**Podcast: Literaticast**

**Episode: 54: Meet the Agent! With ABLA Associate Agent Paige Terlip**

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[Literaticast theme plays.]

Jenn: [00:00:02] Hello and welcome to the Literaticast. I'm Jennifer Laughran and I'm a senior agent at the Andrea Brown Literary Agency where I rep children's books, from picture books through young adult and everything in between.

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[00:00:48] I'm sure I've mentioned on this show or on Twitter, that sometimes newer agents can be great to query as they are actively building their lists. They tend to have a lot of energy and as long as they're at a good agency with a mentorship system in place, they have access to just as many editors as any more senior agent. So today, I'm going to be chatting with a newest agent to join my agency ABLA I think you'll love her like we do. And I'm excited for you to get to know her.

[00:01:17] Paige Terlip has been an agent at Andrea Brown for a year now, though, honestly, it seems more like two weeks to me because time has no meaning. In that time, she's already distinguished herself as a brilliant and empathetic agent and colleague. She has made quite a splash, having sold dozens of titles to major publishers in great deals in the picture book, middle grade, YA, and graphic novel categories. And I know she has a very bright future ahead of her. Let me see if I can get Paige on the line.

[00:01:49] Hi, Paige.

Paige: [00:01:49] Hi.

Jenn: [00:01:49] So I introduced you briefly before you hopped on but just so we hear it from the horse's mouth. Could you introduce yourself, please?

Paige: [00:01:59] Yes, of course. I'm Paige Terlip, I have been at Andrea Brown since 2017. I rep everything from picture books to adult and I'm just excited to be here and to get into the nitty gritty of it.

Jenn: [00:02:18] Right, but you haven't been an agent since 2017?

Paige: [00:02:20] No, no. Yes. So I originally worked with Laura Rennert as her assistant for little over three years and then I was promoted to associate agent last January.

Jenn: [00:02:33] Nice. So can you give us the nutshell version of how you got into the publishing world in the first place and into your current role?

Paige: [00:02:41] Yeah, absolutely. So I had a bit of a journey before landing as an agent. I feel like a lot of agents kind of go through this sort of discovery path. But I had a lot of different jobs. I owned my own company, I worked in marketing and communications at the National Renewable Energy Lab, I did some design work, and I even worked at a ranch in the Rockies. I headed back to school and got my MA in children's literature and MFA in writing for children from Simmons. And it was during that program that I started realizing that, like, maybe I actually can get a job in publishing. So I interned and did some marketing internships and editorial work, and also started working with Laura at the agency. And now the rest is history, so.

Jenn: [00:03:33] Did you want to be a writer back then?

Paige: [00:03:35] I did. I thought about writing, I've always kind of had the passion of writing in the background. But then I sort of realized through school that I actually got a lot more out of helping other people write their books. So, agenting kind of seemed like the right path to pursue that. I feel like an agent is truly a writer's champion, and really helps cultivate a career. So it really fit all my interests.

Jenn: [00:04:02] So congratulations on joining us. You work so hard for your clients and though you have only been here for a little over a year, as an agent, you've been such a boon to us already. Can you talk a bit more about your philosophy of agenting?

Paige: [00:04:18] Yeah, I think one of the reasons why I'm so happy to be at a ABLA is because I feel like my personal agency philosophy aligns so well with that of the agency. I really am focused on supporting both new writers but also nurturing and developing writers who have, already, several books under their belt. And my mission really centers on prioritizing an author's career. So I'm not just thinking about one book, I'm thinking about, you know, what does it look like in 5, 10, 15 years?

[00:04:58] I really am very hands on and collaborative. I think it's truly a partnership and I really love working with my clients at every step of the pipeline. So from an idea to pitching that project to negotiating contracts, or working on kind of supplemental marketing, post publication, I really am thinking, you know, about every little piece of the puzzle. And then I also think, part of my philosophy ties into some of my personal skill sets. So, with a background in design and marketing, I really do like to use those skills to kind of think about how to make my client's project stand out. I know, we'll probably talk about that a little bit more later. But I really do think about unique ways to kind of pitch and be innovative within the publishing space.

Jenn: [00:05:49] Well, why don't you tell us more about that. So you have this keen eye for design, which you definitely bring to the agency because you do a lot of our little logo, signage and ads, stuff like that. Do you think that helps you as an agent? And if so, how does that work?

Paige: [00:06:08] Yeah, I definitely think so. I mean, the obvious way it helps me is that it makes it so much easier to work with clients who are using art as a storytelling medium. So whether that's illustrators, oare author illustrators, in picture books and graphic novels, I really think about things in a visual sense. That's sort of how I decipher the world. And then I think, also, I feel like, even when there's not a visual narrative happening, because I can picture a story unfolding kind of in a visual way in my brain. I think that can help me sometimes craft pitches in a unique way. Or to sort of create collateral like not just for the agency, like the catalogs all the stuff I do there, but also to do it for my clients. So maybe that's putting together a really attractive pitch packet for a proposal or, a film/TV catalog. I'm all about making things look pretty so if I can do that, I like to.

