

Editorial

This month (May) marks the eighth anniversary of Teen Librarian Monthly and Teen Librarian the website. I would like to begin by saying a massive thank-you to everyone that has subscribed over the years and another thank you to the casual readers who download it from the site. If not for all of you that read it, send me articles and provide feedback it would have faded away long ago.

This month the phenomenally talented EDGE authors make another welcome appearance within the pages of TLM and share their thoughts of how to get teens reading.

My dear friend and colleague Caroline Fielding shares her thoughts and experiences on how one person can make a difference in the lives of young readers. Savita Kalhan makes a second appearance expanding on her views on diversity in teen literature following on from her piece in Thoughts from the EDGE.

Tracy Hager's piece on remembering what you are good at is a timely reminder for us all to use our hobbies, interests and skills to interact with teens in our libraries. I have met Tracy several times over the years and I have found her to be one of the most inspirational and dedicated Teen Librarians that I have ever met. Her piece is required reading for anyone who runs or would like to find out how to run successful teen groups in libraries.

Helen Robinson shares news on the creative writing and illustration website she has created in Cumbria.

I have included a number of upcoming courses and training days that are taking place across the UK. As well as the training there are also a number of library Camps and Unconferences coming up that are being organised and run by school and young people's librarians. You also have the chance to take a look at the Queen of Teen nominations short-list.

This month's Eight Questions With... interview is with the brilliant Non Pratt, author of new YA novel *Trouble*, published by Walker Books.

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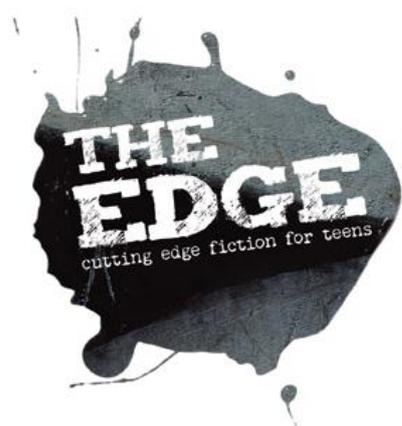
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Thoughts from the EDGE: How to get teens reading?



To celebrate *Teen Librarian's* eighth anniversary, the EDGE's eight authors offer eight suggestions to get kids reading. What's yours?

Diversity in Children's Books in the UK

Growing up as a British Asian in the UK, who read the entire content of the Children's Library in High Wycombe, it was always a nice surprise when I came across a book featuring 'a child of colour'. As an adult, a mother, and a children's writer, I've come to realise how critical it is for there to be more diversity available for children growing up in today's multicultural world. At the very least, in Malorie Blackman's words, "diversity in literature fosters knowledge and understanding of others outside our own sphere of experience. It is only through knowledge and empathy of how others live that we can attempt to communicate and connect with each other."

In the States, there has been a huge campaign to raise awareness of the lack of diversity in children's books - #WeNeedDiverseBooks, with everyone from librarians, schools, booksellers, teachers, parents and kids becoming involved. The campaign made clear that very many readers from primary age through to young adult, felt their voices could not be found amongst the pages of a book. How much of a problem is this in the UK? And would we get more children and teenagers reading if there was more diversity to be found on the shelves in schools and libraries? *Savita Kalhan*

Adapted from the book by ...

Two EDGE authors recommend capitalizing on popular TV shows and films that have been adapted from books.

- When visiting schools and talking to groups of students about reading, if I ask which of them read regularly, less than half the group will respond. Ask who likes movies and almost

every hand goes up. I sometimes use this as an opportunity to talk about film adaptations of books. Students are often surprised to hear that a film they really enjoyed started out as a novel. It's interesting that once we get talking, most of the group will say they prefer the book to the film version. Most students want to read the book first, but some admitted that they use the film as a way to see if the book is worth the effort! At a recent EDGE event, the discussion then moved on to books that students would like to see made into movies, and why they thought certain stories would work well on screen. It wouldn't be hard to fill a display table or bookshelf with books that have made it onto screen—the range would be impressive, from Tolkien and Du Maurier to Stephen King and Philip K Dick! And then there are all the Marvel and DC graphic novel tie-ins, not to mention teen and YA titles like *Holes* and *How I Live Now*. I'm sure the surprise of seeing a book version of their favourite film would inspire some students to at least pick it up. *Dave Cousins*

