

Enthusiasm - YA Fiction

Content Warnings

- Discussions of: Harry Potter series
- Mentions of: Holocaust, drug overdose
- SFX: repeated beeping

HELEN

I have no idea how much of this is going to be usable. [laughs]

ALL

[laugh]

[Show Theme - Intro]

HELEN

Hello friends and fans and welcome to Enthusiasm, the show where we talk about a few of our favourite things. I am your host Helen Gould, one of the best Rusty Quillers. And today we're talking about young adult fiction, and I am super excited to be joined by Annie, Cole and Sydney. So as always, we are going to introduce ourselves alphabetically, which means Annie, you are going first. Can you please give us your pronouns and tell us what you do?

ANNIE

Hi, I'm Annie. She / her pronouns. I'm an audio editor at RQ for Magnus Archives and the Stellar Firma bonus show, Compulsory Film Appreciation as well as the voice of Akteraks on Stellar Firma.

HELEN

Wonderful. Next up Cole, can you give us your pronouns and tell us what you do.

COLE

My name's Cole. My pronouns are he / him and I am a podcaster on the Rusty Quill Network. I create, narrate the show, or I created and I narrate the show currently, The Town Whispers.

HELEN

Excellent. Thank you for checking your own grammar on the fly there, [laugh].

That is very admirable. [laugh]. And finally, Sydney, can you give us your pronouns and tell us what you do?

SYDNEY

Yeah, I'm fine with any pronoun to be honest, And I am the Patreon producer for Rusty Quill.

HELEN

Yes indeed. You've taken over from good old Katie Seaton and we are extremely grateful to have you. Right. So I'm gonna start with a very simple and easy question, which is, what do you think defines young adult fiction as a genre? Because something that I have noticed is that in addition to it usually being about, you know, teenagers and young adults, it can be set anywhere. They can be like dystopias, they can be vampires, there can be sort of gritty, real life

things going on. So what do you think defines something as young adult fiction rather than just being a fiction involving young adults?

COLE

You know, when we did this the last time, Helen, you did this with fantasy as well, where you were straight out the gate, what is the genre? [laugh] and none of us were prepared for the question. So I actually went to Google this time.

Oh, I prepared this time. Fool me twice, shame on me.

HELEN

[laugh], I would never try to shame you, but um, [laugh], I am, I'm very interested in what Google had to say.

COLE

Well, I mean as it always does, there's a variety of answers. But YA, if you ask an agent, is a readership, not a genre, but agents are not completely correct because YA has turned into a genre over the years thanks to Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone creating the big boom of YA, which was always around since the fifties. Cause in the fifties we actually created the sense of the adolescence as we know it now. Once again, Google gave me too much information. [laugh], I'm sorry this is long-winded. But YA basically just defines a loose kind of coagulation of all the things, but the protagonist or the main characters dealing with the issues are between the ages of 14 and 18. So young adults themselves. So it could be any genre. So it's kind of like a top hat on genres of genres. [laugh]. And it's just like, because they're that age.

HELEN

Okay. Do we have any competing theories with what Google had to say?

COLE

Come at me!

HELEN

Yeah, [laugh].

SYDNEY

I feel like what kind of separates them from, I don't know, adult novels for me is; I feel like young adult novels have more hope in them.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYDNEY

In that I generally can trust that it will have, if not like, a happy ending, a good ending for most of the characters.

ANNIE

Yeah. Not a bleak ending.

SYDNEY

Yes. Whereas sometimes I'm kind of wary of picking up an adult novel that sounds good because I'm like, oh, what if they just all die at the end? And that's just how it is. [laugh]

HELEN

That's interesting because the thing is like if the only requisite for something is that the protagonist is between 14 & 18, didn't that makes like Carrie a young adult novel.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm. [affirmative]

HELEN

Which I would not necessarily... [laugh], I wouldn't necessarily put that in, in there. Although it is very much about like the fears you have when growing up and stuff going on at school and being a teenager with like difficult parents and things like this and social politics. But it is also about, uh, what's the word, pyrokinesis?

ANNIE

Mm-hmm. [affirmative]

HELEN

Um, [laugh], whatever it is. [laugh]. Anyway. Annie, what do you think? What do you have to add?

ANNIE

I will also, so, so first of all I'll agree with what Sydney said about the, the hope for the ending. And my thought on it when I was looking at the question here was, unfortunately when it's defined as a genre, a lot of the time a lot of it can be a little bit arbitrary in terms of the way like as long as it fits a certain level of

like, particularly in America, age appropriateness to the subject matter, the defining line between what is a YA book and what is an adult book can sometimes come down to just how the publisher feels like marketing it to a degree. There are a decent number of books that are considered YA that make me kind of question that designation. And there's plenty of adult books that I've read that I would personally have classified under more of a YA heading. So the defining lines can be a bit arbitrary. I think that being appropriate for a late adolescent early adulthood age being a story that either is about or can relate to dealing with adolescents and, and growing up and becoming an adult and to an extent being about characters who are around that age. I think that if you combine those three factors, you come up with a pretty decent approximation of what a YA novel would be if it were a genre.

COLE

So by that...Carrie is in fact actually a YA novel.

ANNIE

In fact, yes, to an extent. I think so.

COLE

I think it is.

ANNIE

Yeah.

COLE

If you're like 17, that book's totally appropriate to read.

ANNIE

Right.

