

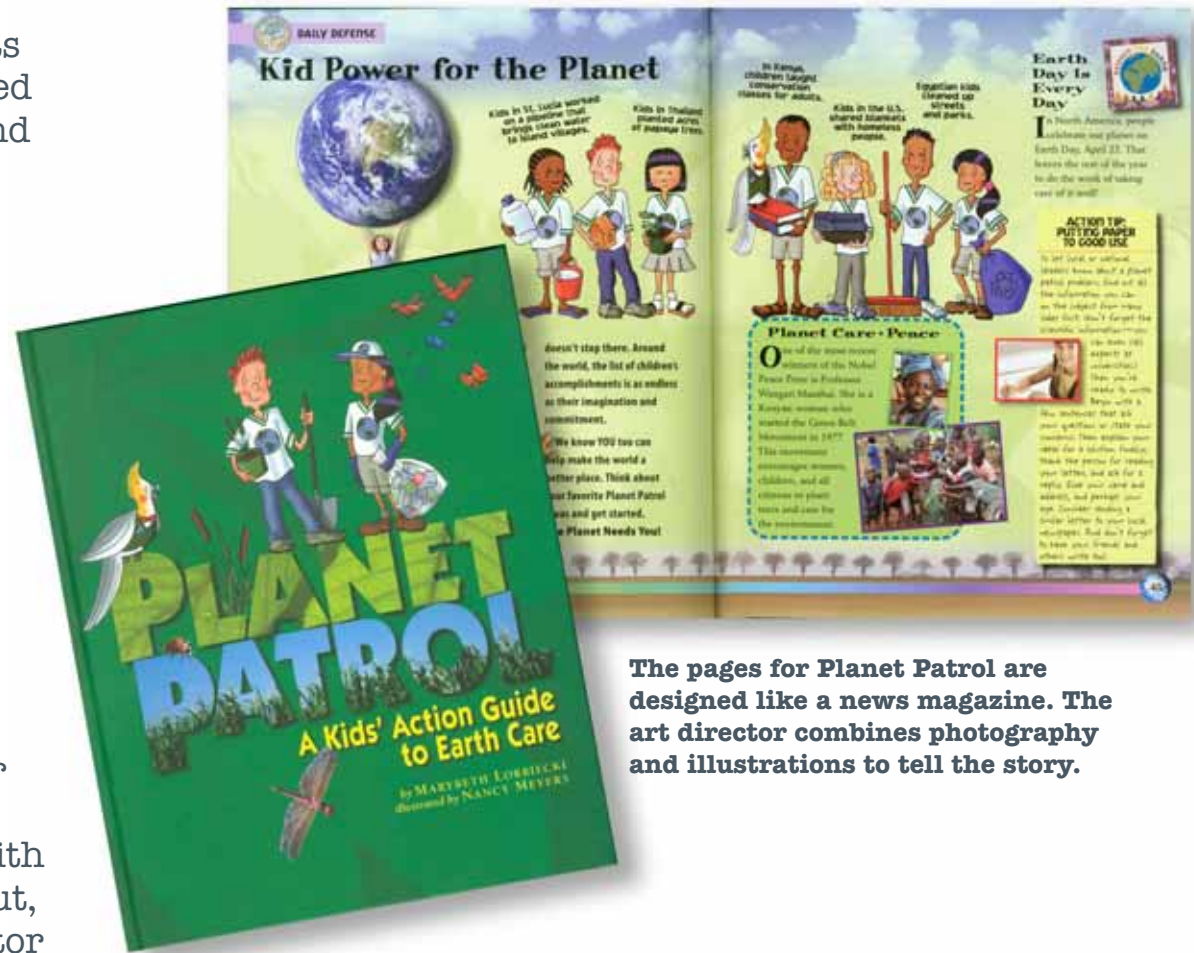
Sketchbook notes from Planet Patrol

Illustrating a book is lots of fun, but it's lots of work, too. There are many people involved in creating a book, and working together and listening to each other are very important.

It all begins with the **author**—without his or her ideas, we'd never get started!

