



PENGUIN YOUNG READERS GROUP  
P R E S E N T S

# Writing TIPS FOR Teens

A Guide to Writing across the Curriculum for Grades 9–12  
Aligned to Common Core State Standards

**Contains Tips and Activities from Favorite Young Adult Authors!**



I N S P I R E • E N G A G E • E D U C A T E



## Dear Educators:

The purpose of this brochure is to provide you with the necessary tools you'll need to support students in their writing. Aligned with Common Core State Standards, the following tips, activities, and techniques illustrate the value of process writing and planning as well as support curious and effective communicators. As educators, you are tasked with improving writing proficiency among your high school students, and our hope is that the information herein will aid you in your quest!

The brochure includes sections on **The Importance of Writing for Teens**; **How to Make the Common Core State Standards Applicable**; **Process Writing, Argument, Complexity, and Realness**; **Writing Activities**; **Critiquing**; and **Dialogue in Writing, Characterization, Structure and Perspective**. Additionally, we've included popular YA author interviews and excerpts to exemplify writing professionally.

Encouraging writing among your students can be a fun and rewarding task. Our hope is that with these tips, you'll find new and inspiring ways to make the connection for your students.

*Penguin School and Library*

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# The Importance of Writing for Teens

As educators, you are in a unique position to help your students develop not only a love of writing, but also strategies to help them hone their skill set. Many teens associate “writing” with essays for assignments, when in reality, teens write all the time, especially in the wake of multiple social media platforms. Texts, tweets, Facebook posts, and Instagram updates take up hours of a teen’s life, yet many don’t consider these activities writing. As educators, you have the opportunity to shift their perspective on writing and help cultivate skills they already possess by bringing activities they already do into the classroom.

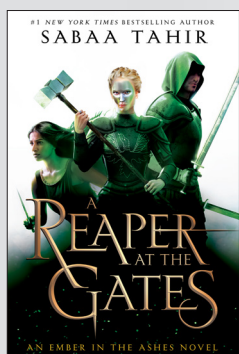
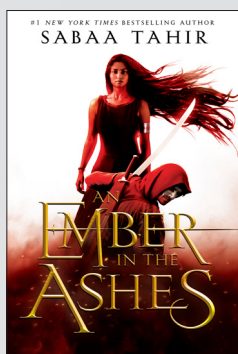
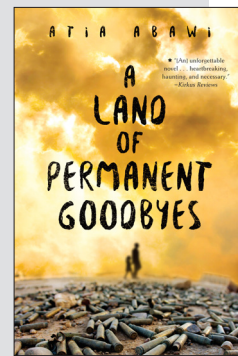
Writing every single day matters. Writing can be the cornerstone of the work teens will do in college, careers, and their future. According to the **Common Core State Standards**, students need to remember that task, purpose, and audience should be at the forefront of their academic writing. Each of these components can comprise specific choices when it comes to words, information, structures, and formats. As an educator, you need to be able to show teens how these are appropriate for the task, purpose, and audience.



*“Write what you know. If it is a part of you—if it’s something you eat, sleep, and breathe—the writing pours out. And if it is not a part of you, it is important to study and learn everything you can about your subject so you can share that knowledge, empowering your reader. Knowledge truly is power, both for the writer and then eventually the reader.*

*People have changed thoughts, lives, laws, and wars with knowledge and a pen.”*

—**ATIA ABAWI**, author of *The Secret Sky* and *A Land of Permanent Goodbyes*



**Sabaa Tahir on what clichés or bad habits she would tell aspiring writers to avoid:**

1. **Don’t waste inordinate amounts of time polishing small sections of your writing.** Figure out your story first. Polish later.
2. **Show your work to people.** Recently, I fell into an old (bad) pattern. I’d written fifty pages of something and was certain it was horrible, but hadn’t actually shown the pages to anyone. Don’t do that! Find trusted readers among writer friends, and get feedback.
3. **Don’t make excuses for yourself.** You can waste years that way. If you find yourself repeatedly saying you haven’t written because you’re too tired/busy/blocked etc., then rethink how badly you want to be a writer.”



# How to Make the CCSS Applicable

The rhetorical triangle can be a great tool to introduce situational writing to teens and to help them reflect on their writing's purpose, task, and audience. The components of the rhetorical triangle are **Ethos**, **Pathos**, and **Logos**:



**Ethos** refers to the credibility or trustworthiness of the author/speaker.



**Pathos** refers to emotional appeal or any element of the writing that appeals to the audience's character.



**Logos** can be explained as logic or reasoning, or the actual content of the writing.

Teaching your students the components of the rhetorical triangle can help them see their writing in broader and more complex ways. For example, a student can look at a Tweet in terms of how it might make followers feel or react, the reasons she used the language she did to get her message across, and how it adds or subtracts from her own image. The rhetorical triangle can be a very difficult concept for students to grasp, so using it in conjunction with a student's own social writing will help the student see its practicality.

