

Dear Reader,

As you may know, a book can change a lot from its first draft to what is finally printed. Just like outtakes at the end of a movie can be fun to watch and can give you insight into the process of creating that movie, so comparing the first draft of a book with the final can give you an idea of how a book changes over time.

I wrote *The Adventures of Melon and Turnip* about three years before it was published. When it came time to actually print it, I realized that the poem songs it contained were not very accessible for children. So I simplified the words and cut the number of song lines from 59 to 36. Here, below, are the original lines.

How many differences can you find between the original and the final songs? Which lines would you have changed and which would you have kept? Why? Considering questions like these can help you to understand what it's like being a writer and also to improve your own work should you choose to be a writer yourself.

Best of luck to you in all your activities, and do write me and let me know how you liked this book!

Trisha Adelen Howell

*Page 12-13: Song of the Apples*

This is the song we sing  
A song of apples by the spring  
Swaying and playing  
Pleased we're staying  
Welcoming the world's wonder  
We're not afraid of the bird's raid  
We'll never trade the joy we've made  
Even lightning and thunder  
Can't rain on our parade.

*Page 14-15: Squirrel's Song*

Pluck the lovely nut;  
Store the savory seed.  
Don't slip into a rut;  
Patience is what you need.  
Every day is new.  
And so, my dear, are you.  
Work and you will see  
The beauty that can be.  
Every moment an adventure,  
Reaping what you venture.

*Page 16-17: Pine's Song*

Long I've lived and much I've seen:  
Winter's snowy carpet, spring's lively green.  
But I can sum it all up in a word or two:  
Do unto you neighbor as you'd have done to you.

*Page 18-19: Snake's Song*

Drimple and drither  
Slither and slide  
Catch 'em by the forelegs  
Catch 'em by the hide  
A feast is in the making  
Food for the taking  
Oh, how soon they'll be shaking  
As I swallow them alive!

*Page 24-25: Song of the Grass and Melon's Song*

After Snake slithered away, Melon and Turnip felt a pleasant caress from the dancing grass. As more blades joined in, the faint whisper became a chorus:

Enter the world with wonder  
Energy strong as thunder  
Celebrate and play  
So your spirit is king.

Work hard with ambition  
To ensure your nutrition  
Be active each day  
So your body may sing.

Treat creatures with love  
From far below to high above  
You are one with all others  
You receive what you give.

Grace the world with truths  
Whether this vexes or soothes  
Honesty and respect are brothers  
The noblest way to live.

Your life never ends  
Your spirit ascends  
Keep singing your song  
All your life long.

"That's the wisest song I've ever heard." Melon's eyes shone with gratitude. Then she found her own song inside and was inspired to sing:

I love the adventure of each day  
And no longer into fear will stray  
To life and death, amen  
I know I'll be back again.

*Page 28: Turnip's Song*

Blessings to one and all  
My anger now is small.  
Though our danger was tall  
I think life is a ball.

Dear Reader,

Sometimes because there is not enough space for the words on the page or because having them there slows down the story too much, a character has to be taken out.

Such was the case with Melon's timid friend Squash, who learned to be less afraid when she saw that Melon had returned safely from her journey. Her story—together with the other material already on the below pages—was simply too much text for a children's book, and I was unsure how much her presence actually added. So I decided to remove her.

However, you can still see Squash on pages 6 and 29, and here is her story. Do you think it was a good idea to take out Squash? Have you or your friends ever felt afraid like Squash? What did you do? When you are afraid, it is always great to have someone you know who can encourage you and make you feel better. Usually, the fear itself is worse than what you fear!

Best wishes to you,

Trisha Adelena Howell

*Page 8-9*

A soft whimpering caught Melon's attention. In the next row a yellow Squash was trembling under several squash leaves. Melon frowned. "Why are you crying?"

"I want to see the sun." Squash spoke just above a whisper.

Melon thought that her friend did look rather pale. "His sparkling smile awaits you out here!"

"But I might get burned and die."

"Don't be afraid; you won't die." Melon's voice was gentle and encouraging.

Turnip turned to Melon. "Are we going or not?"

Melon considered Squash, smiled then rolled in the soft dirt until there was a loud snap. As she tumbled down the hill toward the river, Turnip bounded after her.

*Page 30-31*

Leaves rustled as Squash peered out. "Melon?"

"Squash, I'm so happy to see you!" Melon said.

"Really?" Squash inched her head out from the under the leaves. "I was thinking that maybe if you could survive such a great adventure, I could survive seeing the sun. What do you think?"

"I think you're right."

