

MARY KOLE

Mary Kole is a freelance editor, author and blogger whose goal is to help writers of children's literature create compelling stories for young readers. A former California and New York literary agent for the Andrea Brown Literary Agency and Movable Type Literary, she received an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of San Francisco and interned in the children's editorial department at Chronicle Books. Mary has spoken at over 75 writer's conferences and workshops across the world, has been deeply involved with organizations including the SCBWI, *Writer's Digest*, and NaNoWriMo. She has recently been teaching the concept of interiority almost exclusively.

Her blog on children's writing and publishing, *Kidlit.com*, receives an average of 17,000 hits per month. It has been named one of the "101 Best Websites for Writers" by *Writer's Digest* every year since its inception in 2009. Her book, *Writing Irresistible Kidlit* (Writer's Digest Books, 2012) has sold 11,000 copies

and is rated 5 ★ on Amazon.com. Mary has also worked as a freelance writer for newspapers and magazines, including the *Los Angeles Times*, and was named one of 20 writers to follow on Twitter in 2017. She currently works as a freelance editor with over 500 clients per year. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband and son.



EDITORIAL SERVICE TESTIMONIALS

"Mary is a one-woman MFA program."

KIM W

"I had several 'a-ha' moments while reading your feedback ... I highly recommend your services."

ALLISON MORGAN, AUTHOR OF *THE SOMEDAY JAR*

"If you are lucky enough to have Mary Kole read your manuscript you will find yourself in the hands of a gifted editor."

CYNTHIA WETZLER, *NEW YORK TIMES* WRITER

"As the author of *Writing Irresistible Kidlit*, she knows what goes into a great kids' book."

STACIE LAYNE WILSON, SCREENWRITER AND FILMMAKER

"Mary got me one of the best agents in the business! Okay, okay, that's not strictly true—I did actually write the stuff myself, but I did it with the help of Mary's editing services. After working with her on several manuscripts, I signed with my dream rep. Mary's critiques continue to help me—I now apply her advice to every story I write and it's really working!"

FRANZISKA G.

"It genuinely feels like you've handed me a golden compass so I can trek off in the right direction now to ultimately find buried treasure."

KENDRA

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Q&A

Q: Why are children's books so exciting to write and publish?

A: Children's books attract a passionate group of writers because we are quite literally shaping the bright young minds of the future. Child and teen readers tend to be curious, voracious, and deeply invested in character and story. It's impossible to find a more passionate readership. Plus, the books we write and publish for young readers can have an incredible impact on people who are still figuring out the big questions of life. Quite simply, kids' books can change lives and, maybe, in a small way, the world. There is no better motivation than that!

Q: You're a freelance editor, helping writers work toward their publishing dreams. What's key to writing for middle grade and young adult readers?

A: For hooking young readers, character tends to be the most important craft element. Learning how to write a compelling character brings with it the concepts of relatability, voice, interiority, and theme. A writer's primary job is to make readers care deeply, and so character is the key that unlocks everything else in a manuscript.

Q: How did you come up with the term "interiority" and how crucial is this concept to compelling children's literature?

A: I've been using the term "interiority" to define a character's thoughts, feelings, and reactions. This concept has become one of the cornerstones of my editorial philosophy. How a character interacts with the story is crucial to a reader's engagement with a manuscript. Which events matter? Why do they matter? What's the hidden context that can come to the surface and deepen a scene? How does the plot act on characters and their relationships? What is a character's primal, driving objective as they move through a story? All of these things are wrapped up in the practice of interiority.

How a character goes through the plot, what they focus on, what it means to them, etc. This is what matters to audiences. Interiority creates writing with nuance and substance.

Q: What are the secret ingredients for writers looking to succeed in the publishing industry?

A: Very few writers are an overnight success. J.K. Rowling and Stephenie Meyer are noteworthy exactly because their stories are so unique. Most writers achieve success over a period of years, with stumbling blocks and "drawer manuscripts". But the most common traits I see in working writers are: perseverance, humility, and a driving desire to learn and grow.

Q: What's one trap that aspiring writers fall into?

A: Many people chase the reward (publication) instead of the work (writing). Writing is such an emotional and intimate craft that everyone wants to see their dreams come true in a big way, sure. But publication is one small facet of the writing life, believe it or not. Those writers who find lasting fulfillment come to love the writing, revision, and learning process. They are fulfilled by the joy of practicing their craft, no matter what else happens.

Q: What's the hardest writing lesson to learn?

A: Relax. No seriously, relax. (Easier said than done, right?) Trust yourself to communicate clearly, and trust your reader to interpret it. Try to find your own writing voice instead of emulating what you think your writing is or should be. This maturity and confidence, which come with time and practice, often separate aspiring writers from published authors.