## Process Writing, Argument, Complexity, and Realness

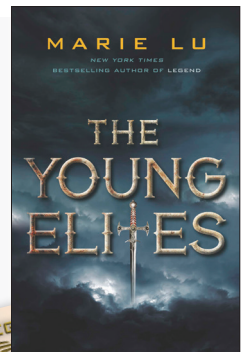
Writing is layered, like an onion. Each layer has its purpose, and together they create a tangible, indispensable, versatile product. Learning how to use and love writing skillfully takes time, but one should begin by understanding that effective writing is cyclical and recursive.



Process writing is not only an area of the Common Core State Standards, but also part of a major shift many colleges are taking in teaching composition. Process writing revolves around the notion that writing is not linear and that writers can need multiple drafts to reach a final product.

*"Before I write about any character, I almost always start out by drawing my characters. Somehow, I need to be able to picture them on the page before I can delve into who they are."*

—**MARIE LU**, author of the Legend trilogy, The Young Elites series, and Warcross



Creative drafting frees up a writer to experiment with his writing and allows for brainstorming more fully. Process writing also stresses the importance of discovery. Students who allow themselves the freedom to use multiple drafts can find new directions to take that they didn't intend to when beginning a project. Process writing shows students that drafts can always be improved and that revision is a key component to composition. It can also differentiate more clearly between revision and editing, showing students that global writing concerns, such as content, organization, and clarity, can take a more important position than editing for grammar and mechanics at specific stages of the writing process.



The Common Core State Standards emphasize that educators should focus on teaching argument rather than persuasion. Argument writing includes a claim, and it makes logical appeals to its audience rather than emotional ones. A logical argument offers proof of the claim rather than emotional appeals to sway the audience. In using argument over persuasion, students are much more likely to produce work that is complex and thorough. Additionally, creating a work from multiple drafts allows the student to investigate her topic in much more depth than basing the final draft on surface-level research and thought. Partnered with writing in more complex ways comes reading more complex texts. If students produce texts with complexity, then reading them will be less intimidating. The Common Core State Standards detail three factors of complexity:

1. Quantitative evaluations
2. Qualitative evaluations
3. Reader and text matching

Examining these in terms of writing, educators should push students to create compositions with layered meaning, theses that are logical and clearly articulated, and writing suitable for the audience.

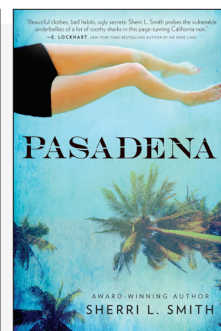
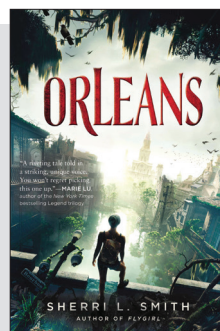
It's important for students to practice writing for a variety of audiences, but the Common Core State Standards push writing for realistic audiences with real purposes. Assignments should be authentic and applicable, and students need to be able to see the validity in their writing. Students are most likely to stay motivated and eager if the project has real-life applications.

**Relates to Common Core State Standards: W9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.6, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.10**



*"Changing genres certainly creates challenges. Historical fiction takes a ton more research than contemporary, and speculative fiction requires a serious attention to detail when building some brave new world. But what is life without challenges? If you want to dip your toes into new waters, just do it! There are plenty of books out there to help you along the way and, most likely, you are a fan of the genre already so you know the basics."*

—**SHERRI L. SMITH**, author of *Orleans*, *Flygirl*, and *Pasadena*

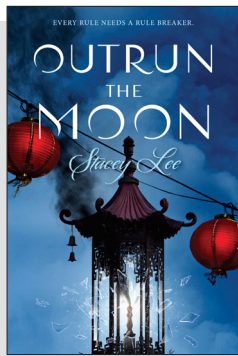
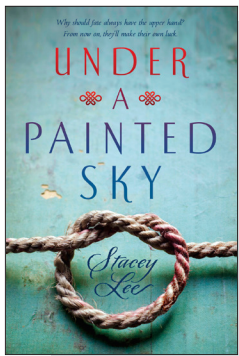


## Writing Activities

There are many ways to get students to write, learn to like to write, and meet the Common Core State Standards. Following are just a few.

**Blogs/Journals**—Have students either create their own free blog (Blogger and Wordpress are both free), or find one they follow on which to comment. Students can update these weekly, and educators can check for completion rather than perfection. Think of this as a low-stakes writing activity.