Squash slowly pushed aside her leaves and looked up at the radiant sun. "Wow! It's so beautiful! I feel so happy."

"Because you're living your dream."

"And I'm only a little afraid."

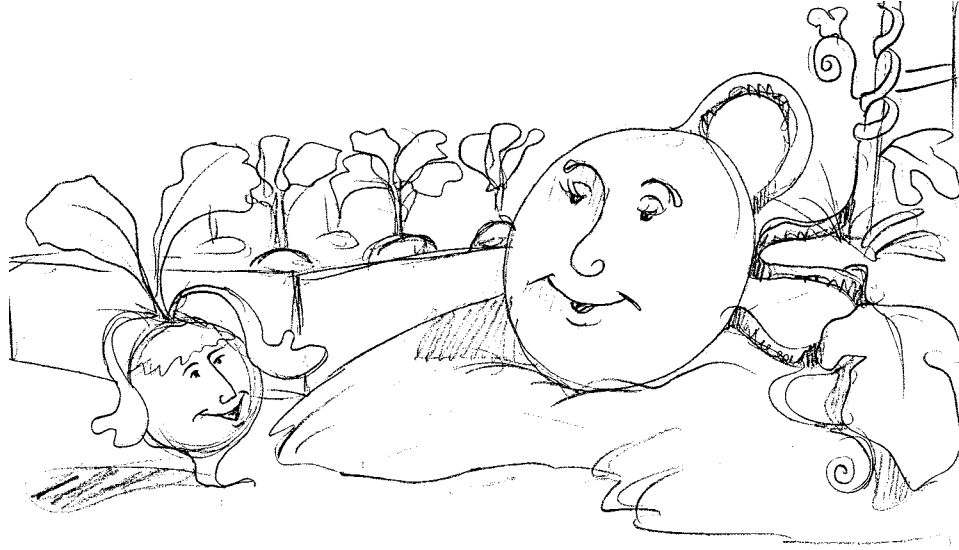
"It's okay to be afraid." Melon said. "Just don't ever let it keep you from being yourself."

As Squash danced with Melon, and Turnip played hopscotch with Pepper, the other fruits and vegetables joined in. Everyone had fun for the rest of the summer.

Dear Reader,

The art for a children's picture book may change a lot from start to finish and requires a strong focus on detail and on consistency. In the case of *The Adventures of Melon and Turnip*, it took me over a year to create the final artwork.

First, I read the story carefully and visualized all the scenes in my mind. I tried especially to get a sense of who Melon and Turnip were and how they might look. My first attempt is below. Neither Trisha nor I were satisfied with this Melon and Turnip. They looked old and stodgy, not projecting the energy and enthusiasm that we wanted our characters to have and that the words of the story showed they had.



So Trisha and I brainstormed how we wanted our characters to look, and I did the studies below and on the opposite page to develop those ideas. As you can see, some of these look like the final Melon and Turnip and some don't. Look carefully. What differences and similarities can you see between these sketches and the artwork in the book? What do you like about the way Melon and Turnip ended up looking, and what would you have done differently? How would you approach illustrating a book such as this?