Jenn: [00:07:11] Nice, what have been some of the biggest highlights of your time as an agent so far?

Paige: [00:07:17] Yeah, I think, gosh. It’s hard to pick. I feel like the first year has been such an amazing whirlwind. It was kind of a struggle to be promoted during a pandemic, but I feel like it's kind of taking it in stride. And I think some of the lows also helped me celebrate the highlights even more. But I would say that to narrow it down, I think maybe finding that perfect place for a debut author, and getting that deal and presenting it to someone is like, this is your first book, it's gonna be in the world. I feel like that's so exciting to me. One project in particular that was just really fun, because it was my first auction. And it was a really exciting, stressful, fun experience was getting the deal set for Miranda Sun, *If I Have to Be Haunted*. That was really a highlight from the first year.

Jenn: [00:08:22] Nice. That's such a great title. Will you pitch the book to us?

Paige: [00:08:25] It's a YA contemporary fantasy about a girl who reluctantly embraces her ghost speaking heritage to resurrect the local golden boy who she has sort of a rivals to lovers arc with, and it's just so much fun. It’s such a snarky voice, really creative magic and world building, but grounded in our reality and it's just so exciting. And I can't wait for the world to read it.

Jenn: [00:09:00] When is it coming out?

Paige: [00:09:01] It's coming out in summer 2023 and then there'll be a follow up in summer 2024.

Jenn: [00:09:08] Nice. Okay, so obviously, you were an assistant before, so you knew a lot going into the role of agent already because you had been watching the agency and doing stuff in a supportive role. But is there anything you have learned since becoming an agent that has surprised you?

Paige: [00:09:25] Yeah, a lot of things. One of the biggest things has been that I've really learned how difficult it is to pass on projects that you love. I can't take on everything and there really is a balance of figuring out what I love to read just as a consumer, and what I should actually represent. It’s like an inner battle because loving something doesn't necessarily mean I'm the best agent for it. And so figuring out when to let go of things even though I'm really enjoying it has been a lot more difficult than I could have anticipated.

Jenn: [00:10:07] Yeah.

Paige: [00:10:07] And then also, I feel like I work a lot, I knew that I was going to work a lot. And I'm used to it. I had three jobs in tandem with going to grad school full time, but I didn't actually realize that I could work more, but I am. And it's a good thing that I really love what I do, because I feel like you do work a lot when you're building. And anytime in publishing, I mean, that’s the conversation that [crosstalks]

Jenn: [00:10:30] Yeah, you keep working a lot, unfortunately.

Paige: [00:10:32] Yeah, always.

Jenn: [00:10:32] Writers obviously do get a lot of rejections, often from agents, as we just mentioned. And I know a lot of that can be really painful. But what they might not realize is we get a lot of rejections as well. Do you have any advice for writers in terms of dealing with rejection?

Paige: [00:10:52] I mean, I sympathize. Rejection is hard. It's not fun to hear the word no. I think it's something that people experience in every facet of their life. But when it comes to a book of your heart, or something that you've poured hours and hours into, it can be exceptionally difficult. But I think rejection is honestly an opportunity for redirection or to pivot and create something new. So my best advice is to give yourself time, take some space, process the rejection. And when you're ready, to just get back up and start again. I know it’s lot easier to just say that than to actually do it. But I really do think that there's so much opportunity to grow through rejection, and I truly believe that no, just means not yet.

Jenn: [00:11:46] Yeah. I mean, also, the reality is, if you're rejecting it, then you weren't the right agent for it.

Paige: [00:11:53] Exactly.

Jenn: [00:11:53] So maybe that person is right around the corner. Or maybe the next project will be the thing. I think it can sting a lot. But also, if I get a rejection on one of my clients’ books, I have to think, well, they wouldn't have published it well, and I don't want somebody to publish a book that they're not going to love and support.

Paige: [00:12:13] Yeah, 100%. And I've signed clients who came to me with one project that I passed on, and they queried me with something else. And it was, that was it. That was the book that was ready to go and we signed together. I've had clients who they got an R&R and they came back and revised and it was great. And that's when we move forward. So it is hard. But sometimes those passes are just like the universe doing you a favor because it wouldn't be the right fit at the right time.

Jenn: [00:12:42] Yeah, I totally agree. So I know that everyone is really dying for me to ask this question. They've been putting up with us chit-chatting so far. But you mentioned that you rep a little bit of everything, but what specific categories or genres do you rep?