COLE

At 17 all bets are off. You're almost an adult. You could totally read it.

HELEN

To be fair, I was too young when I read it. [laugh]

COLE

You should have been the, in like the ages, like 12 section of the bookstore, but you were...

HELEN

It was okay. It was in the school library and in the school library books that were appropriate for year 7 to 11. So that's, uh, age 11 to 16 were marked with one type of sticker and books that were for six forms only, which is ages 17 and 18 were marked with a different kind of sticker. But obviously I was bored with all of my age range of books, so I went and picked [laugh].

SYDNEY

Oh no.

HELEN

A restricted secret sixth former book off the shelf and it was Carrie. But the thing is I wasn't able to take it out of the school library cause obviously the

school was small enough that the library would know me and how old I was. So I just had to have a series of dinner times sit in the back of the library secretly reading Carrie!

SYDNEY

[laughs]

ANNIE

Did you put it inside of another book, so they thought you were reading something that was age appropriate?

HELEN

I think I made a little stack of other age appropriate books. [laugh]

SYDNEY

Incredible.

COLE

So you, you had a restricted section in your library.

HELEN

Basically yeah.

COLE

So you went to Hogwarts.

HELEN

Okay. Right. Okay. So there are some things about Hogwarts that do happen in British schools. There are some things that are entirely made up. I think that there probably are mechanisms to restrict [laugh], um, different kinds of books because a lot of the schools here go from ages 11 to 18 and that's a big range...

ANNIE

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]

HELEN

...of stuff. You've gotta be careful.

ANNIE

Yeah, just about the biggest eight year range that a human life can have. The difference, the difference of the person you are at 11 to 18 is about as big as it gets over any eight year period of your life.

HELEN

Yes. And we did have school houses and...

COLE

What?!

ALL

[laugh]

COLE

That's a thing that actually happens in schools?

HELEN

Yes. Our houses were named after the different founders of the school. Just like in Hogwarts actually.

ANNIE

Oh my god.

COLE

What?

HELEN

We had three and there were house colours. Rawlinson was green. Hansard was yellow. And Ayscough, which was mine, was blue [laugh].

SYDNEY

That's incredible.

COLE

[spluttering] Oh, I do... I, I di... I, actually, I just ran out things to say I can't believe you actually had house schools. That's insane to me.

HELEN

[laughing] There wasn't a sorting hat! I think they were randomly assigned, but I also think that it was done by a person because siblings would always end up in the same house.

ANNIE

Right.

COLE

Hmm.

ANNIE

Yeah. I, I had the same reaction Cole's having the first time I learned that headmaster was an actual position at schools because they're called principals here.

HELEN

Yes. You call them principals.

ANNIE

Yeah. And I was like, wait, they actually call them headmasters?! [laugh].

HELEN

Yeah, headmaster or head mistress. Yeah.

ANNIE

Right. [laugh].

COLE

It's actually so wild to me when we, you know, we come together and we have these conversations and then I'm like, oh yeah, yeah. It's, everything's like the same in Canada as it is in the States, but we're also Commonwealth so it's like

the same, you know, proximity of the United States Commonwealth. So the UK we get a lot of the same tv, all that jazz. We've kind of got our like public, you know, our state controlled media like the BBC and all that stuff. But then you bring out stuff like; you have houses and restricted sections in libraries And I'm like in one way being in Canada is kind of cool cause like we didn't have a restricted section in my library, it was just, if you were young you couldn't go to the quiet section in the library because you were incapable of being in life. If you could always rent a book from the quiet section, which included Stephen King, but I would've taken a restricted section and that mild censorship in order to have school houses. Because that sounds like completely healthy tribalism that definitely would've flourished in the schools I went to.

SYDNEY

[laugh].

HELEN

Yeah. It's not even, okay, we didn't have like a method of house points, but we did have competitions. Like we had competitive sports.

COLE

What.

HELEN

And uh, we had drama competitions and music competitions that would get judged by the teachers. So like you would, all the actors of a play would be from Rawlinson, and they would put on their play and then Hansard would put on their play and then Ayscough would put on their play and they were also

divided up into age categories because you couldn't have a year seven acting alongside a sixth former that that, that's just too big a gulf of like talent. So it would be year seven to nine and then years 10 to year 12. Um, we're so off topic. [laughs]

ANNIE

We're so off topic [laughs]

COLE

Well it sounds like you grew up in a YA novel...

ANNIE

Little bit.

HELEN

Well I do, I will. I will just say; Britain is weird. We're a strange, strange little country. We've got very particular national neurosis [laugh].

SYDNEY

[laugh] See I grew up homeschooled so I feel like an American could tell me anything about the American school system and I'd be like oh really? Wow.
[laugh]

HELEN

[laughs] So it sounds like we have come up with some criteria which is for young adult fiction, the protagonist should be between 14 and 18. It should be

at least vaguely hopeful or not necessarily have a depressing or bad ending. So
that's, Cole. You're making a face. [laugh]

COLE

I'm gonna FedEx you all a copy of a little book that destroyed me for about a
whole year called Milkweed.

HELEN

Ooh. [interested]

COLE

Yes. It's about, during World War II, a bunch of little thieves in the Jewish
ghetto and Kraków. And it will even as an adult put you in a weird head space
for a year. Cause it is not and it definitely does not end well. I've said too much
already. It's not good and it is a YA novel, I will say.

HELEN

To be fair, it's about the ghetto in Kraków. So I have some idea of what may
have happened to those kids.