- I think the large number of YA books being made into films or television series, is a fantastic thing in terms of getting teens reading. I have spoken to a lot of kids recently who, having seen a film, or the first part of a trilogy, have gone out and bought the book (or books). This is a wonderful lead in to other novels in the same genre. I noticed that free copies of *Slated* were being given out at the *Divergent* premiere. Making teens aware that the books which are being made into films are but a tip of a giant YA iceberg is a great first step into pulling them into reading more. With all of the multiple medias that teens are now exposed to and immersed in, I believe that making books more of a part of a larger multi-media world will draw more teens into reading. And if a book cannot be made into a film there are other options: producing playlists, short films (perhaps on YouTube), games or apps. I believe a multi-media tie in approach is something that an author wanting a larger audience should valuably consider nowadays. *Bryony Pearce*

Emerge from the shadows

I think a great way to engage teens in reading is to shadow book prize shortlists such as the Carnegie. By displaying the shortlisted books and encouraging teens to read one (or more) books from the shortlist, they can then discuss and debate the merits of each book, paste their own reviews, act out their favourite scenes, and finally vote for their favourite book - and see if it's different from the book that actually wins! I think it

makes such a difference if there's at least one other person who's already read or reading the same book as you, as it makes the experience that much more interactive and interesting. An alternative is to run your own book prize with your own chosen (or teen-nominated) shortlist, and invite the authors to visit the school for awards ceremony - a rewarding experience all round. **Katie Dale**

Positive peer pressure

Peer recommendation is a very effective way to get teenagers reading. At the moment it seems like thousands of teenage girls are raving about *The Fault in our Stars* and recommending that their friends read John Green's books. It's fantastic to see that, when a story strikes a chord with teenagers, they will discuss it together with a passion that you rarely find in adult readers. Although peer recommendation may lead to concern that this narrows what teens are reading to a few 'zeitgeist' books, I believe that anything that gets them reading is worthwhile. It may also follow that they branch out to other books and other genres.

This may already happen in schools, but I think it would be great to have a library lesson where students come prepared to advocate their favourite book and try to persuade their peers why they should read it. Not every student will want to do this, but the passion from their peers may encourage even reluctant readers to give certain books a try. **Paula Rawsthorne**

Read by example

Sit and read with them. Parents - sit around in the evening and suggest that everyone reads a book for half an hour. Have some snacks ready and a pile of books. Sharing the reading experience is both calming and inspiring and could become a moment in the day everyone looks forward to. Equally - teachers - sit at

your desk, even for just five minutes a day and tell your students that everyone is going to read, including yourself. No checking phones! Just the simple act of everyone sitting quietly, reading. This can be an oasis of calm for students in an otherwise hectic school life. In primary schools you could probably manage longer. In secondary schools, use the form time, even if it's only once a week. I was a teacher for 25 years and in my experience setting this example really works. **Miriam Halahmy**

Recommend across media

As the mother of a 14-year-old boy, this is something I puzzle over myself. I'd say, talk to them about books, ask their opinions - they love to feel that someone's interested in what they think - and relate to their interests across media. 'If you like *The Big Bang Theory*, try this...if you like *Call of Duty* try this...'. **Keren David**

Engage with the author

And our final cheeky suggestion... host an author! Authors have a way of bringing their stories to life and engaging teens in storytelling. I've been lucky enough to watch my fellow EDGE authors inspire rooms full of teens - sometimes with laughter, others with heart-felt anecdotes and after events, with one-on-one connections. We've seen the reluctant teen slouching at the back of the auditorium and been gratified when they've approached us after to chat. We've had emails after EDGE events from students who started reading *To Kill a Mocking Bird* at our recommendation. We love connecting with teen readers - especially those who don't know they are readers yet. **Sara Grant**

Visit the EDGE authors at www.edgeauthors.blogspot.co.uk or follow them @EdgeWriters. To host the EDGE or one of its authors, send an email to edgewriters@yahoo.co.uk.

A chicken walks into the library. It goes up to the lending desk and says: "book, bok, bok, boook". The librarian hands the chicken a book. It tucks it under its wing and runs out. A while later, the chicken runs back in, returns the book and goes back to the librarian saying: "book, bok, bok, bok, boook".

Again the librarian gives it a book, and the chicken runs out. The librarian shakes her head. Within a few minutes, the chicken is back, returns the

book and starts all over again: "boook, book, bok bok boook". The librarian gives it yet a third book, but this time as the chicken is running out the door, she follows it.