The author sends his or her written story (called a *manuscript*) to the **editor**. The editor works for a publishing company that produces books. The editor reviews the authors's ideas and makes comments and suggestions. The author and editor can work together for a long time finishing the manuscript.

Once the manuscript is complete, the editor works with the **art director** to create the look for the book. The art director works with a **graphic designer** to decide the page layout, images and typography. Then the art director hires an **illustrator** or **photographer** to create the images. That's where I come in!



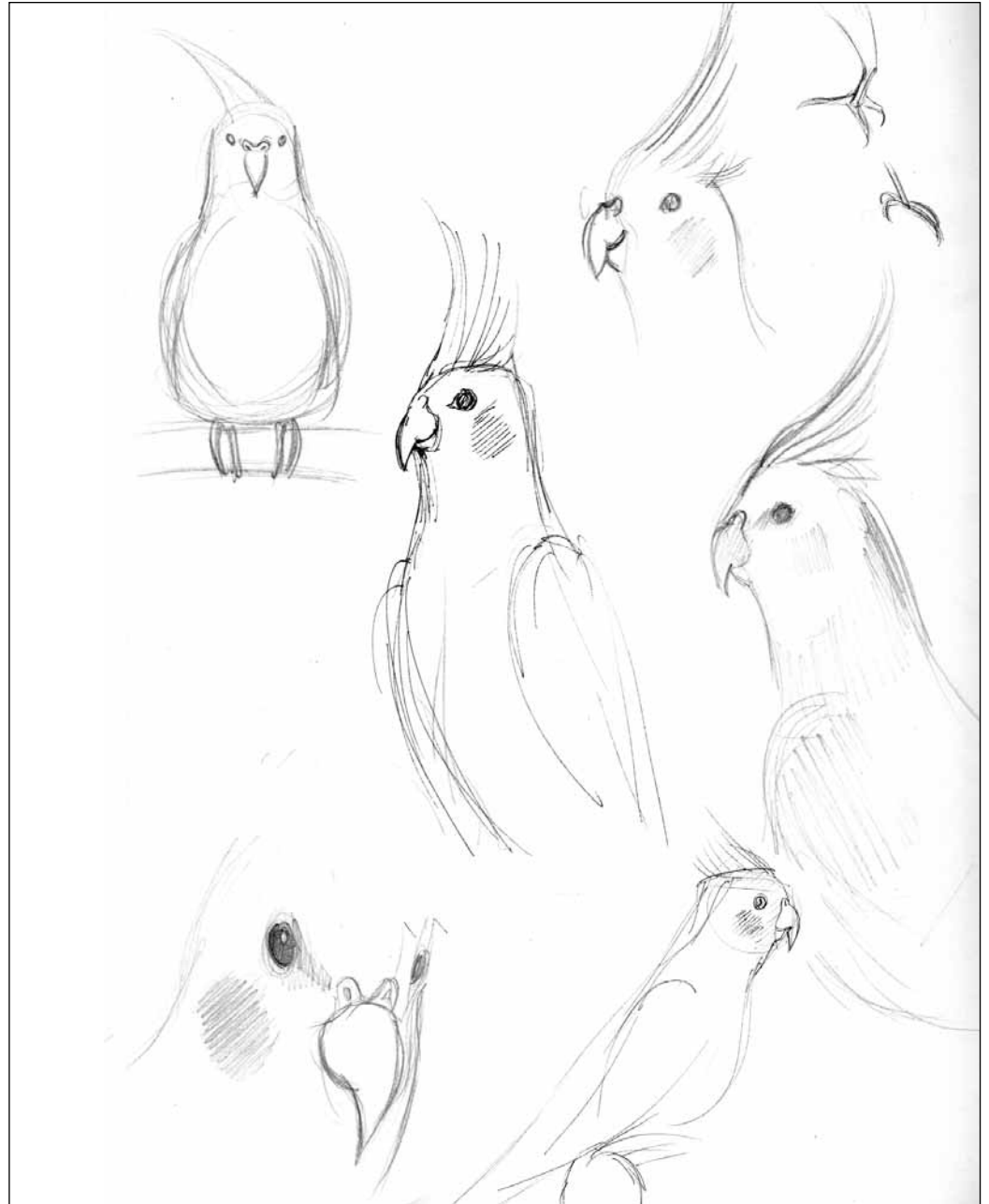
The pages for Planet Patrol are designed like a news magazine. The art director combines photography and illustrations to tell the story.

