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Table of Contents

About Sourcebooks………………….3

Why Sourcebooks?…………………..4

Interview-Kate Prosswimmer……5

Book Review…………………………….10

Conclusion……………………………….14

ABOUT SOURCEBOOKS

Website: <http://www.sourcebooks.com/>

Mission Statement

“Sourcebooks’ mission is to reach as many people as possible with books that will enlighten their lives.”

Headquarters Imprints

Sourcebooks, Inc. Sourcebooks, founded in 1987

1935 Brookdale Rd, Suite 139 Sourcebooks Casablanca, acquired in 1996

Naperville, IL 60563 Sourcebooks Fire, founded in 2010

Phone: (800) 43-BRIGHT Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, founded in 2007

Phone: (630) 961-3900 Sourcebooks Landmark, founded in 2001

Fax: (630) 961-2168 Sourcebooks MediaFusion, found in 2000

Sphinx Published, acquired in 1997

Cumberland House, acquired in 2008

Simple Truths, acquired in 2013

How Sourcebooks Came To Be

Sourcebooks started officially in 1987 when Dominique Raccah left her career with advertising giant Leo Burnett, cashed in $17,000 from her 401K plan and created a publishing house from her upstairs bedroom in Naperville, Illinois.

What Sourcebooks Publishes

Fiction, non-fiction, teen books and children’s books. Variety of humor, history books, cooking books, teen non-fiction and fiction, picture books and self-improvement books.

Why Sourcebooks?

Over the summer, I decided to treat myself to a visit to Barnes and Noble in Bourbannais, Illinos. It is the closest Barnes and Noble to me from my home in Northwest Indiana, and I was preparing for my first visit to a different country. I had just booked a ticket to London, England and I really wanted to grab some maps and some travel guides, and looking online, Barnes and Noble had a few I wanted.

Once at Barnes and Noble, I grabbed my London guides and ventured off into the Young Adult book section. Once there, I knew I had to treat myself to one book, but it took me quite a few hours to decide on which book to get. I browsed the shelfs, read the back cover of almost every book, and finally, at the bottom of a shelf sat the book *This is Where it Ends* by Marieke Nijkamp. I have to admit, the cover drew my attention immediately, as did the summary listed in the front cover. I decided immediately that this was the book I had to buy. I read it and really enjoyed it and not until my publishing class did I realize Sourcebooks was the place that published it. Because of *This is Where it Ends,* I decided I wanted to interview an editor from this company and learn more about Sourcebooks.

Interview-Kate Prosswimmer

\*Interview edited for report purposes only\*

A Brief Introduction of Kate

Kate Prosswimmer is an assistant editor for Sourcebooks Jabberwocky and Sourcebooks Fire. She is specifically looking for books ranging from kid’s books to young adult. These titles can be stand alone or series. She prefers books with emotional hooks and loves tangible world building and high stakes situations.

The Interview

**Conducted on November 25, 2016**

1. How did you come to the decision to become an editor? Did you have any background in writing?
2. I started in freshman year of college, and I decided I wanted to make a decision about what I was going to do so I could plan out my schedule accordingly. I realized the thing I had always been most passionate about was reading and I never really had gotten out of children’s books and I was reading young adult even into college. English class was always enjoyable to me and I did some research and found being a book editor was really what I wanted to do. I took creative writing at school and I met an author there and ended up interning at a literary agency for three years. I finished up my Master’s at school and then interned at Sourcebooks and was hired full time after that.

**Q**. What do you love about young adult/children’s fiction, since you chose to mention it in your bio?

**A**. I would say that anything goes in children’s fiction and it is kind of special in that way. You’re not really hounded by expectations. I really believe in Sourcebooks’ motto which is that books do change lives. When I’m acquiring a book, I think about what kid this is going to reach and what kind of positive impact this book will have on them.

**Q**. What is one mistake you find most often when you’re reading a submission?

**A**. There aren’t many too many blatant mistakes that are made because the submissions I see are agented. I would say the most inconvenient mistake is when something is miscategorized age wise, like it is sent as a middle grade and it is clearly a young adult book. When the content for a middle grade is too intense it really can’t be published as a middle grade book.

**Q**. How big is the competition for young adult/children’s books? Do you get a lot of submissions?

**A**. So I’ve only been acquiring books for my own lists for about six months now, so on a personal level I am getting a good amount of submissions every week. My coworkers, who have been in children’s book publishing for years get twenty to fifty books every week. There are a lot of literary agents out there, which means there are a lot of submissions.