ANNIE

I would not expect that one to be a particularly hopeful book.

COLE

And you know it from the get-go too.

ANNIE

Right?

HELEN

Yeah. It's like the, like the Book Thief as well.

SYDNEY

Yeah.

HELEN

So perhaps is more likely to have a hopeful ending than other books from different genres, is at least vaguely age appropriate for people of the ages of about 14 to 18 to read, and has some of the themes of growing up and deals with those through allegory or through actual plot points. That sound about right to everyone?

SYDNEY

Yeah.

ANNIE

Yeah. I think that's a good, at least a working definition.

COLE

Yeah.

HELEN

Yeah. So now that we have our definition, come at me, throw, throw me all of your favourite young adult authors and books. Go, go, go.

ANNIE

So if I, if I could open very quickly, I mean I will at some point need to take some time with His Dark Materials series and how that kind of, I think is one of the books that straddles the border between young adult and adult fiction. But part of the reason I am on this episode in the first place is because during season two of Enthusiasgasm, you guys did fantasy books. I think it was.

HELEN

Yes.

ANNIE

And Tim started into Pratchett and Discworld and I, while still listening to the episode, sent a message to Lowri that was just like, can we do an entire Pratchett episode? Because I feel like Tim and I could fill an hour just ranting about Pratchett.

HELEN

[laugh]

ANNIE

Now it would become disjointed but it would be very fun. Uh, [laugh], but I will say this for Pratchett is that depending upon where you draw the line of what YA is, Discworld is either entirely YA or only partially. But I, I fall on the side of partially because if you look through Discworld, there is a specific, you know, it's 40 something books with a bunch of subseries within there and only one of those subseries fits all of the criteria that we were talking about previously.

Cause it's about a character who's an adolescent. It's about, it deals with themes of adolescents and finding your own independence and such. And that's the Tiffany Aching series. And if you have not read any of those books, even if you've never read a Discworld book, the Tiffany Aching series, the first book is Wee Free Men and it is a fantastic starting place and just, it's different than the other disk world because it almost does feel like Pratchett was sort of leveling it at a YA audience a little bit in the way that the plot moves and the way that the stakes ramp up, particularly in the third act of the book. It just feels like other YA books that I've read in the past. I don't really know how to phrase it better than that. Anyway, I don't wanna get too into it cause again, like I said, I could fill an hour on Pratchett probably.

ALL

[laugh]

ANNIE

But I had to get it in there. [laugh].

HELEN

I feel like Mort is another good one for, in terms of Pratchett young adults.

ANNIE

I would agree that's the first book in the Death series in in Discworld. And the rest of the Death series may not fall in YA in the same way [laugh] but Mort, yes, I would agree. I think Mort could work very well as a YA book and it also works very well as a standalone. If you know nothing else about Discworld and you don't continue after that, Mort still does fine on its own.

HELEN

That's exactly what I did. Mort was one of the few Pratchett books that I read. [laugh], I do want to go back and read them all at some point, but I already have a massive stack to get through first.

ANNIE

Mm-hmm. [affirmative]

HELEN

Sydney, how about you? Do you have a favourite young adult author or book?

SYDNEY

Yeah, my favourite book of all time is, I'll Give You The Sun by Jandy Nelson. It's about two twins and it's told from different time periods. So both of their stories kind of have this disconnect and you're not sure why, like what happened to them in between those time periods? And they're just like very artsy and think in terms of art a lot. Like, as they're talking to people they're thinking about like how would I draw them? And it's just a really good story about siblings and how much you can love and hate each other. [laugh].

ALL

[laugh]

SYDNEY

I absolutely love it. My copy of it is almost trashed at this point because it's highlighted and I've written in it and it's, it's a mess. [laugh]. I also really love

The Raven Cycle by Maggie Stiefvater. Actually like I have a tattoo [laugh] from that book, a quote from it and it's just, a friend gave me the first book, I got the tattoo in her handwriting and I just, it's such a good series, I really love it.

HELEN

That's really lovely. Aw [laugh], what's the series about?

SYDNEY

So the Raven Cycle, let's see, the first book is the Raven Boys. It's about three boys in a very exclusive all boys school, two of which are like very privileged, one of whom is putting himself through school and it's very difficult. And then a girl who is the only non psychic in a family of psychics, [laugh]. It's a very like weird group and it's very fun. And they're on a quest to find a lost Welsh king [laugh]. They are in America [laugh], but they're trying to find the body of this Welsh king that they think has been moved to America. It's very weird and fun [laugh] and it's a beautiful writing style. And there's a sequel series as well that the author is still currently writing about one of the characters. It's, it's delightful. [laugh].

HELEN

Oh lovely. [laugh] and Cole, what about you? What would you say your favourite young adult author or book or series is?

COLE

Oh my gosh. I was enjoying listening to everyone else's answers. I kind of forgot to think about my own. Uh, my favourite YA book, which I should have been thinking about up until this point. It's really hard at my age. I'm 31 now to kind

of avoid like the hysteria of like Harry Potter when I was growing up. So, you know, Harry Potter obviously had a huge impact on the type of media I consumed after that. And it, it's just really hard to escape cause there were so many formative memories. I used to go wait at midnight with my dad. Uh, my grandfather like went to some like black market book dealer and got the Goblet of Fire for me three days ahead of time so I could have it on my birthday instead of July 10th when it was supposed to come out.