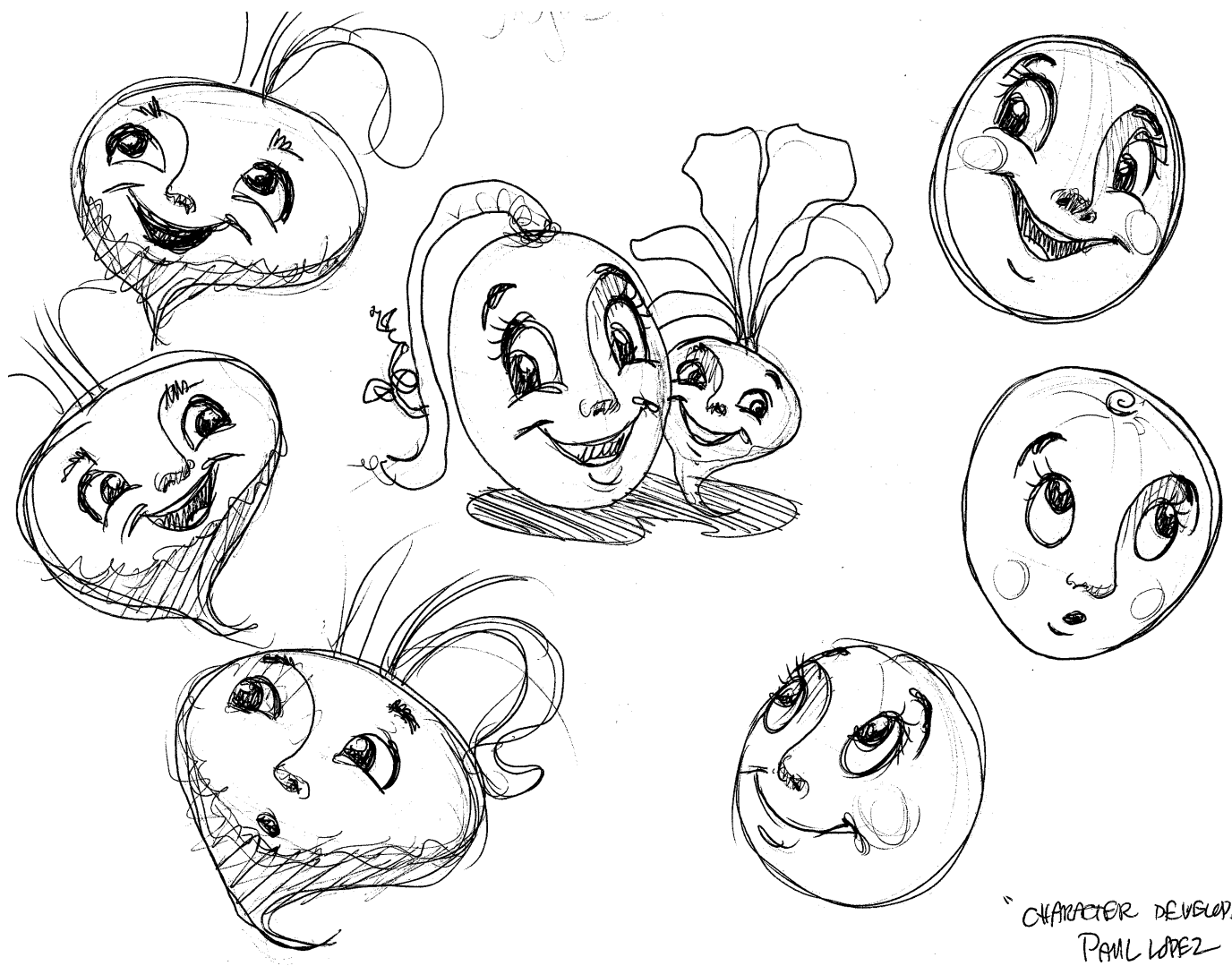
What I did, once I'd finalized all the characters, was to imagine the exact setting for each scene. As an artist, it is easy to create beautiful pictures in my mind and on paper. But as an illustrator, I had to make sure that each picture contained all the elements necessary in each scene—as well as other things not even mentioned in the words but which would make the story come alive even more. Look

closely. How many little animals and other extra details can you find in the illustrations that are not talked about in the story?

Finally, it was important to make sure that all the illustrations were consistent. The first illustration in the book shows the whole scene—not only the garden where Melon and Turnip live but also the river, forests, meadows, and mountains surrounding them. If you look closely, you will see all the story locations on this two-page spread. Now look at the rest of the illustrations. Can you find where each of them is located on this first painting?

The last step is adding color. All the above steps happen when the artwork is still in the black and white drawing stage so that I can easily make changes. After all the characters, the basic scenes, the little extra details, and the consistency between scenes are finalized,





it's time to start over, copying the drawings exactly as colorful paintings. Before I do this, however, I have to figure out which colors to use. In the case of *The Adventures of Melon and Turnip*, Trisha and I had several discussions before we decided on the exact color Melon and Turnip should be. Otherwise, the colors were easy: bright and bold watercolors were my choice for this very upbeat yet soft and emotional story.

After my artwork was completed, there was still more to do. All my paintings were scanned by a huge machine, and these scans became the computer files that the page designer worked with as well as what the printer printed from. The printer held onto the original artwork during this process so that he could make sure that the computer files printed out in the finished book in the exact colors that I used in the original artwork.

Creating illustrations (and art in general) is a great adventure—kind of like the adventures that Melon and Turnip go on here. You discover new and exciting things as well as learn a lot when you set out to bring to life in actual illustrations the imaginative vision that is in a story or in what you see when you look at our beautiful world. I hope that all of you will experience the thrill of drawing and painting. Don't worry about whether or not you have talent. The point is to experience the challenge, the sense of discovery, and the joy of putting your own unique vision onto paper, into a sculpture, or into whatever form you want to use to express yourself.

Go out and have fun with your art, whatever it may be!

Paul Lopez