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ARTICLES AND INTERVIEWS

Mary has been interviewed by many online platforms including the SCBWI and NaNoWriMo as a literary agent, editor, blogger and author. Here is a selection of recent interviews. Visit her blog (KIDLIT.COM/ABOUT) for a complete list.

FREELANCE EDITOR INTERVIEW: MARY KOLE ▶

ONLY PICTURE BOOKS

Jul 23, 2018

EDITING AND WORKING WITH AN EDITOR BY MARY KOLE ▶

INSECURE WRITERS' SUPPORT GROUP

Jul 9, 2018

EDITOR, PUBLISHER, WRITER: THE SCOOP ON MARY KOLE ▶

SARAH SCOOP

June 5, 2018

CHILDREN'S BOOK EDITOR MARY KOLE ON RAISING AVID READERS ▶

OPEEQO

Jan 2018

WRITING TIMELESS STORIES ▶

SCBWI PAL NEWSLETTER

Oct 30, 2017

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH EDITOR MARY KOLE ▶

SMITH PUBLICITY INC.

Feb 17, 2016

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 [@marykoleeditorial](https://www.facebook.com/marykoleeditorial)

MARY KOLE

WRITING IRRESISTIBLE KIDLIT (Writer's Digest Books, 2012)

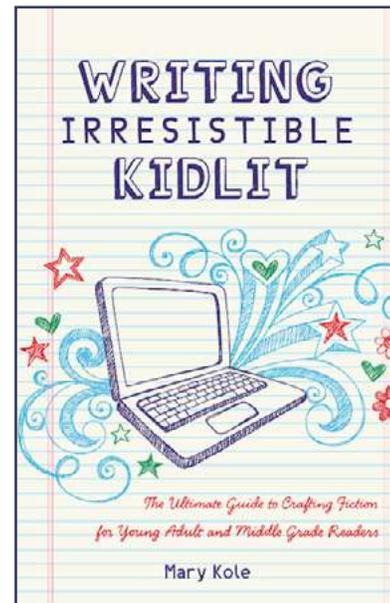
Captivate the hearts and minds of young adult readers!

Writing for young adult (YA) and middle grade (MG) audiences isn't just "kids' stuff" anymore—it's kidlit! The YA and MG book markets are healthier and more robust than ever, and that means the competition is fiercer, too. In *Writing Irresistible Kidlit*, literary agent **Mary Kole** shares her expertise on writing novels for young adult and middle grade readers and teaches you how to:

- Recognize the differences between middle grade and young adult audiences and how they impact your writing.
- Tailor your manuscript's tone, length, and content to your readership.
- Avoid common mistakes and clichés that are prevalent in YA and MG fiction, in respect to characters, story ideas, plot structure and more.
- Develop themes and ideas in your novel that will strike emotional chords.

Mary Kole's candid commentary and insightful observations, as well as a collection of book excerpts and personal insights from bestselling authors and editors who specialize in the children's book market, are invaluable tools for your kidlit career.

If you want the skills, techniques, and know-how you need to craft memorable stories for teens and tweens, *Writing Irresistible Kidlit* can give them to you.



PRAISE FOR *WRITING IRRESISTIBLE KIDLIT*

AMAZON 5 ★ (91 REVIEWS)

“I have read a lot of books on writing and none compare to this—even Stephen King's *On Writing*. This is the best writing book ever.” **SARAH LEITH BAHN**

“From now on if I see a writing craft book with her name on it I will hit the 'one click purchase' button without a second thought ... Every page is wise and rich and full of craft and works to stimulate your imagination ... possibly the very best book on writing craft I have read in 25 years.” **SPROCKET**

“Quite simply, THE BEST ‘how to’ book on novel-writing I've ever read and probably ever will read in my life—and I've read plenty.” **CAROL**

GOODREADS 4.5 ★ (563 RATINGS, 110 REVIEWS)

“How-to for everything.” **AUDREY**

“This is a must-read book ... for anyone writing for children. She is a master.” **COURTNEY**

“This book is an incredible wealth of information.” **HEATHER SPIVA**

MIDDLE GRADE LUNCH BREAK

“One of the top 3 favorite craft books for writers of children's fiction 2017, jam-packed with great writing advice.” **MGLUNCHBREAK.COM, JAN 31, 2017**

PURCHASE *WRITING IRRESISTIBLE KIDLIT*

[AMAZON.COM](#) ► [WRITER'S DIGEST SHOP](#) ► [GOODREADS](#) ►