**Relates to Common Core State Standards: W9-10.2, 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.6, 9-10.10, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.6, 11-12.10**



*"Go through each scene and brainstorm how to ratchet up the tension even more. Let's say, your protagonist is trying to bake a cake for his mom's birthday but he's never baked a cake before. How can you make the situation even harder for him? It can be a small pressure, like the eggs are past their expiration date, or a*

*big one, like the girl he likes pays him an unexpected visit. How your protagonist reacts to pressures great and small can turn a scene from interesting, to compelling."*

**—STACEY LEE, author of *Under a Painted Sky* and *Outrun the Moon***

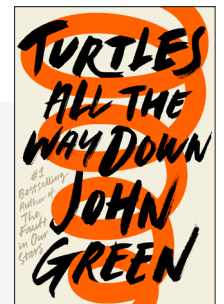
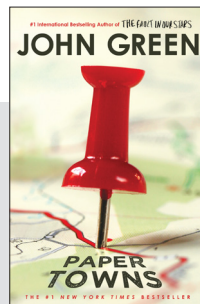
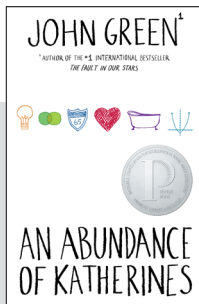
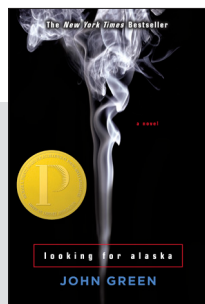


**Tweets/Memes**—These are quicker, shorter, and maybe more fun. Create a Twitter account for your class, and have students update it daily. You could make these thematic, so students would all stick to the same topic week to week. For Memes, find images from popular culture and have the students caption them. Bringing in their world outside of academia will make the project fun and fresh.

**Relates to Common Core State Standards: W9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.6, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.6**



**John Green** is a *New York Times* bestselling author who has received numerous awards. John is also the cocreator (with his brother, Hank) of the popular YouTube channels vlogbrothers and Crash Course, which have been viewed more than 1.4 billion times by nerdfighters, teachers, and students all over the globe.



## John Green on Writing Drafts:

*"I believe that all writing is rewriting—even when you're writing something down for the first time, it's still an act of translation in a way because you're trying to use text to bring life to this thing that exists in your mind. And I'm a big believer in revision: I almost always delete most of my first drafts (often as much as 90%). But there are many mini-drafts along the way, so it's hard to talk about the process quantitatively. I do try to save the file with a different name each time I've made some dramatic changes I fear I might later regret, so that's some measure, maybe, of how many drafts there are. The final copy of Katherines on my hard drive is called aok284; the final copy of TFiOS is called okay192."*

**Texts**—Have students transcribe their text conversations and fill in the gaps based on different audiences. What language works best with specific audiences? Why did the students make the choices they did for the original audience?

**Relates to Common Core State Standards:** W9-10.1, 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.6, 11-12.1, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.6

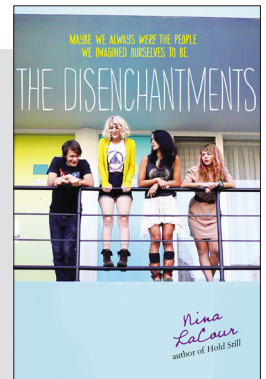
**Multi-Modality**—Assign multiple steps and different products for the same assignment. Working in groups or singularly, have students use everything from letters to social media to videos to create meaning for different, specific audiences about their topics. These topics can run the gamut from the importance of a varied cafeteria menu to which reality television show is best and why. Students should use a variety of research methods and sources to complete the project.

**Pair Writing**—Have students pair with a partner to practice realistic dialogue. Each student should take turns writing a short dialogue between two characters, each student writing the voice of one of the characters.



*“Find a trusted reader to share your work with, someone who will tell you what they admire in your piece, ask you the right questions to keep you moving forward, and be honest with you if something isn’t working. Learning how to receive feedback is vital to becoming a good writer, and even more than that, sharing your work gives you the opportunity to take something that was only yours and offer it to others to read and relate to, which is what being a writer is all about.”*

—NINA LACOUR, author of *Hold Still*, *The Disenchantments*, *Everything Leads to You*, and the Printz Medal Winner, *We Are Okay*



**World Building**—Encourage your students to plot their story from “the ground up.” Will it take place in the present, past, or future? Describe the setting of the world/society and its climate—is it urban, rural, or something in between? What is the culture centered around? Use these questions to lead them into building a one-page synopsis of their world.

**Thematic Approach Activity**—Put several different issues onto pieces of paper, then in a hat, and have students choose one at random. Then have your students create “platforms” based on this issue using the different types of writing discussed in this brochure.