The chicken runs down the street, through the park and down to the riverbank. There, sitting on a lily pad is a big, green frog. The chicken holds up the book and shows it to the frog, saying: "Book, bok, bok, book". The frog blinks, and croaks: "read-it, read-it, read-it".

What difference can one person make?

Caroline Fielding

A librarian holds a unique position in a school, potentially having more contact with pupils in their 'free' time than any other member of staff, and so the opportunity to really develop relationships and mould attitudes is huge. All schools are different, the children have different backgrounds and needs, but I think within the context of this school the pastoral side has become the most important aspect of my job. Without that personal connection with pupils I cannot hope to encourage them to trust my recommendations and advice, listen to me teach them referencing skills or lead a research task, or follow my instructions in a busy environment. Obviously these goals are only possible with the foundation of a well managed collection and an inviting space, the most "Librarian" aspects of the job, but promoting the library to the whole school won't work without making a connection with individual pupils as well. Without that goal the collection and space can easily be just a pretty waste of time and money.

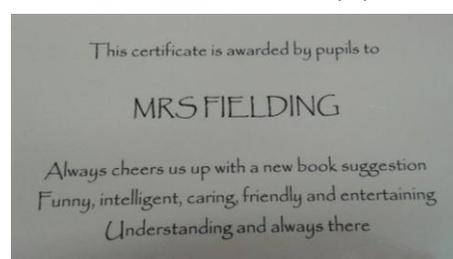
Almost 5 years ago, when I joined this school, it was having some serious issues with pupil behaviour and reputation so a massive shake-up was implemented through a new federation with a school in South West London. There hadn't been a librarian for a good few years and the library had become a dumping ground but the summer before I started it was completely refurbished (overseen by a federation librarian who began to work part time at this school and the other). I arrived in September to empty shelves and boxes full of uncatalogued books, but a nice budget to replenish the stock. The library was closed for the first 2 weeks of September to give us a chance to straighten things up but then we opened to the pupils with a piece of paper to write down what books were being borrowed. I won't deny they were challenging times with regularly up to 100 pupils swarming into the library at lunch break, making so much noise that I literally couldn't hear myself speak and finally lost my voice for a couple of weeks by November. There were riots and fights and books all over the place and I regularly slumped down and cried once the final pupil had left the room.

But it got better.

The school had introduced a House system through which interhouse tournaments were set up but also individual pupils could be awarded Points that added up

for a personal reward as well as the House Cups each term. They could also have them taken away for poor behaviour or missed deadlines. I jumped on this as an opportunity to promote good use of the library and so created my "House Point book" in which I would write down the name of any pupil I saw making use of the library appropriately. I was extremely generous, looking for any excuse to reward someone, and it was a twofold success: I asked for names and told them why they were going into the book, meaning I learnt out the names not only of nice pupils but of a lot of pupils that never want to tell you their name in case they get in to trouble later. Secondly, it meant that the pupils were learning what was expected of them in the library and having it positively reinforced every time they were in there. Inputting these points into the system is a time consuming task, but tutors would look at the points tally regularly and it gradually became known by pupils that of all the staff in the school I gave out the most rewards and so they would be clamouring to be seen doing the right thing in the library. It meant I could welcome them all by name as they came into the room and, as I developed my library helper team and so could leave them to issue books, I could wander around the room chatting with pupils about what they're doing without them feeling overly supervised. I very rarely deduct points, preferring to ask them to leave and come back when they remembered how to behave in here.

It is still noisy in here. I don't think my pupils understand the concept of library voices, but it became a productive and happy bustle rather than an angry mob. You might think "so what, the nice ones are using the library, there's a surprise", and of course there have still been moments where a pupil has pushed me to banning them for a fixed term, but some of those that are most difficult in lessons are gentlemen in the library and changes in attitude were noticed across the school. I'm by no means saying that it is entirely down to me, staff were all trying to consistently apply the behaviour policy and it was a very slow process involving a lot of sanctions from SLT, but the feeling of self worth that they could get from the environment of the library must have played at least a small part in the cultural shift to mutual respect. I have never done any "work" during the library's opening hours, only when the library is empty of pupils do I take on the every-day tasks of library management. The most important job I can do while pupils are in here is to be a part of their lives.