SYDNEY

Oh, wow.

HELEN

Oh my gosh.

COLE

Like I have all these cool memories with it, you know, and it's kind of sad that like, you know, recent events have kind of tainted that for me. But like I can't help but still have those very positive memories and as such, you know, I associate those memories with the book. Caveat, I will add another book in there, The Perks of Being a Wallflower, when I had a lot of feelings when I was younger that I didn't have words for, helped me articulate the way I was feeling and to the point where I used to buy that book for my friends when they were feeling sad or like I saw them kind of like becoming like kind of jerks or moody, you know? And like that shift in personality you get in your, you know, your like 14 like 17 and the hormones and everything.

And so I used to buy them that book when I noticed they were feeling down and I used to like go leave it on their like front doorstep and then I felt like I was

like so cool and quirky cause I'd be like, yo, go to the front door and check it. And they'd be like, what's this Cole? And I'd be like, you need to read it. And they'd be like, wow Cole, this book changed my life now, Perks of Being a Wallflower isn't like this like cool like little thing but also good memories with Perks of Being a Wallflower so.

HELEN

I read all genres of books these days and my work as a sensitivity consultant means I'm actually a lot more open to the kind of books I will read now because I have been paid to read lots of different books. [laugh]. And so I've been like, oh right, so books with this genre can be like this. That's interesting. But I've been listening to a very interesting podcast and I just wanna drop this in there. It was about a book called Go Ask Alice

ANNIE

mm-hmm [affirmative]

HELEN

Which was like this fake diary about a teenage girl who gets hooked on drugs and dies of an LSD overdose.

ANNIE

Yes.

HELEN

Which is not really something that happens [laugh], but it's... [laughs]

ANNIE

Technically it can. But it, yeah. I actually just recently saw cause someone wrote a book about that book

HELEN

Yes.

ANNIE

And the author who wrote that one, I don't remember what the other one was, but there there's another one of these really popular diary books that the same person who faked Go Ask Alice also faked the other one.

HELEN

Yes.

ANNIE

And they both got recently exposed. Wild, wild cause that book I remember Go Ask Alice was all over the place when I was like in high school and shortly thereafter. Everybody had a copy of that book. And so many people I know were like huge, huge, huge fans of it. I never got into it, but I just remember the, the hype around it was so huge. And then now it's just like, oh yeah, no, totally. It's like a, like the, what was that Oprah book? A Million Little Pieces.

COLE

Ah.

ANNIE

Just completely faked.

SYDNEY

Yeah.

HELEN

It wasn't so much a thing here. Like it was quite an American phenomenon. Or an North American phenomenon I think. So it's been really fascinating for me to listen to this sort of dissection and sort of debunking of this book. It was by the, uh, You're Wrong About podcast. They, they were reading through it, but they kept saying the author probably doesn't intend this, but this teenage protagonist sounds so gay. [laugh] like she is, she's so very much in love with her best friend, like [laugh]

SYDNEY

[laugh]

HELEN

And she keeps saying things like, oh I suppose I'll go out with this boy. Anyway, uh, me and my best friend, I don't know how I would live without her. She's such an important part of my... [laugh]

SYDNEY

[laugh].

ANNIE

Can I give a quick shout out to the, the book that I was referencing by the way that I saw recently? It's Unmasking Alice by Rick Emerson is the one.

HELEN

Yes. He's on the podcast I think. Yes. Hee hee! Anyway, that was a complete tangent. The reason I bring it up is because an adult wrote that book pretending to be a teenager. And it is, it's, it's a very different book to the actual books the teenagers read. It seems to me like, I feel like when I was growing up I wouldn't automatically pick up a book that was like, this is the diary of a teenage drug addict. I think I'd be like, that seems weird.

SYDNEY

Yeah. [laugh]

HELEN

Where are the Dragons? [laugh] And yeah, it's absolutely a bestseller. So go figure I guess. On that random tangent, we're going to take a little break.

[BREAK]

HELEN

And welcome back. Now, Cole, you mentioned in the first half Perks of Being a Wallflower, which is actually a nice segue to my next question, which is; I was wondering what people thought of the very sort of film and TV adaptations of different books. Like there's, there's been The Hunger Games, Percy Jackson, I

think Divergent was one To All the Boys I Love Before was one we had, um, so they released it as I think Angus Thongs and Awesome Snogging or something like that.

SYDNEY

Oh yeah.

HELEN

But the actual title of that book is Angus Thongs and Full Frontal Snogging. But I think they thought the full frontal was too [laugh], um, spicy to go in the title.

ANNIE

[laughs] It had certain implications in cinema that it doesn't necessarily have elsewhere.

HELEN

[laugh]. But those books were hilarious. But I boycotted the film because I was like, there's no way you can live up to the how funny the books were. Anyway, [laugh], anyone seen the adaptations? How do we think?

SYDNEY

Yeah, sorry. I started laughing when you mentioned Divergent because that, the first book was like my favourite for a bit when I was in high school. And then as the series kept going it just kept getting worse. [laugh] to the point that now I feel like almost embarrassed to say that I loved that book series. It had some fun, I don't know, some fun qualities to it. The movies are very interesting to me because they're beautifully shot, but just, I don't know, feel a bit clunky, a

bit off for whatever reason. But you mentioned the Hunger Games and I feel like maybe a bold statement, I feel like I liked the Hunger Games movies more than I liked the books.

