



ABRAMS

Amulet Imprint

THE **ART OF BOOKS**
SINCE 1949

Lauren Niemiec
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Independent Press Report



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FOUNDED: In 1949 by Harry N. Abrams. The imprint Amulet was launched in 2004.

FOCUS: Illustrated books, high-quality art

SUBMISSIONS:

Due to an increase in volume, Abrams Books does not accept unsolicited manuscripts. However, Abrams Books for Young Readers & Amulet Books accept nonfiction submissions. Guidelines available under "Author Submissions."

ACTIVITY:

Amulet puts out about twenty to thirty hardcover books, ten paperback books, annually.

IMPRINTS:

Abrams
Stewart, Tabori & Chang
Abrams Books for Young Readers
Amulet Books
Abrams Image
STC Craft
Abrams ComicArts
Abrams Appleseed [coming in 2012]



WHY ABRAMS BOOKS? WHY AMULET?

“My theory is that if you learn enough about something, you can learn to love that something. I’m still waiting for that to happen for football.” –Lauren Myracle

On November 20th, I made an extremely fortunate decision to attend Lauren Myracle’s book signing for *Shine*, a book I love and would recommend to anyone.

In the beginning of the discussion, Susan Van Metre walked in, and Lauren Myracle lit up, telling us that Susan was her editor, the best editor in the world, and the first person to give her a chance. Myracle dealt with many rejections; actually one hundred and eighteen rejections and five failed novels, not only from Publishers, but at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, where they told her that she could not take the advanced creative writing courses, her writing was not good enough.

She gave it up, but when coming across one of her favorite books, *Ramona the Brave*, she began to write again. She sent out her manuscript over and over, until one letter came that was promising. Susan asked her to re-write the story, with no guarantees on publishing it. So Myracle trashed it and wrote it over again. She sent it back to Susan, who sent her the same letter again. She re-wrote it five times in a two year period; once scrapping it and starting fresh, until Susan called her one night with the good news that *Kissing Kate* would be published. Susan and Lauren have formed an excellent editor-author relationship through all the books they have published so far.

Lauren Myracle couldn’t talk about the book *Shine*, due to the adult content (most of the attendees far too young to listen to an excerpt or discussion), so she asked me to give a synopsis when someone asked what it was about. This class was put to good use when I thought for a second and told the crowd: *Shine* is a dark story about Patrick, the victim of a hate crime. Opening with a news article about the gruesome event and then, told in Cat’s perspective, we struggle to find the truth. The cops in the small depressed town in North Carolina said it was most likely people driving through, but sixteen-year-old Cat knows better. I won’t give away the ending, and I won’t go into the details of the hate crime performed outside of the gas station because it is very graphic. While Patrick is in a coma, his old friend Cat follows the clues to try and uncover the truth about the attack. And while she is searching for the clues, she grows out of the lonely girl she has been for the past few years to help her old friend. She also notices changes in other people in town, and not all of the changes are good ones.

“PERFECT!” Lauren Myracle said in response and I smiled, I could not believe I did that. After the Q&A and the excerpt from one of her *Winnie* books, I went up to get *Shine* signed. She asked me all of these questions about Columbia and writing, and asked me who I thought the criminal really was. We talked for about five minutes, she was so great. As I was walking away, she said very nonchalantly, you should go talk to my editor Susan. She pointed her out and winked.



A TALK WITH SUSAN VAN METRE

This interview was conducted on December 02, 2011

LAUREN NIEMIEC: In 2010, you were promoted to vice president and publisher for Abrams Books for Young Readers and Amulet Books. Can you describe how you worked your way to this position?

SUSAN VAN METRE: I started as an editorial assistant, twenty years ago, and have worked sixty to eighty hour weeks ever since. Being an editor means taking work home every night and on the weekends. It's worth it because the work is so interesting, but it means many sacrifices on the personal-life side of things.

LN: What was it like switching from Dutton to Abrams Books?

SVM: I spent about a year starting sentences "At Dutton, we [do ____ this way]" until people wanted to kill me. It was a difficult decision to leave because Dutton was a great, old division with a backlist that included some of my favorite books of all time, like THE WESTING GAME and MY SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN, but at Abrams I am able to be in on the beginnings of what I hope will one day be a storied publishing program.

LN: At the book signing at Andersons Bookshop, Lauren Myracle mentioned that one of your suggestions in rewriting "Shine" was to make all of the characters seem like potential suspects. What other comments did you make and how closely did you work with Myracle during the editing process of "Shine?"

SVM: Lauren is such a terrific and thoughtful writer that I typically do not have to work very hard on her manuscripts, but in the case of SHINE, she was trying a new genre (mystery) and writing about a very different setting. There was a lot of back-and-forth over many months. Another piece of advice I gave her was to move the church basement scene forward so that we're exposed to bigotry in the town early on and meet some of the important characters before Cat begins her investigation. I felt we needed to see what she was up against.

LN: When you are looking through manuscripts, what do you look for? Is there a set criteria?

SVM: There's no set criteria. I look for a story that draws me in, that's well told.

LN: How do you decide whether a story holds potential? Lauren Myracle said that you held onto her manuscript while she revised it with no promises back when she was trying to publish *Kissing Kate*. Do you still do this at Abrams?

SVM: Sometimes. We might see a spark of talent but want to be sure this translates into a publishable book before you take the financial risk of offering a contract. And in

Lauren's case, I was quite a young editor at the time and had to do a lot of persuading of my bosses that I was ready to make an acquisition.

LN: How many people are involved in the decision-making process for selecting manuscripts and what are their roles?

SVM: Typically there is a publication board that makes these decisions, which includes management, editorial, marketing, and sales.

LN: Abrams does not accept unsolicited manuscripts due to increase in volume. Can you talk about this? Do you agree or disagree with this?

