

Latinidad - Fall 2014: Young Adult Books

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BEFORE YOU SEND IT OUT

“Marcela doesn't just midwife books. She brings author careers to life. Her strategic advice during our consulting sessions has influenced many of the steps that have propelled me forward as an author, saving me time, effort, and heartache. And when I haven't listened, I've regretted it. It's that simple. She loves her authors and her vision for them is spot on, loving, and wise. When you become her author, you gain a writing godmother for life.”

—Anjanette Delgado, author of *The Clairvoyant of Calle Ocho*, <http://www.anjanettedelgado.com/>

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1. Saludos

The ongoing success of blockbuster YA (young adult) fiction such as *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*, and *The Fault in Our Stars* has agents and editors scrambling to find new YA writers. If you write YA books—or aspire to—now is your time. Don't wait to begin, or finish, your manuscript. To help you get started, read the Q&A below with literary agent Regina Brooks, author of *Writing Great Books for Young Adults: Everything You Need to Know*, from *Crafting the Idea to Getting Published*.

Helping Latinos get published,

Marcela Landres

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2. Q&A

Regina Brooks is the founder and president of Serendipity Literary Agency, which *Writer's Digest* magazine named as one of the top 25 literary agencies. She represents a diverse base of award-winning clients in adult and young adult fiction, nonfiction, and children's literature. Formerly, she held senior

editorial positions at John Wiley and Sons and McGraw-Hill. She is the author of Essence Magazine's quick pick children's book, *Never Finished, Never Done* (Scholastic), *Writing Great Books for Young Adults* (Source Books), and *You Should Really Write a Book: How to Write, Sell and Market Your Memoir* (St. Martin's Press). She is always interested in new and emerging writers. For more information, visit <http://www.serendipitylit.com/>

Q: What inspired you to write *Writing Great Books for Young Adults*?

A: I wrote the book *Writing Great Books for Young Adults* because there was no other book on the market at that time that separated children's from young adult. When I first envisioned the project, *Twilight* and *Divergent* didn't exist. Now there are hundreds of thousands of young adult books and thousands of new authors writing for the genre. It's very exciting.

I was having success selling YA projects and several agent friends were coming to me for advice. There had always been a separation between the children's book market and the adult market. And many agents who sold adult books didn't sell to children's book editors, so they didn't know the space. One agent in particular, Katharine Sands, kept urging me to write a book that would not only help writers but also agents who wanted to learn more about this audience and how to evaluate and sell the projects to editors.

In addition, the book was written to guide potential young adult authors towards crafting books designed to appeal to the market, while helping them understand the nuances of writing for this audience. There were at the time many adult authors who wanted to jump on the YA gravy train (editors were given huge advances) and did so successfully. So the book was also designed to help authors who wanted to make the transition.

Q: The second edition of *Writing Great Books for Young Adults* is coming out October 7, 2014. How has the young adult publishing landscape changed since the first edition was published in 2009?

A: When I wrote the first edition, I really wanted to focus on craft and was hopeful that it be an evergreen title for anyone wanting to learn the technical aspects of writing for this audience. And while the book still has that appeal—there are even several MFA programs that use the book for their courses—there are new issues to be discussed. Two in particular are New Adult and YA nonfiction.

The term New Adult was first coined in 2009 by St. Martin's Press when they held a special call for "...fiction similar to YA that can be published and

marketed as adult—a sort of an ‘older YA’ or ‘new adult’.” As YA readers aged out of the genre, publishers needed a way to maintain a connection to those readers. So New Adult was created to generate both books for those readers and a space on the bookshelf for those stories. The New Adult market has helped to retain the reading loyalty of adults of all ages who enjoy the expressive fervor of YA books.

Also, as schools have adopted the Common Core (educational standards designed to ensure all students in the nation have a comprehensive set of skills), great opportunities have opened up for editors to publish and sell books that incorporate core topics. Implementation of the Common Core means the school/library market has assumed greater importance in the publishing world.

In the film industry, the market for YA adaptations has exploded; ten adaptations alone were made in 2013. These cinematic successes mean that YA books are reaching broader audiences than ever, particularly parents and film executives. The numbers bear this idea out. According to *New York* magazine, the two biggest audiences for YA fiction are readers 18-29 who buy 35% of all YA purchases, and readers 30-44 who buy 27% of all YA purchases. In my new edition I discuss book to film.

Q: Which three mistakes should newbie young adult writers avoid?

A: 1. Avoid preaching to young adult readers, or being too heavy-handed in handling theme or teaching a lesson. No YA reader wants to feel like they are reading a verbose public service announcement.