**Q.** My teacher told me editors decide in the first 20 pages if they want to read the whole manuscript or not. What makes you keep reading after the 20th page?

**A.** I think it varies from editor to editor. Sometimes it is a little difficult for authors to get their stride in the story, so I always try to read at least fifty pages. I have such a huge pile of reading that there is a fight for my attention with all these projects I need to look at. If I’m feeling like I should try a different submission, that’s a sign that it probably isn’t the right submission for me. Sometimes it’s clear earlier on if a submission isn’t right for me, but I still do try to read at least fifty pages because this is someone’s baby they’ve been working on for years and years. I would say what makes me keep reading is how much it captures my attention, how much I want to put it at the top of my reading pile because as an editor you really want to be reading and editing the books you love. It really comes down to personal taste.

**Q.** Do you get a lot of the same themes or ideas with different manuscripts? If so, what makes any of them stand out?

**A.** I guess on a base level, a lot of children’s literature is themed around not being alone or lonely. Then there’s a lot of other issues or questions that are raised on top of that like questions of identity and friendship, or dealing with peer pressure. I think all kids struggle with that on some level. For me, any book that can make me cry. You want to speak to the emotional side of the reader. Any book that can make me laugh, same thing. If they can do both, that’s a goldmine. The hook is what really captures your attention, and that’s the one to two sentence elevator pitch of what your story is that captures at the core what your story is. Having that elevator pitch is really important because it shows that the author is able to step back and look at the story for what it is. There are definitely themes that are pervasive in children’s literature, and if they’re wrapped up in a way that is fresh and interesting that’s what really makes something stand out.

**Q.** What are the biggest clichés to avoid with young adult fiction?

**A.** There certainly are clichés. I guess what people mean by that is that they’re taking a familiar theme and they’re not doing anything inventive with it. When it boils down to it, a lot of young adult is very similar. *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are very similar in set up, but the premise is really unique and fresh for them. You don’t want to not include them, you just don’t want to put all of them into one book and have the reader expect them.

**Q**. If you were stuck on a stranded island all alone with a bunch of your favorite young adult /children books and you had to burn all of them to stay warm but were able to keep one (only one) which one would you choose and what makes you decide on an editorial and reader standpoint?

**A**. I’m a huge post-apocalyptic fan, so I think out of survival mode, I might pick *The Swiss Family Robinson* just because A. That was my favorite book growing up and B. It has plenty of practical application techniques that would help me survive on the island.

**Q**. How do you not lost your mind editing one manuscript for a long time?

**A**. Lucky for me, I am a huge re-reader and my brain is wired to enjoy doing that. It can get difficult if you were handed down a project or you weren’t the one who picked the project or your suggested edits aren’t being implemented, but at the end of the day it’s the author’s book. On the other hand, when you find a book you are strongly connected with, it is really exciting to get a draft back after the edits.

**Q**. What is one bit of advice you would give to someone who writes young adult fiction?

**A**. I would say read a ton of other young adult books. It will help you keep your finger on the pulse of what’s happening in that community. To be a good writer, you have to be a good reader. I think it’s also really important to understand how the category works and to see how their book would fit into the category. Being able to point to what conversation your book is partaking in is really helpful because that’s half the editor’s job.

Book Review-*Love and Vandalism*

*Love and Vandalism* by Laurie Boyle Crompton

Published by Sourcebooks Fire

Young Adult Fiction-14 And Up

Publishing in May 2017, 320 pages

The novel follows teenager Rory Capers during her summer vacation. She has been busy spray painting beautiful lions all over town during the night when her police officer father isn’t tracking her phone or lecturing her about how he was right to ban her from making art. Along the way, she somehow stumbles into the new kid in town, Hayes, who instantly thinks Rory and him are best friends. No matter how hard Rory tries, he won’t leave her alone, so it’s almost inevitable she falls deeply for him, something she’s never done before. She tells him her deepest secret she has never admitted to anybody, and now he’s locked in her life forever. *Love and Vandalism* is a classic young adult novel about falling in love, growing up, making choices independently, and finding who you truly are.