Diversity in Teen Literature

Savita Kalhan

I recently blogged the lack of diversity in children's books - *Black and White and Everything in Between*: <http://bit.ly/1otrkv2>

It was one of very many blogs on the subject – on both sides of the Atlantic. The subject seems to be gathering momentum – particularly in the States.

Following BookExpo America's (BEA) BookCon line up of an all-white-all-male panel of 'luminaries from the world of children's and TEEN/YA writers', an online campaign was conducted with the hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks.

Here's the link to their facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/745853242132100/>

And this link is to their Tumblr page:

<http://weneeddiveersebooks.tumblr.com/>

#WeNeedDiverseBooks ran a three day event. Most of it was online on Tumblr, Twitter and Facebook, but from the photos on Tumblr you can see that librarians were very much involved – as were readers, who took photos of themselves saying why they felt the need for more diversity in books.

The American Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) initiated a programme to address the lack of diversity in libraries in the States. The letter, below, was posted by Alyson Felman-Piltch, a librarian at Indiana University:

Dear Colleagues:

Many of you have already read ALSC's White Paper entitled "The Importance of Diversity in Library Programs and Materials for Children" (available here). If not, I highly urge you to read it, as well as participate in the "We Need Diverse Books" social media campaign.

I include the letter in its entirety because it may be of value to librarians in the UK.

In the UK, the Guardian is also following the debate as authors add their voices to the call for more diversity- <http://bit.ly/1ubqxtg>

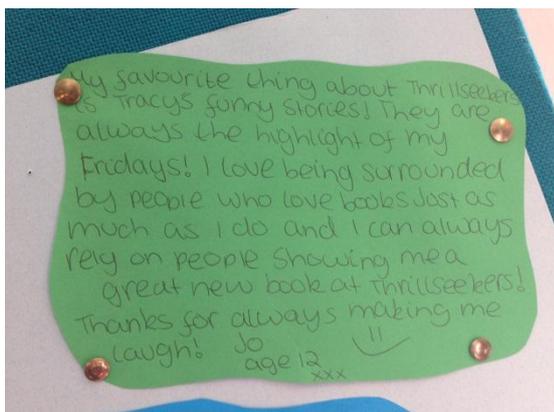
What's very clear is a call for more diversity in children's literature, from picture books to books for young adults, diversity in not only colour and race but in everything. I wonder, from their vast experience and knowledge of books and what children and teens are reading, whether teen librarians in the UK have identified such a need too.

Setting aside the other factors that might contribute to teens generally reading less, are teens partly reading less because there isn't enough diversity in the books available to them? And does it start when they are much younger, when they are frustrated by not finding a voice they can identify with or a character to relate to?

Remembering what you're good at during challenging times

Tracy Hager

This won't be the most original piece you've ever read, but in these times of cuts and low morale over the threat to libraries, I think it's worth remembering that we, Teen Librarians, all have skills and there's a reason we started doing what we do.



If, like me, you spend all of your time just trying to cover your basic responsibilities, there's not often much capacity left over for creativity. I have to remind myself that if I don't keep things fresh and exciting, even for myself, then I'm not going to inspire my teens to engage with the service.

Most good Teen Librarians find a hook – a way to connect with the young people they work with; some idea that communicates: *I am not another boring person in your life. You don't need to avoid eye contact and ignore me - for I am someone who has the key to the riches and I want to share them with you.*

Okay, I know it sounds hokey, but it's true.

Teen Librarians know we're fighting a battle not to be seen as just another authoritative, boring adult. We know that we can successfully engage with those who are already book-obsessed, but what about the others? The shy kids? Those who struggle with reading? The ones who think they hate reading because no one has ever bothered to find out what they might like?

When I first became a Young People's Librarian in 2007, my first ambition was to set up a reading group for teens. I was told over and over that it just wouldn't work in our town. But the naysayers were wrong. It worked and continues to thrive.

The Thrillseekers meet monthly on Friday nights. For the first couple of years, we all read one book each month and the sessions lasted half an hour. Eventually the numbers grew to the point that we needed multiple titles and the young people begged for it to be an hour long. Attendance has been as high as 40 and has never dropped below 5. Our average stands at around 17.

I'm often asked how I manage to engage so many teens – especially on a Friday night?

I can tell you that it's not with posters or listing events on our website. Nearly all of my Thrillseekers have come because I've stalked them in the library, forced them to speak to me and sold them on the idea. Sound creepy? It's not.