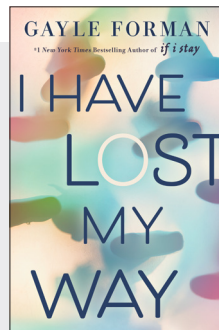
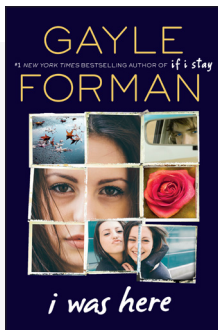
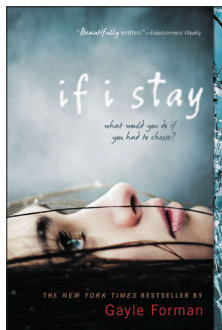
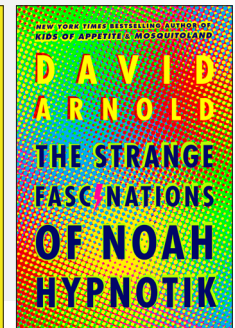
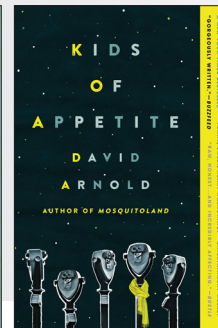
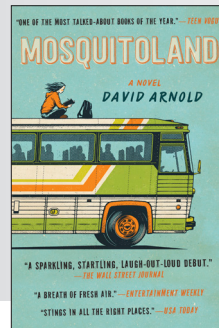
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# ALL IN A DAY'S WORK:



*"I often hear young writers say, 'I had this great idea, but I quit halfway through.' And I ask, 'Why?' And they say, 'Because it was no good.' To which I say, 'Nothing is ever good at first.' For me, that realization—that every great book or painting or song was, at one point, not good, and that it was only made good by the bullheaded persistence of some irrational artist—let me off the hook. Knowing that everything sucks at first, gives me permission to suck. Which is the only way I get anything done."*

—**DAVID ARNOLD**, author of *Mosquitoland*, *Kids of Appetite*, and *The Strange Fascinations of Noah Hypnotik*



*"The story you have in your mind is so perfect. All you have to do is type it up and you're done. Except the thing you've written down, it is not perfect at all. It sucks! What happened?"*

*What happened is that you're writing.*

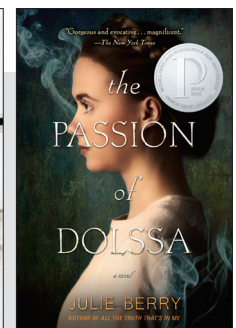
*This is the conundrum—and the challenge—all of us face: translating our beautiful, perfect, theoretical story onto the page. Which is hard. There is no shortcut. To quote poet Robert Frost, who no doubt struggled with the same thing: The only way out is through. Meaning the only way to get that perfect vision out of your head is to let go of the idea that it's going to be perfect straightaway (or ever) and work at it until you get as close as you possibly can. And luckily, this guide has all the tips for getting there."*

—**GAYLE FORMAN**, author of *If I Stay*, *I Was Here*, and *I Have Lost My Way*



*"Perks of writing Ye Olde Fiction: folk wisdom becomes valid. If you want tea from bark of snaggewort tree to cure fever, by gum, it does."*

—**JULIE BERRY**, author of *All the Truth That's in Me* and *The Passion of Dolssa*

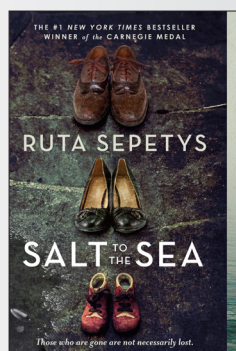
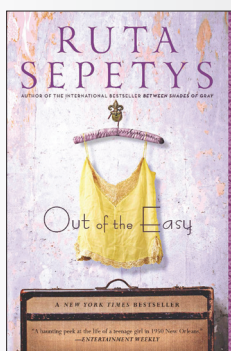
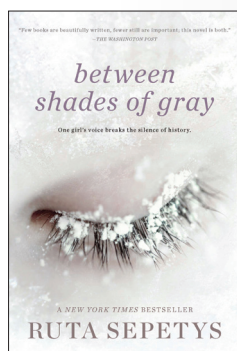
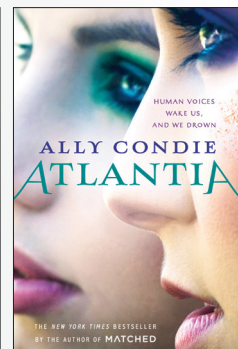
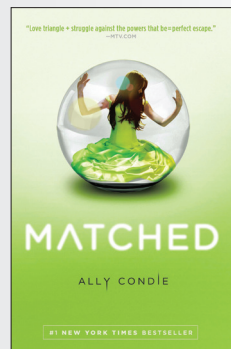


# Our Favorite Writers on Writing



*"I've learned that if I wait for the perfect moment to write, I won't write very often. So I just try to write through it and usually it gets better as I go along. Some things I've found that really help me clear my mind are: taking a break from the manuscript (for a few hours, a few days, whatever I need), starting a new fun project, going for a run, and hanging out with my kids or with a good friend. Reverse psychology works on me, too. If I tell myself*