This novel had interesting twists and turns along the way, which made it impossible to put it down, let alone predict the ending. In the beginning, as a first time reader, I thought it was odd to have some of the chapters start with her mother lecturing her about odd topics in the kitchen late at night. I wasn’t sure why her mother was only popping up during the openings of some chapters, and then, halfway through the book, it was revealed that her mother has been dead for a year and those lectures are actually tapes recorded on a laptop Rory listens to every night. Rory thinks her father is cheating on her mother, but her father tells her he met a girl during a widow’s only meeting, and that her mother has been gone a year. This made me question Rory as a reader. The whole first half of the book she is acting like her mother is alive, except there is clearly something motivating her to paint her graffiti lions around town. At first, the reader assumes it is her strict no art father, but halfway through it is revealed her mother committed suicide, and Rory is most likely painting these lions as a way to grieve her mother. It is interesting to not trust the narrator, because for a while after that was revealed I wasn’t really ever sure if what Rory was thinking was even the truth, but it played out nicely, because it was completely unexpected.

Along the way, a mysterious new guy, Hayes pops almost out of nowhere, and he seems to be everywhere she is. This love situation is pretty common in young adult fiction, but the author was still able to keep me on my toes. In this complex relationship, Rory seems to act pretty irrational about things, as Hayes is a recovering alcoholic and can’t be in a relationship with her until he finishes his ninth step of AA treatment. Half of the time as a reader, I never really understood why Rory was acting so ridiculous towards Hayes. When her past is brought up, she mentions she was raped. The reader is now able to understand why Rory is unable to completely let go and trust Hayes, because of her past.

There is nit-picky notes I would like to address about this novel, and it was something that just didn’t work for me as a reader. There was a guy in the beginning of the novel, nicknamed frat boy, who Rory hooks up with immediately after getting stoned with him. After that, Hayes comes into the picture and the frat boy tries to take her on a date, and Rory says no. After that, we never see or hear of frat boy again. This is a way for the reader to see how Rory views relationships: she is really only interested in hooking up. However, I was disappointed that was the last time we ever heard or saw him again, I was almost hoping he would bust her at her final lion project, which was painting over a Sparkle Soda ad on the water tower. It definitely showed the reader the kind of character Rory was, but it could have been explained in just a few pages instead of dragging it out and making the reader hopeful we will see the character again.

The dialogue was also very refreshing in this book. It seemed realistic, and nothing seemed pushed. The dialogue seemed very authentic to each character, whoever was speaking. It all rang very true and meaningful, even when you could tell characters weren’t being very honest. The characters were all very well rounded, even Ken, who was the owner of the art store Rory worked at. It was obvious the author had really gotten to know these characters.

Something discussed very frequently in my Young Adult Fiction class I took last semester was that it is considered young adult if the character changes in some way from the beginning of the book to the end of the book. This rang very true with *Love and Vandalism*. In the beginning, Rory was very much in denial with just about everything, from her mother’s suicide, to why she was making art, her relationship with her father, and even how she felt about Hayes. Over the course of the book, it was obvious she was changing, and she even admitted it, and said how she really didn’t think she needed to change. By the end, the relationship with her father is on its way to being fully healed, she has accepted the fact that she loves Hayes and even accepted herself for who she actually is. In the beginning, it seemed like everything about Rory’s life was sad and never going to change, but in the end, she learned from her stubbornness and the people around her that she eventually accepted the change in herself and the things around her.

This book felt very fresh. It dove into some topics I would have never thought to read about, such as graffiti. It incorporated the young adult genre quite well, but the author really left the reader guessing as to what would happen next. The ending was not predictable, which I enjoyed. I also enjoyed the fact that the ending seemed as if the characters would live on beyond the book. Too many times I have read young adult books where the book ends and it seems like the characters cease to exist. However, this book made it seem like the characters were developed and alive enough that this was just a glimpse into their world, not the entirety of their story. I would recommend this book and will keep it in my own little library to read again, after I finish reading all the other books I have of course.

Conclusion

Overall, Sourcebooks’ mission, which is “To reach as many people as possible with books that will enlighten their lives.” does a good job of summarizing what kind of books they put out into the world. Even the young adult world, Sourcebooks deals with some heavy topics, an example would be *This is Where it Ends* by Marieke Nijkamp, which is about a school shooting. These topics are real, the books they put out there and publish are real, and their press has reached me in the way that I am excited to continue my own young adult novel. They really hold true to their mission statement as they know they need to reach all kinds of audience and change lives, which means they release books with situations, even tragedies, people unfortunately have to go through, whether it’s losing a parent or a school shooting. In the end, I am pleased that I chose this press.