HELEN

Interesting. Why is that?

SYDNEY

Um, I remember the Hunger Games was the first like major hyped up book series that I feel like I really got into.

I wasn't allowed to read Twilight or Harry Potter as a kid. So I feel like I had a, a bit amount, like a a bit of disdain kind of as a, a high schooler who's like, well I've been kept out of these other big franchises, I bet this one isn't good. Which obviously was not true [laugh] of of that at all. But I feel like I didn't like reading Katniss that much for some reason I've been meaning to reread it. Cause I think I would have a different reaction now just based on the difference between who I am now and who I was in high school. But I I really liked the movie versions. I don't know.

ANNIE

Yeah, I really like both of them. I'm not sure which I prefer. I think that that I, I like them equally for different reasons. I think that specifically it is interesting you talk about not liking reading Katniss because the thing I think that makes the movie so good across the board is casting.

SYDNEY

Yes.

ANNIE

think that they're phenomenally well cast movies, but especially in the supporting roles as well in a lot of the side characters that are introduced in book two. The individual who plays Beetee for example, is just stunning. And Philip Seymoore Hoffman of course is always amazing. Lenny Kravitz.

HELEN

Ah, yes.

ANNIE

You know, you, you could go on with regard to those [laugh] in terms of adaptations, this is a good time for me to really dive into his Dark Materials because there's the movie version that was released when I was still in the young adult age range. It was one of the first young adult series that I read cover to cover when I was in like early adolescence. And so I was very excited for the movie to come out when I, this is when I was a freshman in high school. So I would've been 14, I think 14 or 15. And the movie is absolutely awful in a lot of ways.

SYDNEY

[laugh].

HELEN

[laughs] Oh no!

ANNIE

I'm sorry, I know we were trying to, not to get negative with the things on here,
but it's,

HELEN

It's ok. I'll allow you to briefly be negative [laugh]. I did ask your opinion.

ANNIE

Yeah because I mean there are a lot of very good parts of it. It's not that everything they did in that movie was terrible, but it was very obvious that at some point relatively early on, they knew they were not getting the second one. So they tried to reshape the entire story to be self-contained and they,

HELEN

Oh no.

ANNIE

They cut out an entire character. That was the entire way that you got from book one to book two was centred around the thing that happened to this character and they just weren't in the book whatsoever. So the main character's motivations were 100% rewritten in the movie, which is like, uh, with that said, there is now a TV show.

HELEN

Yes, I've heard that, yeah.

ANNIE

That is absolutely phenomenal. I, when the first season came out, I had my doubts, but they're doing it in three seasons. One for each of the books and they are following it point for point. So well without doing the thing that that adaptations sometimes do where they get overly faithful either and try to do things that don't work as well on screen.

HELEN

Yeah.

ANNIE

They hit all the same plot points while telling it in a way that's compatible with the screen, the casting in that is also absolutely amazing. And I cannot wait. season three is coming soon-ish, hopefully. And I am so excited for it. The first two just hit all the notes that the original did for me.

HELEN

Oh, I'm so happy. [laugh].

ANNIE

Yeah, it's, it's, it's just funny cause his Dark Materials just becomes this tale of two adaptations. If you look at it through any version of it outside of the original text, there's some that have done a really, well let, let's just say strange job of it, at least [laugh] and then, and then there's the ones that are currently ongoing which are very, very good.

HELEN

Cole dare I ask your opinion on the film of The Perks of Being a Wallflower, not to railroad you or anything just cause you mentioned it earlier, you don't have to give an opinion.

COLE

I've been such a good boy and so quiet this whole time. [laugh] Perks of Being a Wallflower, the adaptation. It was fun. I mean, once again I feel like it's like the same thing with Harry Potter. Like someone's just got to do something weird in real life and then kind kind of taint it for me a little bit.

HELEN

Mm.

ANNIE

mm-hmm [affirmative]

COLE

Looking at you Ezra.

HELEN

Oh I completely forgot they were in the film. [laugh].

COLE

Yeah. It's just like you gotta do something.

HELEN

Oh no [laugh]

COLE

You have to do something weird in real life and completely just like, it just feels weird if I were to go back and watch the movie now, like the book so short, like, like you can almost read the book in the same length it takes you to watch the movie. So that's kind of like one where it's like the movie was good. I like the casting at the time. Always love Emma Watson, the fella who played the main character, can't remember his name but he's always great as well. It was good. It was like, you know, I, I highly value popcorn value movies like Divergent. I was a little too old to read the books. I think I kind of missed that mark by a couple years. And same with Hunger Games. My sister was really into those books and she's three years younger and I had read Twilight and I really liked Twilight. So by the time those books came out and then my sister started explaining and there's this guy named Peeta and this other guy and they both like Katniss. I'm like, you know what? Hard stop. Like one girl, two guys, I've seen this before, okay. Like every editor in the world must have gone to them. Like your book's good, okay. But there needs to be a love triangle. Two dudes, one girl every single time. I'm gonna throw my own adaptation into the mix and one that no one's mentioned here, which is Gossip Girl. Best adaptation because the books no bueno, but Gossip Girl's fantastic.

SYDNEY

I didn't know there were books.

HELEN

I had no idea those were books.

COLE

Yes, xoxo Gossip Girl, love that show. Well the conclusion, I think everyone's a little salty about the conclusion that's not even negative, it's just a fact of life.