I pay attention to the books they return, ask their opinions and try to keep conversations short so they won't fear running into me the next time they come in. I do tell them about Thrillseekers and promise that if they're interested they won't be asked to take part in cringey icebreakers. I assure them they don't have to commit and that they can dip in and out. I warn them that we have fierce debates, tell them I share fairly inappropriate stories and that we laugh ALOT. Those who I don't personally recruit, are brought in by friends, who have sold them on the idea of the group – and here's where I get back to what I'm good at.

Storytelling is my *thing*, and I have to remember this even when I'm tired and rushed off my feet and think I can't be bothered to remember or prepare another story.

I'm lucky, I come from a background rich with storytelling. Where I grew up, most bars and clubs were off limits until 21, so my teenage years were spent hanging out in parks and street corners where we spent

hours entertaining each other. We became adept at harvesting the best tales, embellishing them and showing off something chronic.

Many Librarians use hooks: Carl Cross and Matt Imrie with their gaming, Emma Sherriff with her Manga, Nikki Heath with her arsenal of cool ideas; there is no shortage of excellent examples. Books are obviously at the core of what we all do, but how to get young people to talk?

I use stories as an *in*. Mine are usually funny, sometimes scary and often gross. My stories break the ice so no one else has to sit, with pounding hearts waiting to figure out what they will say when the spotlight turns to them. My stories - now kept to the very end of each session, have become a tradition. My sharing, shows that I am silly, not afraid to be the butt of my own jokes and that I can remember what it was like to be a teenager. My stories get the kids talking and paves the way so they can feel comfortable telling their own tales. We all relate our own lives to what we read in the books. Storytelling as a tool, brings the personal into a shared space in a way that's creative and keeps the conversations more interesting. The point of this wasn't to tell you how amazing I am, (because frankly nothing works all the time) but to illustrate that if you share something of yourself, you can change the culture or dynamic of a group.

Of course, running successful reading groups is a combination of things; choosing the right books and having the right people. It's knowing how to lead so everyone takes turns and no one takes over. I think it takes a deft touch and lots of experience – which is why it's so important to keep specialists. I know I'm biased but all of the Teen Librarians I know are supremely passionate about reading and engaging with the young people they work with. We know that there are barriers in getting young people to open up. Talking in public can be scary. There's a risk of sounding dopey or inarticulate. What will the older kids think? What will the boys/girls think? A good Teen Librarian creates an atmosphere, a fun, safe space.

One Librarian I know was tired of feeling negative and decided to try an idea she'd been thinking about for a while. She set up a reading group where people could also knit at the same time. It's so far proven popular and has drawn a slightly different crowd. Another invites bakes theme-styled cakes to revitalise her sessions. I know times are tough but just remember what you are good at, and carve out time to share that skill.

Librarian Launches Creative Writing Website

Helen Robinson

Keswick School English Teacher and Librarian, Helen Robinson has created a website to try and encourage students with an interest in writing and illustration from different schools, particularly from across Cumbria to interact with each other.

"I have a Writers & Illustrators Club in school, but I thought that there must be similar groups in other schools and that it was a shame that we are all working independently of each other instead of sharing ideas and working together. Pupils who take part in things such as sport and music often get to meet students from other schools, but for pupils who like reading, writing and drawing, this can often be much more isolated. I wanted to do something to give those pupils an opportunity to meet and work with others who share their interests."

www.cumbriaschoolwriters.weebly.com has been live for a couple of months now and has been shared with schools across the county. There are pages where pupils can share writing tips and ask for feedback on their own writing and illustrations, information on local and national writing opportunities, links to other related websites and Keswick School's Writing Club blog which is open to anyone to join in with.

"The site was created with the idea of providing a platform for pupils and staff in Cumbrian schools to share ideas about writing, but it would be great if anyone, anywhere could find it useful," said Helen. "I'd like to invite anyone to have a look and would welcome any feedback or ideas to help make the website a resource that can benefit as many people as possible."

Courses & Training

Graphic Novel Training Day

For people who work in school or public libraries and have an interest in graphic novels

Wednesday 28th May

Hillhead Library,

348 Byres Rd,

Glasgow G12 8AP

10am to 4pm

Speakers:

Gary Erskine <http://garyerskine.tumblr.com/>

Paul Register, founder and organiser of the Stan Lee Excelsior Awards <http://www.excelsioraward.co.uk/>

Falkirk Community Trust on running a successful graphic novel event

Koren Calder from Scottish Book Trust on using the John Muir Graphic Novel in schools and public libraries

Exhibitions:

Forbidden Planet (<http://www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk/>)

Please note, while refreshments are provided, please bring your own lunch. Waitrose, Marks and Spencer and many independent food retailers are in close proximity to Hillhead Library

Please contact Jill Reid, on 01382 431573 or jill.reid@leisureandculture Dundee.com for more information.