Sketchbook notes from Planet Patrol

When the art director calls to discuss characters for Planet Patrol, I'm excited to hear one of the main characters, Professor Cosmos, is a cockatiel. My good friends have two cockatiels, and they live right next door! So my first step is to visit the birds and start sketching. My neighbors also have a book on cockatiels which I can borrow to help with details. Cockatiels are smart and very friendly, and best of all—they love kids!

Even though my drawings are whimsical, I like to start with realistic sketches to make sure I understand how something (or someone) moves. Trips to the zoo are great for drawing animals, and I also use photographs.

This is Robbie, one of my neighbor's cockatiels. He is a great model, and he really likes to get his picture taken!



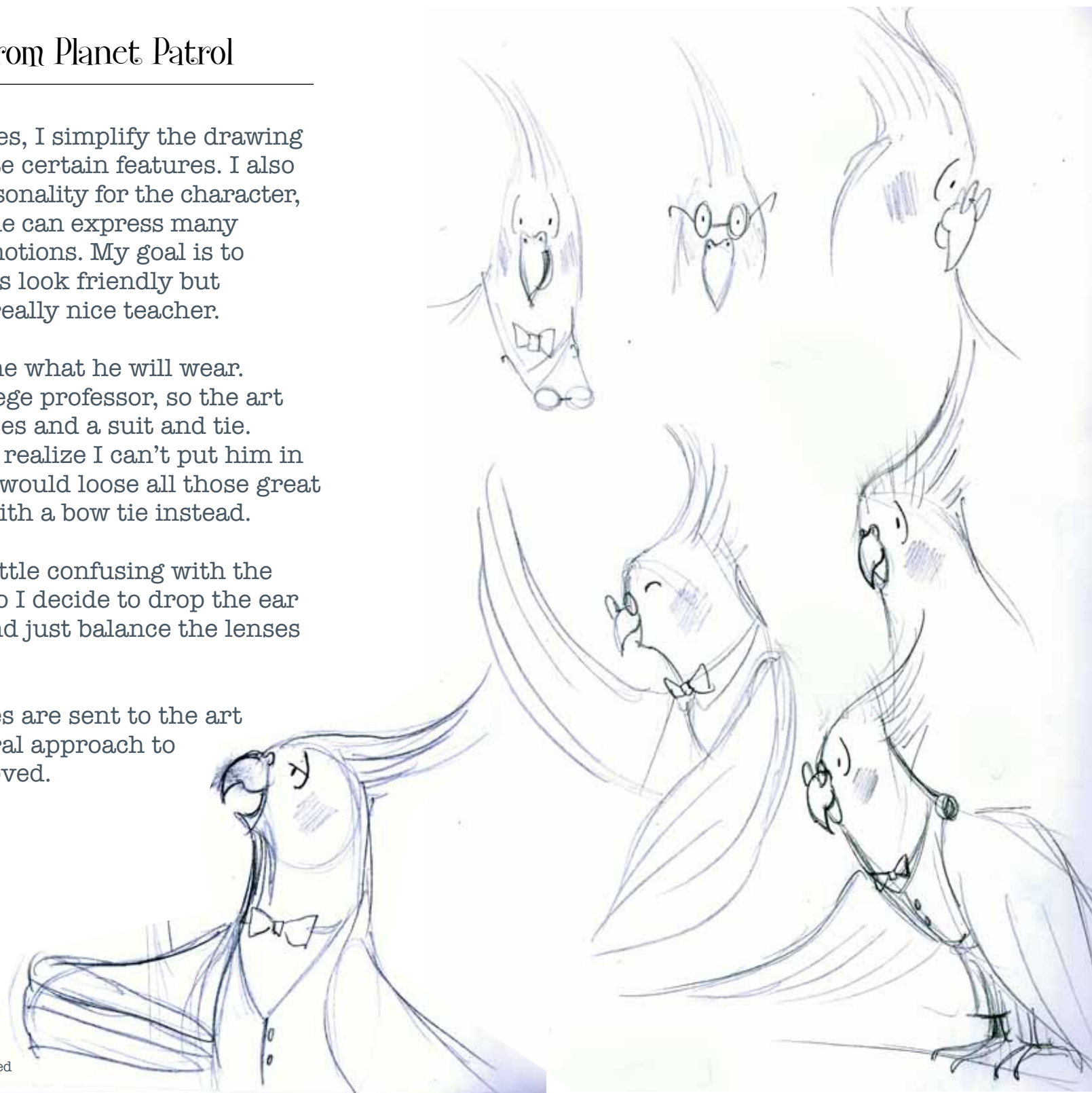
Sketchbook notes from Planet Patrol

After my first sketches, I simplify the drawing and begin to exaggerate certain features. I also need to establish a personality for the character, and make sure he or she can express many different moods and emotions. My goal is to make Professor Cosmos look friendly but knowledgeable, like a really nice teacher.

