

Who makes the decision for a book character to be licensed?

Q: Who makes the decision for a book character to be licensed, and how much input can an author or illustrator have?

Licensing is handled in-house by the subsidiary rights department, unless the author or illustrator has retained those rights. While you can certainly suggest ideas to your editor, the impetus to license a book or character is almost certainly going to be driven by market forces. “Licensing, beyond the sale of paperback and book club rights, is unusual for individual titles unless you see a character take off in the marketplace,” says Lucia Monfried, Editor-in-Chief of Dutton Children’s Books. “Other rights sales are more likely to prove viable with a series, or with properties that have been packaged by a consortium to work as a licensed product. In that case, the book publisher is just one of a number of companies involved.”

Another way licensing can happen is when a company which does games, plush toys, greeting cards, or other products approaches the publisher about buying rights to a particular book. That’s where an author or illustrator who has contacts in other industries can have an impact — by generating outside interest. 4:5/95