£35 which can be paid by cheque made out to YLG Scotland or invoice to your local authority or trust.

£20 for students which can be paid by cheque made out to YLG Scotland, or by cash on the day

BOOK HERE:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/graphic-novel-training-day-tickets-11463635041>

Encouraging Reluctant Readers/Writers course

Where: Peters Books & Furniture, 120 Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, B5 6RJ

When: Thursday 3rd July 10.00a.m. – 3p.m.

Presenters: Bev Humphrey (@Libwithattitude) & Andy Robb (@ThatAndyBloke), author of *Geekhood* books

This one day course will focus on encouraging those reluctant readers and writers to enjoy reading and writing for pleasure and learning, with an emphasis on boys. Just because young people can read, it does not always follow that they want to and enticing them away from their gaming screens can be extremely difficult at times! Using their passion for all thing tech to get them excited about reading and writing can be extremely powerful however and there are many sites and apps

that can help you do this. During the day you will :

Learn ways to use social networking for a literacy purpose.

Meet a great young adult author and hear his ideas on getting students motivated.

Discover sites you can use for reading promotion and creative writing.

Be provided with a toolkit of apps you can use in school.

This course would be suitable for librarians, teachers and LSAs and the links given would be useful for both primary and secondary staff.

Competition!! A chance to win a free (only travel/overnight fees payable) author visit or virtual visit from Andy – details to be announced on the day!! Cost £95 (£80 for second delegate from one school)

Sign up form

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LXR6GQP>

(This course will need a minimum of 10 delegates to be viable)

Free Reading INSET with Alan Gibbons in Birmingham Wednesday 4th June 2014

WEDNESDAY

4TH JUNE 2014

4.30pm – 6.30pm

Join award-winning author, Alan Gibbons for a twilight session on practical strategies to engage reluctant readers including hints and tips on how to engage your

struggling pupils with reading and make them want more.

The session will also include a reading from Alan's latest books, *Being Rooney* and *On the Run* alongside a quick overview of Collins *Read On* and how this series can help your pupils progress to achieving a secure level 4 in reading.

This is a free event and refreshments will be available on the evening.

Schedule

4.30-4.45pm Arrival with refreshments

4.45-5.45pm Workshop on practical strategies to engage reluctant readers with activities

5.45-6.00pm Overview of Read On scheme from Collins

6.00-6.30pm Author reading, book signing and questions

6.30pm Finish and take away free resources from Collins

Venue

Q3 Academy, Great Barr, Birmingham

B43 7SD

RSVP

Places at this exclusive event are strictly limited so please reserve yours by e-mailing

on michelle.storer@hays.com. Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Upcoming Library Camps

On Saturday 14th June, there will be four school library camps held simultaneously in different locations;

London: <http://tinyurl.com/po4ms23>

North West (Manchester): <http://tinyurl.com/p7q48t9>

Yorkshire (Leeds): <http://tinyurl.com/q4vnted>

Scotland (Glasgow): <http://tinyurl.com/o89yux4>

Midlands School Library Camp Saturday, 14 June 2014
from 10:30 to 15:30

Great Malvern, United Kingdom

Library Camp South East Saturday will take place on Saturday 21st June 2014 from 10:30 to 16:30

Canterbury, United Kingdom

<http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/library-camp-south-east-tickets-8502732903>

Library Camp SW 2014 will take place on Saturday, 5 July 2014 from 10:00am to 16:30 in Exeter

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/library-camp-sw-2014-tickets-10431961277>

Queen of Teen 2014 shortlist announced!

Since 2008, we have championed and celebrated the fantastic authors from the world of teen fiction. This year has seen some incredibly passionate and enthusiastic fans nominating their favourite authors; authors that have changed their lives.