I also need to determine what he will wear. The character is a college professor, so the art director suggests glasses and a suit and tie. After sketching a bit, I realize I can't put him in a suit jacket because I would lose all those great feathers. I try a vest with a bow tie instead.

Eyeglasses become a little confusing with the linework of the eyes, so I decide to drop the ear stems of the glasses and just balance the lenses on his beak.

Pages of rough sketches are sent to the art director, and the general approach to this character is approved.



Sketchbook notes from Planet Patrol

Next, I move on to the two other main characters, Dimitri and Esperanza. I work closely with the art director on hair style, skin color and wardrobe. She forwards all sketches to the editor and author to make sure the characters are just right.

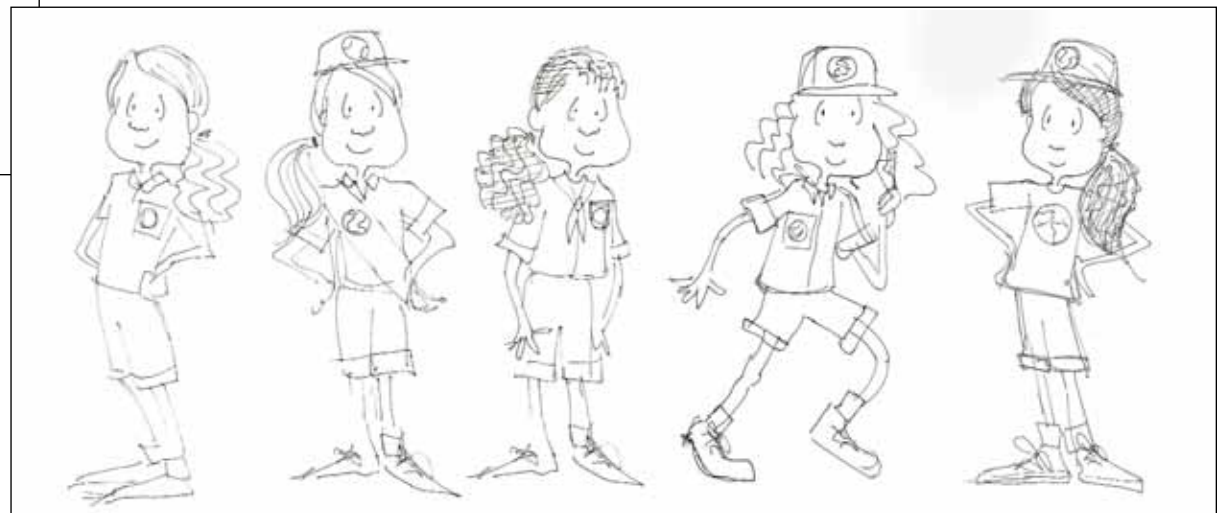
I love this part of the process, because it's fun to try different ideas, and you can be messy!



Esperanza sketches



Hat options



Planet Patrol uniform options and hair styles

Sketchbook notes from Planet Patrol

As we are working out details on the kids, we need to determine how big to make Professor Cosmos. If he were actual size, he would be very small next to the other characters. I decide to scale him up a bit, like the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*. The nice thing about cartooning is you don't have to follow all the rules!

