

# **YOUNG ADULT WRITING**

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**JOHN HOPE**



# **YOUNG ADULT WRITING - AGENDA**

- **Select the Right Topic**
- **Your Leading Character**
- **Think Like Your Audience**



# **SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC**

- **Young Adult Writing is NOT “Dumbed Down” Adult Writing**
- **Hot / Serious Topics**
- **Don’t Water Down the Truth**

# **SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC**

- **What's important to teens?**
  - **Friends and Meaningful Relationships**
  - **What Other People Think About Them**
  - **A Sense of Self**
  - **Grades / School**
  - **Their Future**



# SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC

- **Harry Potter's Struggles:**
  - **Making Friends**
  - **Fitting in the "right" House**
  - **Discovering his hidden potential**
  - **Surviving wizard school**
  - **Saving the world from Voldemort**



# SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC

- Provide the audience interesting ideas, settings, and scenarios



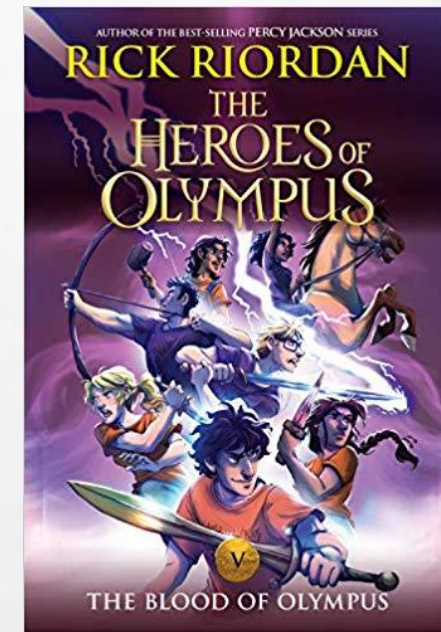
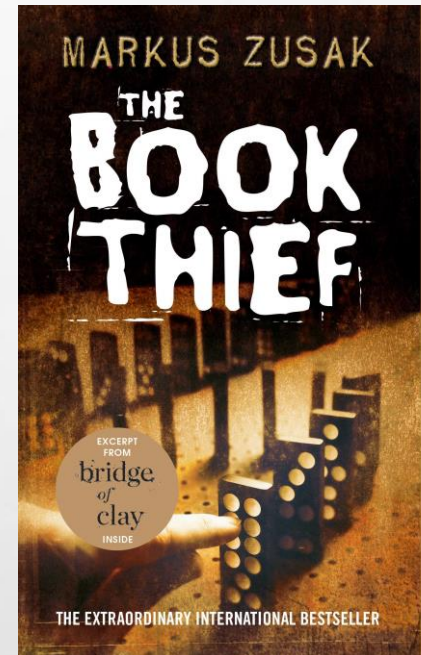
# **SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC**

- **Keep in mind, kids buys books, adults buy MORE books**
  - **Need to sell concepts to parents and teachers**
  - **What are topics are adults comfortable with exposing to their kids**



# SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC

- **Schools**
  - **Focus on learning**
  - **Historical topics**
  - **Science/Technology**



# SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC

- **Taboos**

- **Sex**
- **Nudity**
- **Vulgarity**
- **Excessive Violence**
- **Drug use**

- **All Taboos CAN be addressed – go light on the descriptions**

# SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC

- **Don't get preachy, just tell your story**
  - **Trust your audience will get it**



# **SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC**

- **Satisfying endings**
  - **Doesn't have to be happy, but it should be hopeful**
  - **A better life is coming**
  - **Characters have changed (character arc)**



# **SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC**

- **Remember to Hook Your Audience**
  - **Overarching story huge and epic (sounds good)**
  - **The core of your story deep and character-centric**



# SELECT THE RIGHT TOPIC

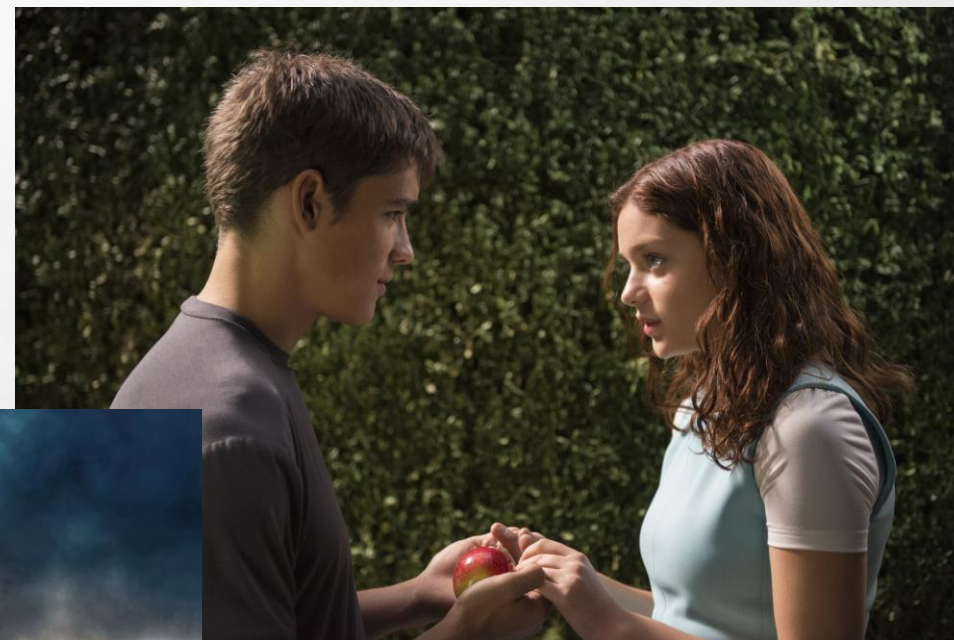
## • Teen Hooks

- Dystopian
- Starkly realistic
- Stories that challenge their world view
- Push the limits of what's acceptable