*I'm not going to write or I can't write for a while, then it's not long before I'm DYING to write!"*  
**—ALLY CONDIE**, author of the Matched trilogy and *Atlantia*



*"[Research is] different for every writer. I personally love the immersion experience. If at all possible, I want to see it, hear it, smell it, touch it, and experience the emotions associated. That makes it easier for me to write about it."*

**—RUTA SEPETYS**, author of *Between Shades of Gray*, *Out of the Easy*, and *Salt to the Sea*



*"Skip the boring parts. If you ever find yourself wondering 'how do I get Character A to Point X' or 'Such and such book has a long journey in it, so mine should too,' take that thought, fold it into a paper airplane, and sail it right out the window. That doesn't mean everything needs to be explosions and passionate kisses. Sometimes, the really exciting stuff happens inside. Which brings me to my next point: love writing. You*

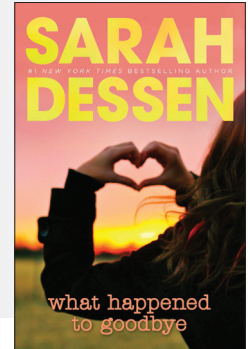
*won't always love what you write. But if the feeling you get while telling a story is different from the any other feeling you've ever had, chase that. And I guarantee, you'll be on the right track."*  
**—TOCHI ONYEBUCHI**, author of *Beasts Made of Night* and *Crown of Thunder*



Share with your students how *New York Times* bestselling author **Sarah Dessen** wrote a paragraph from *What Happened to Goodbye*:



*"Once I start writing, I do it straight through, paragraph by paragraph, chapter one then two then three, and so on. Maybe it's because my husband is a carpenter/contractor, but I've learned over the years that you need whatever you're building—be it a house or a story—to be as well-made and strong as possible from the bottom up. I can't write a flimsy chapter, then leave it to fix later and move on to the next. It just doesn't work for me. This is also the reason I do so much re-writing and editing as I go: once a chapter is done, ideally, it stays as is until I revise when the entire book is finished."*



The house was cute, small but really cozy, and had clearly been renovated recently. The kitchen appliances looked new, and there were no tack or nail marks on the walls. My dad headed back outside, still unloading, while I gave myself a quick tour, getting my bearings. Cable already installed, and wireless: that was good. I had my own bathroom, even better. And from the looks of it, we were an easy walking distance from downtown, which meant less transportation hassle than the last place. I was actually feeling good about things, basketball reminders aside, at least until I stepped out into the back porch and found someone stretched out there on a stack of patio furniture cushions.

*Okay, so that's kind of the easy part. Describing a house and location is one thing: now I've introduced a person, so I need to fill in the blanks about what they look like. Because I'm not sure how to do this, I stall a bit:*

I literally shrieked, the sound high-pitched and so girly I probably would have been embarrassed, if I wasn't so startled. The person on the cushions was equally surprised, though, at least judging by the way they jumped, turning around to look at me as I scrambled back through the open door behind me, grabbing for the knob so I could shut it between us.

*Now I really have to get through it. How long do you not notice how someone looks?*

As I flipped the deadbolt, my heart still pounding, I was able to put together that it was a guy in jeans and long hair, wearing a faded flannel

shirt, beat up Adidas on his feet. He'd been reading a book, something thick, when I interrupted him.

*In the first draft of this paragraph, I'd had Dave just sleeping on the back porch: there was no book involved. This was partially because in the earlier versions of WHAT HAPPENED TO GOODBYE, he was battling a drug problem. As my editor and I worked on the story, though, I found I just couldn't mesh that aspect of his character with everything else I'd created about him. It kept tripping me up. So I changed the drugs to a one-time drinking at a party incident and added a book. He's not sleeping off something. He's just reading in a place he thought he wouldn't be bothered. Much better.*

Now, as I watched, he sat up, putting it (the book) down beside him. He brushed back his hair, messy and black and kind of curly, then picked up a jacket he'd had balled up under his head, shaking it out. It was faded corduroy, with some kind of insignia on the front, and I stood there watching as he slipped it on, calm as you please, before getting to his feet and picking up whatever he'd been reading, which I now saw was a textbook of some kind. Then he pushed his hair back with one hand and turned, looking right at me through the glass of the door between us. "Sorry," he mouthed. Sorry.

*So now we've seen Dave, and we've been in Mclean's head for a few paragraphs. Time to insert some sort of "now" action, to bring both her and the reader back to the real-time action. No better way to do that than bring in another character and some spoken dialogue.*

"Mclean," my dad yelled from the foyer, his voice echoing down the empty hall. "I've got your laptop. You want me to put it in your room?"