But Gossip Girl was fantastic from start to finish Dan and Serena til I die.

ALL

[laugh].

COLE

A lot of people are gonna be confused that might have listened to the Town Whispers and hear me gushing about Gossip Girl. But great show also Pretty Little Liars, fantastic show. Don't even know if they were books, but definitely falls within the YA genre as well.

SYDNEY

I did wanna mention just some like John Green adaptations. I don't know if anyone else had like a big John Green phase?

COLE

The Fault in Our Stars.

HELEN

I literally, I have never read a single thing that John, this is John Green, the brother of Hank Green?

SYDNEY

Yes, yeah.

HELEN

Okay.

COLE

The YouTubers. Yes,

SYDNEY

Yes. I did just wanna say the TV version of Looking for Alaska [laugh]. I don't know if anyone saw that.

ANNIE

No.

SYDNEY

It was actually really, really good. I did like that more than the book as well. I think it's set in like the early two thousands and they fully went like okay then this is a period piece and we will only use early two thousands music and like it's beautiful.

HELEN

Oh my god.

SYDNEY

It's a lot of fun

COLE

Lot of Chumbawamba, lot of Smash Mouth. Yeah. Nice

ANNIE

Yes please.

COLE

Soundtrack to my LIFE.

SYDNEY

And the casting was like very, very good as well.

HELEN

[under their breath] Early two thousands music... Oh my gosh, that's like peak Britney Spears and Gwen Stef... Yes! Daft Punk and that! Oh what a banger of a soundtrack. that must be.

SYDNEY

It's good.

HELEN

Incredible. Okay, so my next question was kind of redundant but I'm still interested in the why of it. So I was gonna ask, do you still read young adult fiction now that you are like a, a proper grownup adult [laugh], an old adult.

[laugh]

SYDNEY

[laugh]

HELEN

But it sounds like all of you do. So I guess I'm wondering like is there like a sense of nostalgia there? Is it like when I go back and I read the 18 book series that [laugh] highly influenced my own writing over and over again, like...

ANNIE

This actually goes back to what we were talking about at the beginning about the like slightly less bleakness of at least most YA insofar as I have time to read anything these days. The reason that YA books still really draw my attention a lot of the time is because for me, any fiction that I'm consuming in either written or audio format pretty much has to be escapist for it to hold my attention. And that doesn't necessarily mean fantastical, but it has to be, I use fiction a lot to try and insert myself into something other than what I'm actually experiencing day-to-day. Rather than trying to find things that are like relatable experiences. I tend to actually go for things that are wildly different so I can, when I'm reading I uh, a book especially, I can just be somewhere else for a little while. And I think that YA does a very good job of that. For the most part. If, if a YA book is escapist and most of them are to an extent, then they're, they do a good job of creating somewhere that I either like want to be for a little while or at least is, is interesting and different to be for a little while. So I think that that, that's what keeps drawing me back to YA is just the fact that so many of them do a very good job at creating a place that is easy to to lose yourself in.

SYDNEY

I like that.

COLE

Yeah,

HELEN

That's lovely.

SYDNEY

Yeah, I feel like I still read quite a bit of YA or I've kind of followed authors who I got attached to in their YA novels and now they also write some adult books as well. But yeah, I feel like there's a comfort in them and I, I remember a few years ago asking friends like I just want queer novels as gifts. That's all I want.

Give me -

ANNIE

mm-hmm [affirmative]

SYDNEY

- queer novels because I don't have enough of them. And I think all of the ones that were given to me were YA novels. That's most of my queer book collection is young adult and I don't know, it's just so much more comforting for me. Like they usually have stories that go beyond just, oh this is a queer person struggling to be queer. It can be, well this is a fantasy setting, everyone's fine with it. And also they're a wizard [laugh] or something like [laugh]. I feel like there's a lot more fun to be had in queer young adult novels than queer adult novels sometimes.

HELEN

Mm-hmm It is interesting to me how much lately young adult fiction has become associated with queer fiction. Like when you ask for recommendations, a lot of it is aimed at teena... and that and that's great because there was none of that when I was growing up or at least very little of it.

ANNIE

Right.

HELEN

But that is interesting to me that it seems to mostly be in that particular genre.

Yeah. I don't know. Cole, what do you think?

COLE

Yeah, I think quickly touching on the queer representation in young adult novels, I think that's just like a symptom of like the changing times and it's easier to market to younger people who are more accepting of those uh, representations. I think it's kind of hard to look at Old Lady Ruth down the street and be like, there's this new Stephen King book out, you should really check it out. It's got queer representation because you know, Ruth didn't grow up with that and that's a lot harder for Ruth to accept. Yeah. Obviously it's great to have different representation in these books. I think it's always great, you know, when I'm reading a book and they have LGBTQ representation that isn't trauma based.

ANNIE

Yeah.

COLE

I think as a straight person I really appreciate that. Like the TV show, Schitt's Creek. Great Canadian TV show.

HELEN

Yes, that's wonderful.

COLE

Had queer representation in that I think is like the epitome of like, if you want Ruth down the street to accept that sort of relationship. Like that's such a fantastic way of representing that. And that's not representative of like, you know, the reality for a lot of people sadly, but that's kind of like what you want the reality to be is that it's a small town in rural North America where this relationship happens and literally no one questions it. Everyone's like, oh awesome. And the main character has the fear and the parents are like, you know, he can tell us like we're accepting, you know, and that's kind of like as someone who's accepting of it and knows that other people aren't accepting of it, I think it's nice to see that cause it might influence some of those crankier older people to like kind of be like, okay, so there's representation of straight people just accepting it as well.