## • Tween Hooks

- Funny, adventurous
- Similar activities of reader
- Bordering on unbelievable premises

# YOUR LEADING CHARACTER



# **YOUR LEADING CHARACTER**

- **Select the character(s) to match your audience**
  - **Same age or slightly older**
  - **Similar problems / desires / wants**
  - **Avoid stereotypes**

# **YOUR LEADING CHARACTER**

- **Point of View**

- **NO RETROSPECTIVE WRITING – No adult wisdom**
- **Allow kid characters to make kid mistakes**
- **Thoughts and reactions should be appropriate for what your character knows / understands**



# **YOUR LEADING CHARACTER**

- **Voice**

- **Select genuine voice for your character(s), each should be unique**
- **Characters themselves may be searching for their voice**
  - **Speak differently amongst their friends vs adults**



# **YOUR LEADING CHARACTER**

- **Fully developed characters**
  - **Tell something NEW about your main characters in EVERY scene**
  - **Allow readers to become friends with the characters**
  - **Show multiple sides to each character**

# YOUR LEADING CHARACTER

- **Character example:**

- **Bruce, he plays football**
- **Big and bullish-looking**
- **Loves dogs and wants to be a vet**
- **Struggles with math, but takes Honors Algebra because a girl he likes in the class**
- **Obsessed with eating pickles**
- **Has a neighbor with Down's syndrome who he gives piggy-backs rides**
- **He cried when saw the Fox and the Hound**

# THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE



# **THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE**

- **Types of kids haven't changed**
- **Environments, situations, technologies have changed – DRAMATICALLY**
  - **Kids have changed to adapt**

# THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE



- **Understanding of Technology**

- **What do kids know, and what don't they know?**

- **Terminology**

- **Use the CORRECT terms in the CORRECT context**



# THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE

- **Basic Desires of Teens (13-19):**
  - **Sense of identity, self**
  - **Meaningful relationships, beyond childhood friends**
  - **Gain confidence in adult responsibilities**
  - **Question what they've learned**
  - **Start to take ownership of their own lives**

# THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE

- **Basic Desires of Tweens (10-12):**
  - **Cares what adults think of them**
    - **They start to challenge authority**
    - **Don't want adults around**
    - **They still need love/support**
  - **Activities (games or sports) more important than hygiene**
  - **Embarrassment, fitting in**
  - **Want to do grown up things**

# THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE

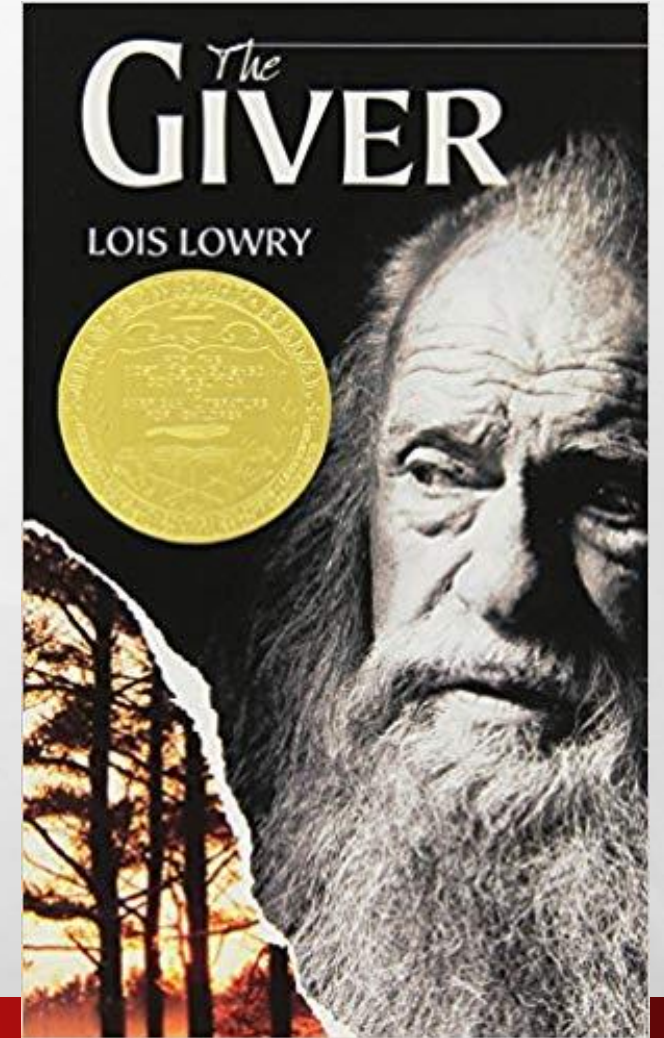
- **What do kids generally don't worry about?**
  - **Paying bills**
  - **Carrying for others' welfare**
  - **Cooking dinners**
  - **Managing carpools/transportation**
  - **Next day consequences**
  - **Their own mortality**

# **THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE**

- **Propel your story with the concerns of your audience**

# THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE

- **Main character, Jonas, has lived a cookie-cutter life**
- **He has a moment of enlightenment**
- **He decides to live his own life, away from his family**
- **He rebels, breaks the rules, and leaves**





# **THINK LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE**

- **Teens React: The Hunger Games (01:50 onward)**
  - **How real they view the story**
  - **How they relate it to their lives**
  - **How they understand the symbology**
  - **Their general reactions**

# **Questions?**

## **YOUNG ADULT WRITING**

**Presentation Available:**

**[www.johnhopewriting.com](http://www.johnhopewriting.com)**