Finding Success in the YA and Middle Grade Markets

A Writers Workshop

Alex Marestaing
CURRENT TRENDS IN YA AND MIDDLE GRADE FICTION

A. What's trending on the New York Times YA Bestseller List

1. Science Fiction: The Fifth Wave

2. Paranormal: Miss Perigrine's Home For Peculiar Children

3. Off Beat Romance: Eleanor and Park

4. Realistic Fiction: The books of John Green

5. Physical or psychological illness: The Fault in Our Stars, Everything Everything, Wonder

6. Bullying: Thirteen Reasons Why

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B. Learning from the list

1. The appeal of first person perspectives

2. Unique characters rule
   
a. Willow Clark (Counting By Sevens)
b. August Pulman (Wonder)

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C. Blazing your own trail

1. The dangers of chasing trends

2. Personal Point: I'm Nobody and the importance of following your heart

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THE FOUR P'S OF YA AND MIDDLE GRADE FICTION

A. The importance of PLACE

1. Disney and the Art of Place (Video clip)

2. Taking readers on a trip
   a. Paris 2.0 (*Ratatouille*)
   b. District 12 (*The Hunger Games*)

3. Think wild and whimsical

4. Settings as characters

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B. Keep Up the **PACE**

1. Research on internet age attention spans

2. Avoiding long expositions

3. Introducing conflicts early.

4. Every page must "further plot or develop character")

5. Emotional scenes in short bursts
   
   a. Story example: *Everything Everything*
   b. Story example: *Wonder*

C. **POINT OF VIEW**

1. Finding your voice

2. Choosing the right point of view

   a. 1st person: Can you *be* the character
   b. 3rd person: A tool for deep stories

3. Moving out of your comfort zone
4. Creative story structures

a. Personal Point: *Izzy's Pop Star Plan*
   a change in POV leads to a contract
b. Story Example: *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*

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D. PURPOSE AND POWER

1. An absence of purpose (Reflections on current culture and music)

2. Don't be afraid to go deep

3. Don't preach, inspire

4. Shining God's light into a dark world

5. CBA or ABA market?

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MARKETING

A. Hurdles to overcome when marketing for a youth audience

B. Who buys the book? Teens or parents?

C. The rise of YouTube
   1. John Green, master of YouTube marketing
   2. Personal Point: character vlogs

D. School author visits, teacher's guides, etc.

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ONE MORE THING

A. Giving our creative dreams to God

B. Lessons in faith: How I got my first job with Disney