2. Avoid trying to write to trends or to market instead of writing the material that fascinates or excites you. Especially, do not emulate a trendy "hot" YA book either in concept or in style. Editors want something they haven't seen before. Looking for commercial success will only limit your creativity, and ultimately block you from completing a successful YA novel. When it comes to YA fiction, limiting your creativity is the last thing you want to do! Just as you shouldn't write to trends, keep in mind that if you come to YA with an open mind and a fresh perspective, you could be starting a trend. As I go through submissions, I look for stories about people and situations that have not been well-tread before.

3. On the other hand, ignorance about what's currently out there is not going to be helpful, either. I get thousands of fantasy submission a month and there are certainly themes that are worn thin. How many times can the protagonist be given the task of having to make the decision to save their planet or to

reside in a new galaxy? Newbie YA writers should expose themselves to the incredible, groundbreaking material that's already on the shelves, so they can get inspired and keep pushing those boundaries!

Q: Alternatively, what are some signs of a top-notch young adult writer?

A: A writer who brings a confident voice, freshness/uniqueness of setting and concept, and the presence of well-developed characters who leave the reader with a sense that they are real people with authentic emotion.

A writer who understands that patience is a huge part of being a successful author. There's a lot of stop and start during the lifecycle of getting a book published. Honor the process and allow each phase of the process its natural rhythm.

A writer who understands the importance of revision and who does not take critique as criticism. Revision is a key part of the writing process.

A writer who understands that he or she needs a team to experience ideal success. It takes a village (graphic designers, publicists, editors, web developer, photographer, copywriter, etc.) to make a book work. I encourage my authors to start developing a strong team as soon as possible.

Q: Aside from Writing Great Books for Young Readers, what resources would you recommend to aspiring writers of young adult books?

A: I encourage authors to participate in literary contests as they help build your confidence and provide great feedback to show whether or not you are on the right track. During the month of November I run a contest called the YA Discovery Contest where I ask writers to send in the first 250 words of their manuscripts. They get valuable feedback from a team of in house editors on their submissions. Many of the winners of my contest have gone on to get represented and published. Be sure to check my website <http://www.serendipitylit.com/> for instructions on how to enter this year's contest. In addition, here are a few other resources:

1. The SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators) hosts local and national conferences in every state and region of the U.S. and in several countries outside it. They offer a wealth of resources and networking opportunities. For more information, visit <http://www.scbwi.org/>

2. Literary Rambles, <http://www.literaryrambles.com/>, is a wonderful website for YA writers, featuring a compilation of agent interviews, author interviews,

and giveaways. YA author Cynthia Leitich Smith has also put together a wealth of information for YA and children's writers on her site, <http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/>

3. The Institute of Children's Literature is a correspondence course especially geared toward writers for young people. It might be a good alternative for those who are not willing or able to enroll in a low residency MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults program, such as those at Vermont College of Fine Arts or Hamline University. The course's web site is <http://www.childrenslit.com/>

4. Other craft books that deal with plot and characterization include The Plot Whisperer series by Martha Alderson and Story by Robert McKee, a screenwriting guide by which many novelists swear.

Q: Do you have upcoming projects that my readers should have on their radar?

A: A few author projects include:

The Temple of Doubt by Anne Boles Levy

A Bright Coin Moon by Kirsten Lopresti

How I Discovered Poetry by Marilyn Nelson

Travel Origami by Cindy Ng

Zorro: Steel & Steam--Book One The Conceit of Death by John Schulte and John Besmehn

3. Workshops

WHAT: Comadres and Compadres Writers Conference

The 3rd Annual Comadres and Compadres Writers Conference will provide Latino writers with access to published Latino authors as well as agents and editors who have a proven track record of publishing Latino books. We invite you to join us as a sponsor, advertiser, and/or attendee.

WHEN: Saturday, September 27, 2014

WHERE: Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn, NY

WHO: Esmeralda Santiago, author of the New York Times best-seller Conquistadora, will serve as keynote speaker. Panelists include: Meg Medina, author of Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass; Johanna Castillo, Vice President & Senior Editor, Atria/Simon & Schuster; and Jeff Ourvan, Literary Agent, Jennifer Lyons Literary Agency. For more details regarding the

conference program, visit <http://lascomadres.com/latinolit/latino-writers-conference/>

TESTIMONIALS:

“I am thrilled to tell you that as a result of my participation in the Comadres and Compadres Writers Conference, I have an agent, Diane Stockwell from Globo Libros Literary Management. She sold my book to Johanna Castillo at Atria Book, a division of Simon & Schuster. I’m so grateful for the conference and for everyone involved. It was worth every penny.”