Um, I totally forgot the original question. I was just kind of gotten a little hole there talking about previous thing. Oh, do we still read YA? No, I don't read YA anymore. I'm not saying no YA. I don't really have time to read. But for all the grumpy adults out there who might be going, mmm YA is not for me. Or you know, the teenagers who might be saying no, I've grown past that. A lot of

adult books are actually adopting all the same things that YA books do now. Like I just listen to a Flicker in the Dark, by, I pulled this up on my phone, Stacy Willingham on Audible and it's written like a YA novel and there was Dark Harvest by Norman Partridge, another great book that is highly recommended by critics, which is also written exactly like a YA novel and everyone just watched Stranger Things and that's YA fiction, right?

HELEN

Hmm.

COLE

So everyone can be a gatekeeper or exclusionary or think they're too smart or too cool or too intelligent or too academic for it. But we all consume it whether we know it or not because we're saying right now just books, but there's YA fiction in every form of media that tells a story. So I mean, we all consume it whether we read the books or not.

ANNIE

Right.

COLE

Answer over

HELEN

Thank you for announcing that.

ALL

[laugh].

HELEN

Now I have a slightly more lighthearted question to ask and it's about young adult fiction tropes. Like we touched on it earlier where there's like, there's a lot of books where there's like a a a love triangle and it's often a girl and two boys and one of them is a brunette and one of them is a blonde and that's about it. And it's like [laugh]

COLE

One's a werewolf, one's a vampire. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

HELEN

Or there's like, there's the bossy parent or there's like the school bully or there's like the quiet one. There's loads and loads of different kinds of tropes that you find very commonly in young adult fiction. So I'd be interested to know, if you were in a young adult novel, what kind of character do you think you would be?

SYDNEY

[laugh]

COLE

Oh no.

HELEN

[laughs]

SYDNEY

Oh, I think I would just be a really angsty, pretentious little creature. I, I don't know, [laugh]

HELEN

A sad little gremlin.

SYDNEY

Perfect. Yeah. I feel like in high school I was like very, very quiet and shy. So I feel like I would probably kind of fit that type of trope a bit. [laugh].

HELEN

Yeah. I think I would like, thinking of myself as I am now, I probably end up being like the nice teacher or something like that. Like the kindly mentor that lets the sad teenager hang out in my classroom and gives them worldly advice on how to deal with [laugh]....

SYDNEY

And I was very attached to those types of teachers. [laughs]

HELEN

Oh! [laugh] Annie, what do you think? What kind of character trope do you think he would be?

ANNIE

I think I'd end up being the like supporting character who functions for most of the book as sort of a comic relief character and is the like third heat in the group or whatever to whatever the main characters are going through. And then has a whole b plot about like coming out as queer and struggling with that. That's like very much like how high school kind of was for anyway. So I also have a thing I realised my whole life, I've always had this thing where I think particularly as children, a lot of people when they're reading books or watching shows or whatever, if they're imagining themselves in them at all, they're imagining themselves as a main character or one of the main characters they put themselves in, the main character's shoes. I have done a thing my whole life. I don't know why I have always put myself in a supporting character's shoes. I've never self related or self inserted as the protagonist as the main focus point of any story that I've ever read. I don't know why that is and I don't think this is the time to psychoanalyse necessarily [laugh], but...

SYDNEY

Yeah, I do agree. Like as a kid or a teen, I feel like a lot of the books I was reading, I never loved the main character.

ANNIE

Yeah.

SYDNEY

Like that was never my favourite character.

HELEN

Mm-hmm.

SYDNEY

I don't know if they were just written in a slightly more generic way to be like,
and all kids will relate to this character specifically,

ANNIE

Yeah.

SYDNEY

But yeah, I also was more drawn to the, the side characters a bit.

HELEN

Yeah. I very rarely relate to protagonists of books.

SYDNEY

[laugh]. I've never met anyone who's like, my favourite Harry Potter character is
Harry Potter. [laugh]

ANNIE

Is Harry Potter [laugh]. That's a good point.

COLE

What?

SYDNEY

Yeah. I've never met anyone who says that's their favourite character.

HELEN

He's annoying [laugh].

SYDNEY

Is he your favourite character, Cole? Like it's not a bad choice. I've just,

COLE

Can we just skip this question? Like everyone's like, yeah. I see myself as the humble side character, you know, who has like great insight and is a little too wise for their age, you know, and I'm like, I love the power fantasy [laugh]. I've always loved the power fantasy, you know, as a Wingardium Leviosa you like out the classroom, teacher or something like.

ANNIE

Yeah.

COLE

I, you know, I always had like a problem with authority too when I was younger. So it's like seeing these kids break the rules all the time. I'm like, Harry Potter's doing it for the right reasons. That being said, Sirius Black was my favourite character, but Harry Potter was my second favourite character and I was very attached to their, uh, blossoming familial relationship. And then it's, you know, we can ruin this one. He got tossed through that veil and it was just, I was very upset. That was a terrible book, [laugh]. And I will, I will die on that hill. Order of the Phoenix you wanna talk about Harry Potter being annoying? Order of the Phoenix. There's a lot of angst in that novel.