*Now we can get back to Mclean's thought process. Here's this guy on her porch, she's locked a door between them: what happens now? I've tried with the book, the careful shaking out of the jacket and the mouthed "Sorry," to already show that Dave isn't a danger. But what is he? Best to add a bit more detail, fill him in some.*

I just stood there, frozen, staring at the guy. His eyes were bright blue, his face winter pale but red-cheeked.

*Okay, so that's how he looks. But what is he like? What do you expect a strange boy on your porch to do when you interrupt him reading on your couch cushions? I needed something unexpected, something that would show Dave was different, unique.*

I was still trying to decide if I should scream for help when he smiled at me and gave me a weird little salute, touching his fingers to his temple. Then he turned and pushed out the screen door into the yard. He ambled across the deck, under the basketball goal and over to the fence of the house next door, which he then jumped with what, to me, was a surprising amount of grace. As he walked up the side steps, the kitchen door opened and I saw another flash of plaid. The last thing I saw was him squaring his shoulders, like he was bracing for something, before disappearing inside.

# Critiquing

Teens often have a hard time taking and giving constructive criticism when it comes to writing. If they learn a few techniques for supportive critique early on, they could greatly benefit as they become more comfortable and confident writers. The best advice to give your students regarding critiquing a peer's writing is to remind them that writing is a process, and critiquing, in the form of revision and editing, is part of that process. Everyone, from professional to beginning writers, seeks readers to help them improve their writing. Following the suggestions below, students can learn how to become those readers that writers of all levels seek out.

## ✓ Look at the Big Picture



What kind of help is the writer seeking? Tell your students not to assume that they know what the writer needs help with, and to remember that since writing is a process, different kinds of critiques can come at different times. A student would not want to begin critiquing a writer's grammar and punctuation without checking out organization and coherence first, since grammar and punctuation are often changed many times in the process.



## ✓ Begin with a Positive

The first rule of critiquing anyone's work should be to always begin with a positive. Finding some aspect of a writer's work that is good will help break any tension or apprehension the writer has about sharing their work with a reader, and it helps the reader ease into offering more structured criticism later.



## ✓ Make Specific, Not General, Comments

General comments are much easier to make, and therefore much easier to misinterpret. General comments such as, "This is a good paper" or "Your conclusion is weak" don't tell writers why readers think these things. Rather, telling a writer "Your conclusion paragraph is a little confusing because I can't see where you come back to your main idea anywhere" tells the writer exactly why the conclusion is not working. Specific comments don't leave the writer guessing.



## ✓ Stay Brief

No one wants every aspect of their work ripped to shreds at each critique, so readers should always stay brief. Focus on one to three areas in which the writer can improve, rather than pointing out every error in the writing. Staying brief will keep the writer from feeling overwhelmed, and encourage him to focus on what he can improve upon immediately. This will also help to reiterate the idea that writing is a process, and inspire the writer to seek feedback again.

*"The mark of a real writer is her willingness to revise her work. That first draft gets you to the starting line and that's when the fun begins! Here are three tips that might help:*



- 1. Are there any scenes that you can remove without changing the outcome of the story? Get rid of them or revise so they are critical.*
- 2. Allow your main character to make bad decisions and do stupid things because we all do and it's a great way to introduce plot complications.*

- 3. When you are feeling confused and discouraged, DON'T GIVE UP! All writers feel that way at some point! Get a good night's sleep and try again tomorrow!"*

—LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON, author of *The Impossible Knife of Memory*



## Dialogue in Writing

Dialogue can be a very useful tool in writing, and students can have fun and express creativity experimenting with it; however, teens often seem reluctant to use dialogue in their writing. This could be because they've never been taught the proper ways to incorporate it, or it could simply be because they have not had enough practice using dialogue in their own writing or examining it in the writing of others. To experiment with dialogue, you might try a couple of different activities:

- Take a current story from the newspaper, and have students examine the dialogue therein (probably in the form of quotations). Ask them to describe what they notice and discuss the grammatical structure of dialogue.
- Have students look at pictures and write a conversation between two of the components within it. Make sure students practice using proper grammar and a variety of attributives (he said, she exclaimed, etc.).
- Have students write a brief narrative about something that is recent, like coming to school that day, and include dialogue. Perhaps even have them play with the point of view to explore how dialogue can be seen and heard differently to different people.



*"I suck at 'writing' dialogue, but I love listening to folks talk. For whatever reason, whole conversations become memorable events. I'll talk them into my phone, and then I'll forget I put them in there, but the audio file stays in my head, and as I'm writing, it sort of replays."*  
—PAUL GRIFFIN, author of *Burning Blue*

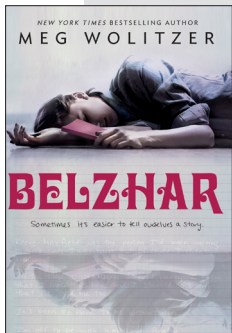


## Characterization

Characters, whether fictional or not, must be given life. Characterization can be expressed a couple of different ways—directly and indirectly. With direct characterization, the writer will tell the audience who the character is and what he or she is like; indirect characterization shows the audience these traits through the character's actions, thoughts, and speech. Characterization is important for a writer because it establishes the narrative, or story, and grounds the writing. Characterization can also be a fun way to add detail and depth to writing.