—Maritere Rodriguez Bellas, author of *How to Raise Bilingual Kids: 101 Tips for Today’s Very Busy Immigrant Parent*, <https://www.facebook.com/maritererbellas>

“I’m a huge fan of this conference! I pitched my book project to two agents, one of who later offered me representation and succeeded in getting me a book contract with Kyle Books, a small publisher based in London. I couldn’t have done it without the Comadres and Compadres Writers Conference. Overall, it was a really inspiring, action-packed day, and I would highly recommend it to any writer who wants to network and learn more about the craft.”

—Lesley Tellez, author of the upcoming book, *Eat Mexico*, <http://www.lesleytellez.com/>

FOR MORE INFO: <http://lascomadres.com/latinolit/latino-writers-conference/>

4. Resources

HOW EDITORS THINK

"I read *How Editors Think* in one sitting and was engaged from beginning to end. It is well written, highly informative, and humorous—I found myself laughing out-loud in a few spots! Thanks for sharing the secrets of the trade."

—Mayra Lazara Dole, author of *Down to the Bone*

Inspired by my experience as a former Simon & Schuster editor, *How Editors Think: The Real Reason They Rejected You* reveals what it really takes to get published. For more information, visit:

<http://www.marcelalandres.com/E-book.html>

\$10,000 AWARD

Deadline: October 30

The Center for Fiction's Christopher Doheny Award, which is sponsored by Audible, recognizes fiction and nonfiction works that shine a spotlight on a serious illness. Manuscripts that are in process or completed but not yet published are eligible. For more information, visit <http://centerforfiction.org/awards/the-christopher-doheny-award/>

\$20,000 SHORT FICTION COLLECTION AWARD

Deadline: November 15

The Story Prize is an annual book award honoring the author of an outstanding collection of short fiction with a \$20,000 cash award. Each of two runners-up will receive \$5,000. Authors may enter eligible works. For more information, visit <http://www.thestoryprize.org/>

FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX SEEKS INTERNS

Deadline: November 15

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, renowned for its international list of literary fiction, nonfiction, poetry and children's books, offers internships that run for approximately 10-12 weeks. Interns are paid \$8/hr. For more information, visit <http://us.macmillan.com/fsg/about>

WRITER'S DIGEST SHORT STORY COMPETITION

Early Bird Deadline: November 17

Entry Deadline: December 15

Winner receives \$3000 and a trip to the Writer's Digest Conference. For more information, visit <http://www.writersdigest.com/competitions/short-short-story-competition>

ONLINE MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING

Deadline: December 1

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) offers a fully online MFA in Creative Writing. Writers can complete the entire degree from anywhere in the world, as there is no residency requirement. For more information, visit <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=42392&submenuheader=2>

BILINGUAL MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING

Deadline: January 2

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) offers a fully bilingual (Spanish and English) residential MFA in fiction, poetry, playwriting, screenwriting, literary translation, and non-fiction. Their flexible course covers a wide array of topics, including literary translation, libretto writing, the novella, and the prose poem. For more information, visit <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=14385&submenuheader=1>

ONE TEEN STORY

One Teen Story is a literary magazine for young adult readers of every age. Unsolicited submissions are accepted throughout the year from writers of all ages. Writers whose work is accepted for publication are paid \$500. For more information, visit <http://www.oneteenstory.com/>

CONCEPCION BOOKS

Concepcion Books, which publishes in English and Spanish, is an imprint of Curbside Splendor, an indie press with a mission to publish literary fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and art that celebrates the delicate point where gritty urban life and art intersect. For more information, visit <http://concepcionbooks.com/>

JUST PUBLISHED: EL CAMINO DE REGRESO

El Camino de Regreso es una novela que reúne la fantasía, aventura y comedia dentro de un marco único como es la vida más allá de la muerte. Para mas informacion: <http://tinyurl.com/oulawba>, <http://tinyurl.com/mesbkya>

GLOBAL GIRL, MULTICULTURAL BOOKS/DOLLS

Global Girl is a collection of six ethnically diverse dolls and companion books that teach girls about cultures from around the world in a fun, inspiring, and stylish way. Global Girl dolls and books are sold exclusively online at <http://globalgirl.com/en/>

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Please forward Latinidad® widely.

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SUCCESS STORIES

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“Most of the basic material a writer works with is acquired before the age of fifteen.”

—Willa Cather

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