And is it in working order, audible from all parts of the room?) A wireless lapel-type microphone works best if you have one, as it allows Niki to move around the room and interact with everyone.
- Have a Point Person. The smoothest events have a point person--usually a teacher, book group leader, or librarian--who handles all arrangements. This is the contact person for Niki should she have any questions, or when it comes time to confirm event details. Make sure this person is easy to reach (either by phone or e-mail) and is someone who will be at the event. If a student or other attendee is disruptive, the point person should be the one to handle it.
- Build Excitement for the Event. While Niki is happy to list public speaking events--such as an appearance at a public library--on the News & Events page of her website, the best way to draw in attendees is by going local. Post flyers at your local high school(s), library, and community bulletin boards. Put a notice in your local paper or on your local cable access shows (many will list events free of charge), and send out an e-mail to members of your reading groups, book clubs, Friends of the Library group, etc. Niki has downloadable photos on the Press Kit page of her website that you are free to use for just this purpose.

Other fun suggestions: Have the school newspaper or the editor of the library newsletter interview Niki for an article. If the event is at a school and Niki will be there near lunch time, consider holding an essay or other contest to award students a chance to have lunch with Niki in the cafeteria. (Please arrange this with Niki ahead of time for scheduling purposes.)

Keep in mind that the biggest way to build excitement for the event is to encourage teens to read Niki's books. Once they've read her work they'll be fired up to meet her.

- Order Books. This is important, and often needs to be done a month or more in advance. See the section on "Will Niki Autograph Books?" for suggestions on ensuring everyone who attends the function and wants a book can get one.
- Brainstorm Questions. In the weeks leading up to the event, consider setting out a box where students and/or library patrons can drop questions they have for Niki. If you're a book club, have members jot

down questions that occur to them as they read. Having good questions helps keep the discussion lively.

If you'd like more ideas about what to do to prepare for an author visit (there are some great articles online:

- About.com:

<http://childrensbooks.about.com/library/howto/htscheduleauthor.htm>

- Timeline to a Successful Author Visit, by Marian Creamer and Laura Kvasnosky:

<http://www.lmkbooks.com/aasl.pdf>

- Tips from Library Media Specialist Toni Buzzeo:

<http://www.tonibuzzeo.com/visitstsgood.html>

Will Niki Autograph Books?

Niki is happy to autograph copies of her books. If there are more than twenty people who want autographed books, it's a good idea to place a sticky note on each book ahead of time with the name of the person to whom the book should be autographed, as she can autograph books more quickly this way and with the correct spelling of names.

Though it is not required, it is a very good idea to have pre-ordered books--as well as a few extras--on hand for all those who may want an autographed copy of their own. Students often leave the talk wanting an autographed book, and are disappointed if they are unable to purchase one.

One way to handle this is to have students/attendees fill out a form and submit payment ahead of time indicating the book(s) they are interested in ordering. Niki does **not** handle book orders, as she is unable to bring copies with her for sale (they tend to weigh down her suitcase!) However, in many cases, a local bookstore will be more than happy to handle orders if given enough advance warning (most need at least a month). When contacting the bookstore, ask to speak to their community relations manager or school sales specialist. If the visit is to a school, another idea is to schedule Niki's author visit in conjunction with a school's annual book fair and let the fair coordinators know well in advance to have Niki's books on hand.

What If I Have Other Questions?

There's a lot of information on Niki's website, www.nikiburnham.com. Or you can contact Niki to ask! Her e-mail address is niki@nikiburnham.com.