One of the important things to remember when experimenting with characterization is attention to the audience. Teen writers will often think they've explained something with plenty of detail, when, in fact, their audience is left confused because the writer has not explained something well enough. Remind students that they must write with their audience in mind. Have students explore this with these activities:

- Watch a short clip from a sitcom, and have students describe the characters. How do they interact with one another? Does it seem true to their character? Are their actions implied or explicit?
- Tell the teens to close their eyes and imagine two preteen children as fully as possible. When they open their eyes, tell them to describe the preteens on paper. Then have them create a scene between the two preteens, making sure the preteens interact in ways true to their characterization.



*"Here's the way I think of characters sometimes when I'm writing: I imagine how, in my life, I will call or write a good friend to say hi. What is it that I get from that person, what kind of feeling does he or she give me, what kind of connection do we have? And when you develop characters, it's not that you should necessarily want to be friends with them, but you should be aware of the feeling they create in you when they appear on the page, and you might try to explore it and enhance it; and with a little luck you will have created that same feeling in your reader."* —**MEG WOLITZER**, author of *Belzhar*



## Structure and Perspective

One of the easiest ways teen writers can infuse their writing with creativity is to play with the structure and perspective. Structure examines the overall way a piece of writing is laid out, while perspective looks at how the story is told and from which point of view. Have teen writers explore structure and perspective with the following exercises:

- Read a famous short story, such as "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin or "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut. Have students rewrite all or part of it from a point of view different than the one it is currently written in.
- Have students think of their first day of school. Tell them they are going to write the story of that day, but they cannot begin with the beginning; they must start the story in the middle of their first day or at the end of it, looking back.



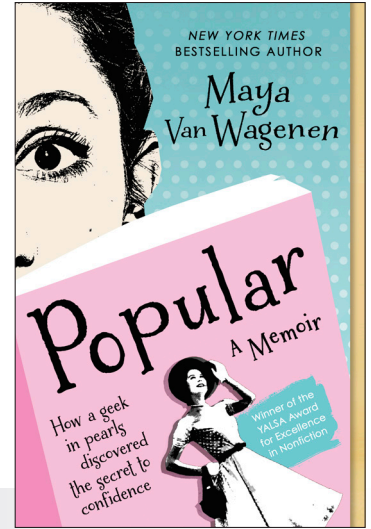
*"Picking the point of view for your story is key. For both my novels, I chose first person because I wanted the reader to be right inside the heart, mind, and body of the narrator and to acutely feel each moment of the story through his/her thoughts and senses. I like writing from this point of view for the same reason. It's a thrill to get inside a character and let them take the reins. I know it's going well when it feels like I'm just following my character around recording what happens next!"* —**JANDY NELSON**, author of *I'll Give You the Sun* and *The Sky Is Everywhere*



# Teens Can Be Authors, Too!



**Maya Van Wagenen** was fifteen years old when *Popular* was published. When she was eleven, her family moved to Brownsville, Texas. The convergence of her awkward adolescence, culture shock, and the violent drug war in this colorful border town inspired Maya to begin a unique social experiment. She spent her eighth-grade year following a 1950s popularity guide, written by former teen model Betty Cornell, to see the effect it would have on her social standing. The results were painful, funny, and profound, and included a wonderful and unexpected surprise—befriending and meeting Betty herself. When not hunched over a desktop writing, Maya enjoys reading, British television, and chocolate.

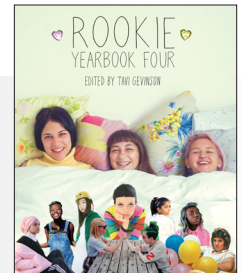
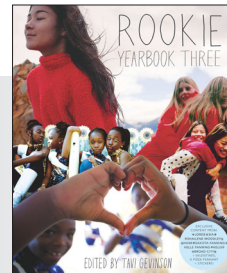
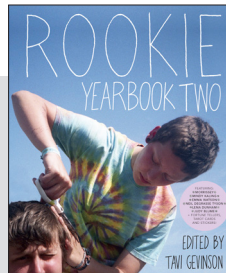


## Maya on Writing with Fearlessness:

*"Good writing makes you feel vulnerable. You put a little bit of your soul out there on paper, sealing it in. If you're not nervous when sharing it with someone else, then you're not being honest enough. Don't hesitate to tell the truth in your work, because that's what's going to have the greatest impact on those with whom you choose to share it."*



**Tavi Gevinson** is the editor-in-chief and founder of *Rookie*, an online magazine for teenage girls. Tavi's career in media began when she created the blog *Style Rookie* in 2008 at age eleven. She was profiled by *The New Yorker* in 2010, and in 2011, at fifteen, launched *Rookie*. Six days after its debut, *Rookie* received more than one million page views. Tavi has since spoken at TEDxTeen, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Sydney Opera House, *The New Yorker* Festival, the Brooklyn Museum, [and] she is also an actress, having starred in Kenneth Lonergan's Tony-nominated *This Is Our Youth*.

