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Ohio Women Writers Inspire in YA: A Study of Three Authors, their Most Recent Young Adult Texts, and their Paths to Publication

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Ohio Women Writers Inspire in YA: A Study of Three Authors, their Most Recent Young Adult
Texts, and their Paths to Publication

By: Genevieve Wadge

Introduction

In their formative years, children and teenagers are growing into themselves and often feel isolated, alone, misunderstood, or confused. At least, that was how I felt during middle and high school. I was under the impression that nobody else knew what I was going through or could relate to my struggles. Then, on a sunny Saturday afternoon, I tagged along with my mom to our local library and skimmed some titles in the Teen section. There, I found my confidants in the crazy transitional period that is adolescence. The characters I read about felt like real friends to me, with similar family issues, school drama, and hopeless crushes on boys in older grades. From then on, my passion for reading grew exponentially and has yet to be squandered.

The only difference between me as a thirteen-year-old reader and me now as a twenty-one-year-old English literature scholar is that I have developed a fond fascination with the behind-the-scenes aspects of books and publishing. I am always curious about the authors and how their backgrounds might have had a hand in their stories or if their intersectional personalities could have affected the path they had to take to publish such stories. With this fascination in mind, I realized that I should pursue a career in publishing and editing after graduating from The University of Akron. I have decided to attend New York University's School of Professional Studies to pursue a master's degree in Digital and Print Media Publishing. This Honors Research Project seemed like the perfect outlet to exercise my interests and ask my prying questions to a select few authors.

My project consists of brief interviews conducted via email with three local authors. All of them write stories that are classified as Young Adult Literature (YAL), identify as women,

and live and write in Ohio. With these interviews, my goal was to learn about them as writers, women, professionals, and experienced literary scholars. The questions I asked of them were all the same to make it easier to examine them against one another. However, their answers were vastly different from one another, making the analysis of each one unique and worthwhile. Along with focusing on the individual authors, I will also be analyzing their most recently published YA book for a variety of reasons. I will be focusing on how those texts fit into or go against the current canon of YAL, what common themes these stories touch on, how an adolescent reader might relate to the story and the characters, and other nuances of the texts. In this project, I will explore the world of YA literature and publishing with a focus on three female authors, Dr. Julie Drew, Rachele Alpine, and Colleen Clayton, and will use their most recently published young adult literature books to further reinforce my research.

Conclusion

The world of literature is full of complexities and challenges, with many moving parts coming together to produce one successfully published book. Through the research, interviews, and analysis of three Ohioan female young adult writers, I was able to examine this process as well as explore the potential impact that their stories could have on their intended audience. The authors I focused on were Dr. Julie Drew, Rachele Alpine, and Colleen Clayton. With each author, I focused on their most recent YAL publications, the themes that existed in those texts that classified them as YA, the road to publishing each author went on for both their first published book and the book I focused on, any advice they had for aspiring writers, and other aspects of their answers that were interesting and would provide further insight into the literary world.

With this project, the authors provided multiple examples of the various ways a writer can go about getting their work published. Drew has published her books two different ways, with her first book getting published the most traditional method of finding an agent to shop a writer's book, and then, with her YA trilogy, Drew queried smaller presses on her own. Rachele Alpine tried to sell her first book through the same traditional method as Drew's first, but her book would not sell. So, Alpine reached out to mid-level presses on her own and connected with Medallion Media Group. For all of her books since the first one, Alpine has been publishing through Simon & Schuster, making her the author with the largest publisher. Colleen Clayton published her first book through Little Brown Books, and then decided to take a risk by self-publishing her second book. With all of these methods there are pros and cons and it is up to the writer to decide which path is right for them.

Overall, this project has given me much more information about the topics that interest me. My passion for publishing and young adult literature has grown during this research project, and I am excited to see where my passions will take me in the future. To all of my authors, thank you for allowing me to pick your brain and analyze you as writers and female professionals. To my project sponsor, thank you for letting me explore such interesting topics with full freedom.