The size relationship of the sketches at right is approved by the art director and editor, and I'm ready to begin working on the actual illustrations.

A cockatiel is actually a small bird, but we "super-size" Professor Cosmos because he is a main character in the book and the illustrations will be small.



We have a very tight schedule, so to save time I paste two character sketches together to give the art director an idea of the bird's size relative to Esperanza.



Sketchbook notes from **Planet Patrol**

The art director sends the first batch of illustration specifications. The specifications are detailed instructions from the author, editor and art director. For the illustrations in *Planet Patrol*, sometimes I receive a copy of the text and sometimes I just get a description of the subject. The specifications usually include size and page placement.

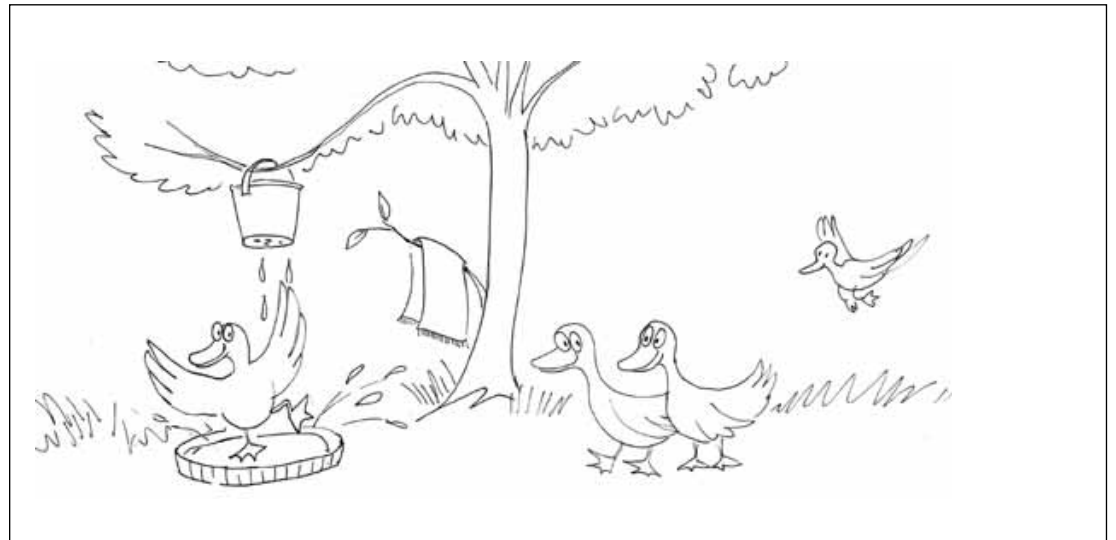
This illustration goes with a story titled “Making a Splash of It.” It describes how to build a shower/ water area for birds and animals for washing, drinking or playing.

First I create a rough sketch, scan it and e-mail it to the art director. The art director either calls back with comments or sends it on the editor. Sometimes the comments are simple refinements, other times I start fresh with a new approach.

After reviewing the first sketch, the art director requests the illustration to be longer to fit across two pages. I also decide to make the robin a duck instead so he can be larger, with bigger feet for splashing. I add more ducks to walk from one page to the next.