SVM: We receive more manuscripts than we can handle, even limiting our submissions to agented ones. If we accepted unsolicited, people would never hear from us.

LN: Does Abrams Books and/or Amulet specifically, have a set market plan or does it change depending on the writer?

SVM: Depends on the book.

LN: Which marketing strategy do you think works best?

SVM: Getting authors out there to conferences, to meet influential librarians and educators. And making LOTS of galleys.

LN: When an author chooses a small press, what disadvantages do they face? What do they gain in comparison?

SVM: Abrams isn't a small press, so I am not wholly qualified to answer, but I would say there's less risk at a small house of the book being overlooked amongst the hundreds of books published a year by the big houses. Small houses are often willing to take a chance on quirky books that don't easily fit onto other lists.

LN: What are your feelings regarding e-books and e-readers?

SVM: I think it's an exciting and anxiety-producing time in our business, because our publishing model is going to change so quickly. But it seems possible that with books so easy to download, people will read more. And that would make me very happy.

LN: Since Harry Potter and Twilight, has there been an increase in manuscripts for young adult books?

SVM: Oh my gosh, yes! It's a segment that has increased tenfold in number of titles and sales—at least. And we receive MANY YA submissions. Unfortunately, most are derivative of other books.

LN: Do you have any advice for aspiring authors?

SVM: Work as hard as you can on becoming a good writer. If you succeed in that goal, someone will notice your work and help you get published. I promise! And as soon as you get a publishing offer, start on your next book. Writing is a job—work hard at it and

you'll have a long career. As in anything.



BOOK REVIEW

Shine by Lauren Myracle
Amulet Books, imprint of Abrams Books
ISBN: 0810984172
376 pages
Reviewed by Lauren Niemiec

It starts with a news clipping. A news clipping that pulls a reader into Lauren Myracle's expertly crafted mystery, *Shine*. The dateline reads, Black Creek, North Carolina, a backwater town of rural folks and attitudes where we become a part of the characters that live there, and we see with gruesome detail the hate crime performed on Patrick Truman; all within the first page. With Cat as our narrator, we fit together the missing pieces until we find the person responsible for such an act of violence.

Myracle did an incredible job of creating the story and the characters inside the town. Patrick Truman becomes a character, regardless of his absence, through the other characters of the book. Truman was attacked while going into work and found with a gas pump in his mouth attached with duck tape, and "Suck this faggot" written in blood on his chest. Throughout the story, Cat grows from a character that keeps to herself, to a girl getting over her past to find who put her old friend Patrick in a coma, alone in the pursuit.

A town with high morals and religious practices, low-to-no income, and southern standards, the town's intolerance of Patrick's "broken sexuality" is hardly disguised. The town folk are distraught, but back-up the sheriff when he claims the attack was done by someone driving through the town. While tolerance is a major theme, in the text we confront drunk fathers, drug-dealers, school drop-outs and even characters just driving through to get to the local college.

Myracle's ability to get into a young girl's head so perfectly amazes me. When I turned from page-to-page, finishing the story in one day, I could not believe that Cat was just a character, and that a high school student did not actually write this story. Cat's fears are confronted, her strengths challenged, and in the end she learns to persevere. "My humiliation had turned to rage, and that was good. But it would take longer still for it to shift into something I could control." When Cat first notices that she is changing, the story picks up and the shifts become more frequent, Cat allowing them to happen. The revelation of how she loses herself in the past creates a whole other world, helps us learn more about each character involved, and adding more suspects for who committed the crime.

Through Myracle's devastated town, the way she allows us to enter, and the character's that feel trapped inside of it, we explore facts of that awful night, and find the truth of each character.



INDEPENDENT PRESS [with a young adult focus]

Persea Press

Persea Books was started in 1975, and is open to publishing fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. For fiction, a query letter is accepted through agent or author, and should include a cover letter, author background and publication history, a detailed synopsis of work and one chapter. Non-fiction can send a manuscript but both query letter and manuscripts for both should be sent snail mail to their address: 277 Broadway, New York, NY 10007. They are currently expanding the amount of young adult books they publish. They plan to reply within eight to ten weeks of when they receive it.

Muse-it-up

MuseItUp Publishing contacts within 6-10 weeks after receiving the documents and are most successful in Young Adult/Tweens and Erotic (MuseItHot Imprint) books. They also accept Paranormal, Fantasy, Horror, MuseItYoung stories in ages 10-14, mysteries, suspense, thriller, and dark fiction. They do not accept submissions during December first to March first or June first to September first and can be emailed to musesubs@gmail.com. While accepting any manuscripts, they are specifically looking for young adult romance, vampire and other undead creature, thrillers, tween chapter books and cozy mysteries. In the subject line, write the title of work. The body of the Email should include: name, pseudonym, email address and website link, title of work, explain if it is part of a series, the genre, word count, a brief author bio, and cover letter introducing yourself and your work. Everything mentioned above should also be on the top-left side of the manuscript. In addition add your full manuscript with file name TITLE_YourName in RTF or DOC and another document with a brief synopsis. They do not want: any work depicting forced rape, abuse of children or any sexual tone with minors under the age of eighteen, bestiality, partially or incomplete and unedited manuscripts, necrophilia, incest, fanfiction, anything that includes bodily fluid (solids included). The manuscript should be in Times New Roman, 12 pt font. Four * should be used to indicate a scene break. Chapter heading should be in 14pt bold and no page numbers, headers or footers should be used. One inch margins should be used and they do not want any underscores or underlines. All communication, including inner thought should be italicized or contain quotation marks. All books are in digital format and authors receive forty percent royalties. Books are only considered for print if they are 45,000 words or more. You receive a three-year contract and pricing of e-books are based on word count.