Thanks to an overwhelming number of nominations, we are delighted to announce the shortlist of authors for this year's prestigious award, Queen of Teen 2014:

Beth Reekles
Veronica Roth
Cathy Cassidy
Holly Smale
Tonya Hurley
John Green
Natasha Farrant
S.C. Ransom
James Dawson

Teen fiction has come a long way since the coronation of our first Queen of Teen, demonstrated by the

diversity of content and style from this year's shortlisted authors. This year, we are pleased to announce two male authors in our shortlist for the very first time: A Fault in Our Stars author John Green and a second successive Queen of Teen nomination for Hollow Pike author James Dawson.

In previous years, it has been very gratifying for the shortlisted authors to see how much their books mean to their fans. Past winners include Louise Rennison (2008), Cathy Cassidy (2010) and reigning Queen Maureen Johnson (2012).

Voting for this year's award is now open at www.queenofteen.co.uk, closing midnight 7 July 2014.

The winner will be crowned at the Queen of Teen award ceremony, hosted on 11 July 2014 at: Catteshall Manor, Catteshall Lane, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1UU.



Beth Reekles



Veronica Roth



Cathy Cassidy



Holly Smale



Tonya Hurley



John Green



Natasha Farrant



S. C. Ransom



Cassandra Clare



James Dawson

Eight Questions With... Non Pratt

What influenced your decision to write for Teenagers?

For me, I don't feel that it's ever been a decision – it's just what I've always written and I've never wanted not to. When I was fourteen I started writing the kinds of things I wanted to read about, basically teens behaving like actual teenagers, hanging out in the park, forging friendships and breaking them – kissing (and more) with both the right people and the wrong ones... I've never stopped.

How do you get into the heads of your characters?

Both my characters in *Trouble* contain a lot of 'me' in them, but their 'voices' have to be different from mine – and from each other. I do a lot of character work, thinking about every layer of a character's life: what's their family like? Have they always lived in that house? Who are their friends? Who *were* their friends? People's past affects their present. I also think about what TV/films/music they like, what hobbies they have – these are the things by which we define ourselves and show people who we are.

Do you know instinctively what will appeal to Teens or is it more a hit or miss process?

The only person I consider when reading back what I've written is fourteen-year-old Non. This is pretty easy, since I am still fourteen-year-old Non inside my head - I don't think what teens want now is so different from teens wanted when I was young enough to be one, the only things that change are the music and the clothes... so I miss those bits out. (I mean, not completely, my characters wear clothes, I just don't go into much detail.)

What is the most satisfying part of the writing process for you?

The first lust of a new idea, when you can't stop thinking of great things your characters will say, the people they'll meet and the problems they'll face. It's exactly like starting a new relationship: all you want to do is spend your time with this idea until your friends get bored of you talking about it. But, just like a relationship, you get more out of your ideas if you stay faithful to them and work at creating a future together.

Do you ever read the works of other Teen/YA authors? If yes what can you recommend?

Yes. Always and only (with very few exceptions). My favourite books are the *Chaos Walking* series by Patrick Ness, for the searing voice and unapologetically brutal way that his story treats his characters. (I like crying at books.) I'm a fan of Frances Hardinge for her wonderful wordplay and clever twisty plots... but for contemporary, my favourites are *This Song Will Save Your Life* by Leila Sales, *Graffiti Moon* by Cath Crowley and anything by Laurie Halse Anderson. And my favourite book of last year was *Undeniable* by Liz Banks, which is perfect teen romance, witty, sexy and well written with heart and laughter.

Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

Yes and no. I was never in Hannah's position as a teenager, nor was I ever subject to the same tragedy as Aaron in *Trouble*... but there is so much of my memories and experiences of being a teen in the way I write their stories – the social hierarchy, the need to fit in, the solace to be found in sharing a secret. The world they live in is the one I inhabited. The characters in my next book on the other hand... they're much closer to me.

Are you working on anything new at the moment or do you have anything planned?

As hinted at above, I'm working hard on the second draft of what is currently called 'Book 2'. It's the story of two friends, Kaz and Ruby, who are off to a music festival to help them recover from their bad break ups. As the weekend progresses, the truths each is hiding from the other threaten to blow apart their best friendship. I want to write something that deals with the fallout from ending an intense relationship – YA tends to focus on hook-ups, not break-ups, which is a bit one-sided, if you ask me – but keep the girls' friendship very firmly in the forefront of the book. Friendship is every bit as complex and heartbreaking as any romantic relationship.

Do you ever do Library visits to Teen Reading Groups? If yes, what is the best way to get into contact with you or your agent about it?

More than happy to, if asked! Drop me an email at non@nonpratt.com