First sketch



Second sketch—lengthened the illustration to go across two pages

Sketchbook notes from **Planet Patrol**

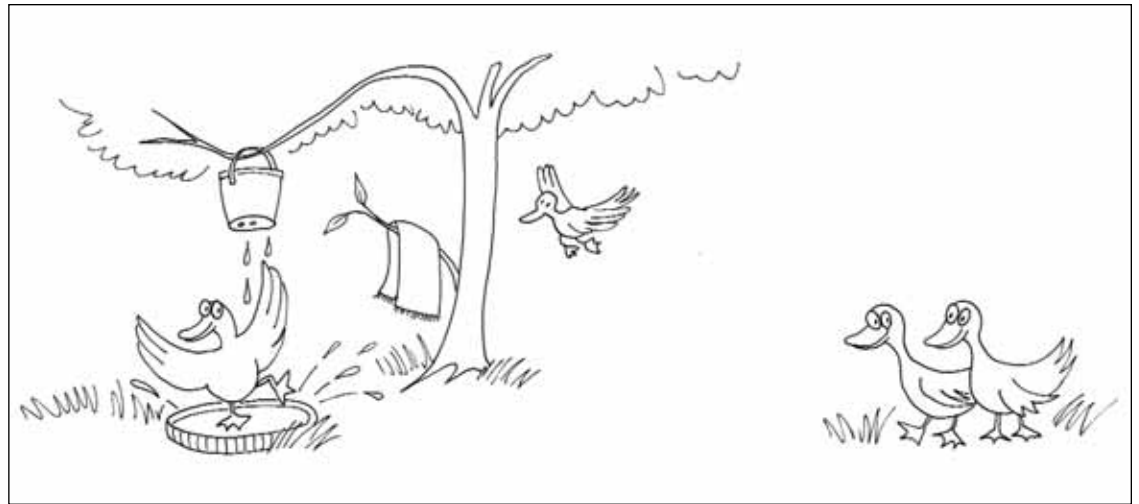
First I draw with ink on paper, then I add color. Sometimes I add color with watercolor paints and colored pencils; other times I scan the drawing and then paint on the computer (digitally) using Adobe®Photoshop®.

The art director wants these illustrations painted digitally so she can layer them with other images on the page.

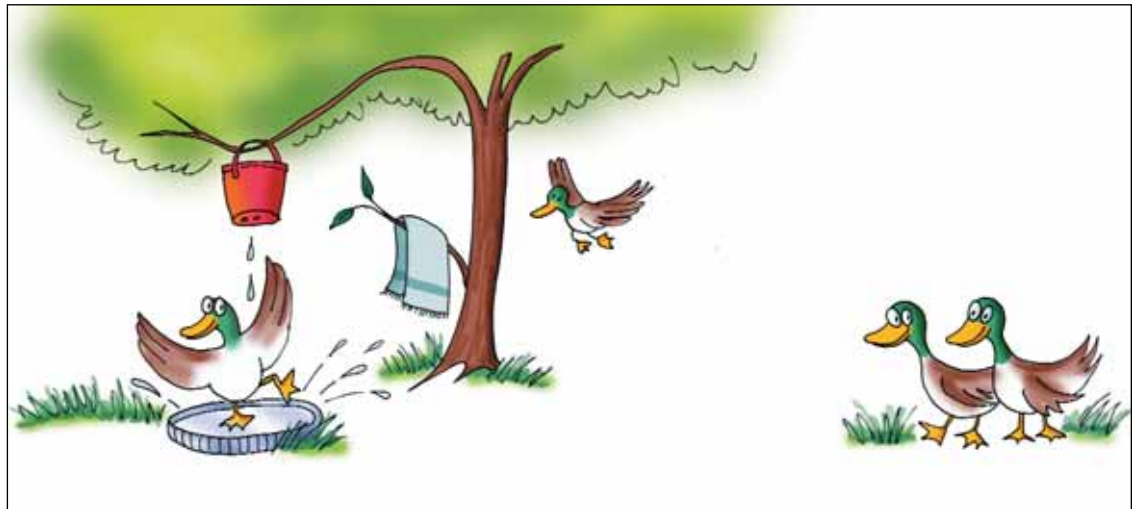
The art director sends me a layout showing the rough sketch in position on the pages. On the final drawing, I move two of the ducks over to allow plenty of space for the center or “gutter” of the book.

In the final inked drawings, I try to keep the linework very simple. Sometimes I have to draw it several times, or come back to it after a break, just to keep from getting too tight or stiff.

Color is added, and then the final illustration is sent for approval. Once approved, the art director will place the illustration in her layout and send it to the printer.



Final inked drawing—I move the ducks on right to allow room for the center of the book



Finished illustration

Sketchbook notes from Planet Patrol



Ink drawing (first layer)



Base color applied in second layer



Highlights, shadows and other details added in six more layers

When I paint digitally, each illustration contains five or more “layers” of color and linework. When the illustration is complete, all the layers are combined, or “flattened,” to create a file ready for the printer.