HELEN

Yeah. It's very much about Harry being angry and trauma. Like there's a lot of, like, I don't, I don't necessarily want to talk about Harry Potter too much.

ANNIE

Yeah.

HELEN

Because I just, it's just, it's completely ruined for me at this point.

ANNIE

Yeah. It's too loaded now.

SYDNEY

Yeah.

COLE

Sorry. It's, it's just, it was so formative and I don't mean to bring it up.

HELEN

No, no, no, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not telling you off. It's just I know that if I start talking about it too much, I'm going to like...

COLE

Yeah.

HELEN

It is interesting in itself as literature for the things that sort of are not said in it.

ANNIE

Right?

SYDNEY

Mm-hmm. [affirmative]

HELEN

That sort of betray the author's biases,

ANNIE

Right.

HELEN

And thoughts like, there's so much world building that like, if you think about it, you're like, that is extremely strange [laugh], why is that there? [laughs]

SYDNEY

[laugh]. Yeah.

HELEN

And I can't, I can never look at it purely positively ever again. Like I can, I can detach myself and see it from like an analyzing literature point of view, but it's not, they aren't the, the books that they were when I was growing up and

SYDNEY

Yeah.

HELEN

Arguably never were.

ANNIE

Yeah.

SYDNEY

I feel like in that sense I've kind of detached my engagement with the story from the story itself in some way.

ANNIE

Right.

SYDNEY

And been like, I had a fantastic time reading this and exploring the world and you know, so did so many of my friends and that sense of magic is ours and no one can take it from us as, you know, annoying as the author has been and as some features of the books actually are.

HELEN

Hmm. We've come to the end of our time. I have no idea how much of this is going to be usable. [laugh]

ALL

[laugh]

HELEN

This has been one of the most off the rails episodes we've had [laugh] I think. Oh dear. Uh, we'll blame it on the heat, but before we go, does anyone have anything you'd like to plug? I mean, Cole, I know you have a podcast.

COLE

Yeah, it's called Enthusiasm. Uh, you can hear me uh, every week. [laugh]
[laugh], um,

HELEN

How dare!

COLE

and uh, yeah, fantastic show. I think it's the best work I've ever done. [laugh]
and it's my legacy. So.

ALL

[laugh]

HELEN

Go on, tell us about the Town Whispers.

COLE

No, I'm not gonna, everybody go listen to Enthusiasm. You're already listening to Enthusiasm. Go tell a friend, leave a review on Apple Podcast or Spotify. Spotify, you can leave a rating on, uh, mobile and you know what? Not enough

of you do it. And it means a lot to Helen and it means a lot to all of us creators because it really helps us get the show out there and we put a lot of time in it. I know Helen puts a ton of time into this, so go leave a review on Apple, Spotify, you don't have to leave words, just leave like five stars, takes two seconds. You know, you just spent more of your life listening to me say this than it would take you to go leave a review. So.

HELEN

You're better plugging my show than I am. I don't think I've ever properly plugged this show. [laugh].

COLE

There. There you go.

HELEN

Sydney, do you have any outside projects that you would like to plug before we go?

SYDNEY

Oh, not outside projects, just as far as Patreon goes. We just released the first episode of Problemagicians, which also stars Helen, um, [laugh]. It's a little RQG spinoff series with Cel and Azu and it's, it's very fun.

HELEN

Thank you. Oh, this is very nice, Annie. Surely you have something to plug that isn't to do with me.

ANNIE

I know. I was gonna say now I now I feel guilty not plugging Helen in some way.

HELEN

No! [laugh]

ANNIE

Helen, come on my Twitch channel so I can [laugh]

ALL

[laugh].

ANNIE

Um, yeah, I, I stream on Twitch, uh, as often as I possibly can at uh, Skinny Pig games. That's my channel with my fiancée and Naomi and also one of our, uh, longtime friends. Jack. Three of us are Skinny Pig games. You find us on Twitch, twitch.tv/skinny pig games or on YouTube just search skinny pig games and look for the little white pig drawing as a logo

HELEN

Lovely. Right Then that's the end of the show. Thank you listener for listening to us talk about young adult fiction and all our various experiences with it. I will see you on the next episode, but for now, it's goodbye from me. Goodbye. It's goodbye from all of them. Would you all like to say goodbye everyone?

SYDNEY

Bye.

ANNIE

Goodbye.

COLE

I refuse.

HELEN

Fair enough. [laugh]

[Show Theme - Outro]

COLE

The last three books of [beep] I'm convinced are 100% stolen from fan fiction because I was on a little website called [beep]. This might be some spice, maybe. I'm gonna start beef with [beep] Yeah, I was on [beep] back in the day and I was an award-winning fanfiction writer, of that fan fiction I'll not tell you just in case you can go back in time, but it was banger. But there was another one and I believe it was called [beep] and the [beep] and in it they said, and these [beep] and this was like back like right after the fourth book. And I was like, huh. [beep] And it detailed exactly what a [beep] was and I swear to god it was the last three books and I will die by this somewhere in the world there's an NDA floating around and [beep] you can come for me, you're just gonna make my podcast pop. I don't care at this point, but you copied fan fiction. You got a ghost writer somewhere and you can put this live. I will absolutely die by this. Someone go on way back machine and go find this fanfiction. It's out there.

[PAUSE]

HELEN

Cole, I'm going to cut that.

ALL

[laugh]

COLE

Damnit! Damnit!

[Audio Fades Out]

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