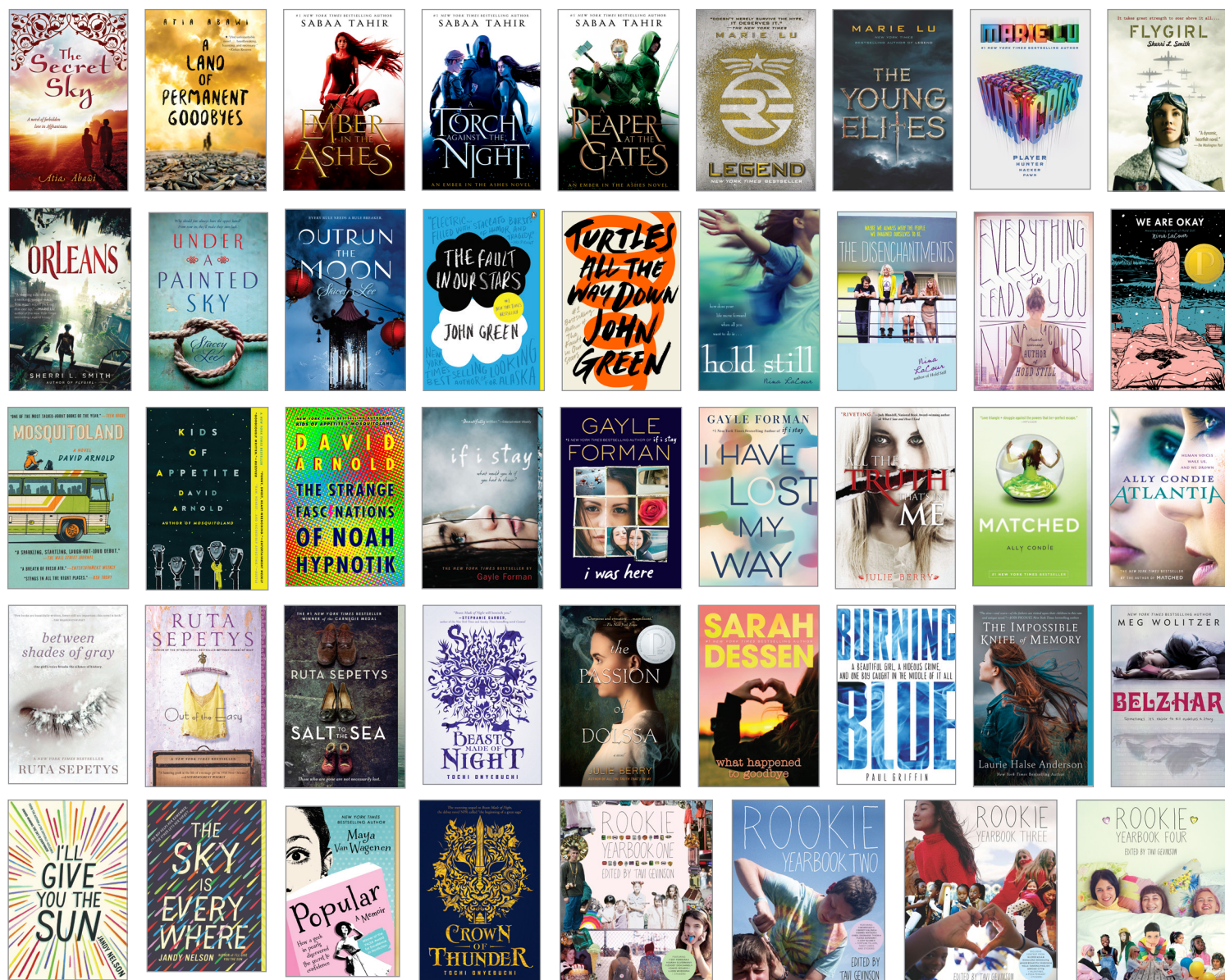


## Tavi on the Trial and Error of the Creative Process:

*"When it comes to creating art, remove responsibility in a way, not as an excuse to be lazy, but so that you can fail and be fine and keep editing. Make whatever is in you and be okay with it for what it is. Take some of that pressure off yourself...that helps me a lot. It's all trial and error, and everyone is entitled to making cheesy art or writing bad poetry. Chill out and be nice to yourself; that's generally my blanket of advice for anyone."*

# PENGUIN YOUNG READERS GROUP

# Writing TIPS FOR Teens



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