I create a digital color palette to keep colors consistent throughout the book. I “dip” my electronic brush into the colors much like a traditional paint palette.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Dimitri skin |  Esp skin |  Cosmos beak |
|  Diminri hair |  Espi hair |  Cosmos yellow |
|  Dimitri airbrush hair |  Espi airbrush hair |  Cosmos grey |
|  Blue earth |  Esp shoe |  Cosmos feet |
|  Green stripe |  Esp shorts |  Cosmos vest |
|  White shirt shadow |  Esp socks |  Cosmos tie |
|  Dimitri shoe |  Esp Cheeks |  Cosmos cheek |
|  Dimitri pants | |  Cosmos glasses |
|  Dimitri cheeks | | |

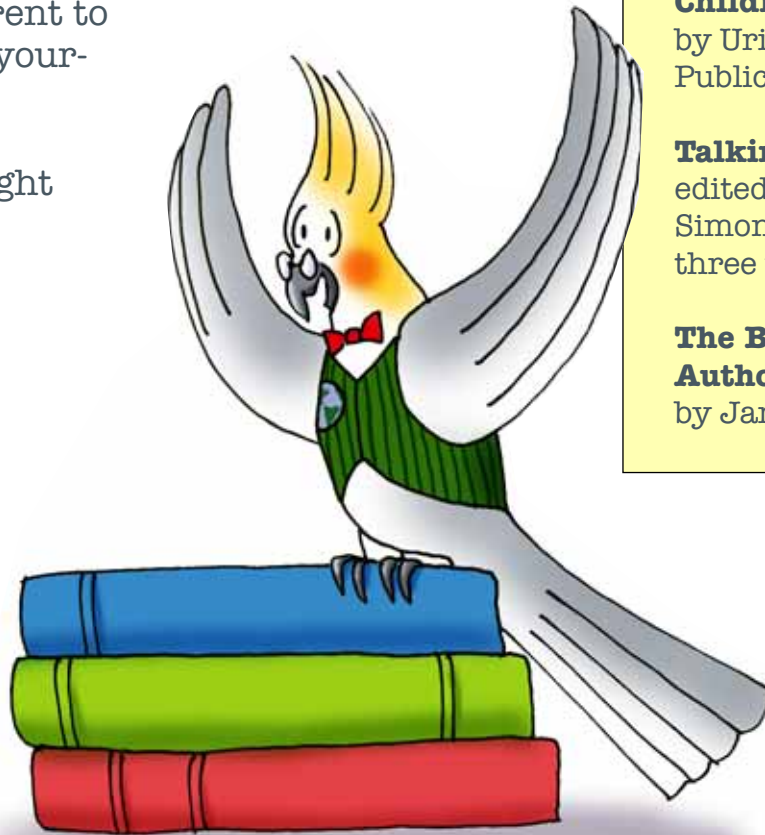
Sketchbook notes from **Planet Patrol**

If you are interested in becoming an author or illustrator, start journaling and sketching! A few rules to follow:

Rule #1 In a sketchbook or journal there is no such thing as a bad idea. Many great stories and illustrations begin as tiny little squiggles of ideas!

Rule # 2 Save your eraser for your math homework. Instead of using an eraser, move on to another spot on the page—what you don't like today might look totally different to you tomorrow. If you just can't control yourself, ditch the pencil and grab a pen!

Rule # 3 Have fun! (Otherwise, you might as well be doing that math homework.)



Don't forget to check out the library! Take a good look at your favorite books and think about what makes them special to you—is it the characters, the settings, the type of materials the illustrator used? What makes one book stand out more than another?

Some great books:

**Writing with Pictures:
How to Write and Illustrate
Children's Books**

by Uri Shulevitz; Watson-Guption Publications.

Talking with Artists

edited by Pat Cummings;
Simon & Schuster (there are
three volumes in this series).

**The Big Book of Picture-Book
Authors & Illustrators**

by James Preller; Scholastic Inc.