Paige: [00:13:01] Yeah, so I represent picture book through adult like we said earlier, and specifically in picture books, I do rep fiction and nonfiction, though I'm not really actively seeking picture book biographies. In the YA and middle grade space, I wrote mostly fiction, so contemporary fantasy, thrillers, horror, historical, especially if it's something that's shining a light on a little known aspect of history. I like sci-fi, but I do tend to gravitate more towards sci-fi that's grounded in our world or is technology-focused versus space operas. I really enjoy reading those, but I find that I don't always have the best editorial eye or passion for them to read them 6000 times like you need to when you're an agent. But yeah, that's pretty much it.

Jenn: [00:13:52] Are there any specific wishlist items are itching to find in your inbox?

Paige: [00:13:57] Yeah, I said this before, but I would love to find the next *Harriet the Spy*. This book, it was never really overtly marketed as queer, but I absolutely think it was. It really stayed with me as a kid. It was one of my favorite books growing up. I love Harriet's independence and cunning mind, the way they observed the world and the unique voice and perspective. And in general, I also really love mysteries and puzzles, and I watched and played *Clue* a lot as a kid. And so something I'd like to see in my inbox would be something like *The Parker Inheritance* or *The Greenglass House.* I really love, especially in middle grade, that kind of mystery or puzzle. And I'm also really looking for funny stuff. I think a lot of people are right now, the world is a little depressing at times. And so anytime there can be something with just banter and wit that perfectly balances that snark and heart, I really appreciate that. Something like maybe *Not My Problem* in YA or *Stand Up, Yumi Chung!* in middle grade. I really love when characters are finding their individuality and owning their truth and in YA, I love to see that in tandem with navigating hormones and first loves, too.

Jenn: [00:15:18] You rep author/illustrators, as you mentioned. What kind of illustrations are you drawn to? In other words, what catches your eye and an illustrator’s portfolio?

Paige: [00:15:28] Yeah, I love this question, because I am such a visual person. And I think sometimes it's a little tough to pinpoint exactly the piece that's going to make me pause and go, yes. But I think it boils down to something that feels really distinctive and fits a unique personal POV or style from Illustrator. I rep people who work only traditionally in you know, watercolor or paint. And then I also rep people who work only digitally. And I think that the medium to me is not something that necessarily matters so much as it is that real personal POV and voice coming through the art. I think artists can do tons of stuff and sometimes have enormous range but when it comes to illustrators, sometimes I think what can help is to really figure out their perspective in this particular space. That way they can really have a calling card. Someone can see their art and go, oh, that's XYZ person.

Jenn: [00:16:35] Right. Is there anything you see too much of in submissions?

Paige: [00:16:39] Yes. I love picture books, but I have been getting an enormous amount of picture book submissions, especially text only. And I really do love reading picture books, I think it is such a fantastic form. But I am being very, very selective in this area right now. And so I would say if you're if querying picture books, you know, just be really thoughtful about what specifically I'm looking for in that area, because I am being very picky.

Jenn: [00:17:09] Yeah, I would go further and say, I think that all of us at the agency are really inundated with picture book texts.

Paige: [00:17:18] Yeah, I feel like during the pandemic, people were like, I'm gonna write a picture book. I don’t know. It just seems like there's a lot.

Jenn: [00:17:26] I mean, I sell a lot of picture books, and I rep picture books, and I love picture books. But I would just say my piece of advice for people who are writing picture books, is consider also trying something else, a chapter book, a middle grade, something, in addition to picture books, because I feel like you're more likely to get traction with an agent if you have more than one kind of book.

Paige: [00:17:50] Absolutely. I agree. That's great advice.

Jenn: [00:17:53] I mean, I know that people really recoil when I say that, but I just… prolific picture book authors are very hard to keep up with.

Paige: [00:18:04] It’s true and a lot of us already have prolific picture book authors on our lists. So of course, we're going to be giving our clients the primary time and space. And so that means that I just have to be really thoughtful about the additional people that I take on.

Jenn: [00:18:21] Right, absolutely. Okay, so how can people query you?

Paige: [00:18:26] The agency uses Query Manager, and I am a big fan of Query Manager. You can find the link to my query form on the ABLA website. And then also on my personal website, there's also some more details about specific, weird wishlist items that I'm looking for on my personal website. So that's always a good place to go if you aren't sure if I like something or not.

Jenn: [00:18:53] Yeah, I will link to both of those in the show notes. And are there any tips that you'd like to give folks who might be getting ready to query?

Paige: [00:19:03] Yeah, I would say, foremost, I think this is in general, just for being a good writer. But I think you need to read a lot and read a lot in the space that you're writing in. Because it's really important to know, what is selling right now? What's in the market? What type of projects you're gravitating towards, and why? And then once you sort of have that foundation, I think it can be a lot easier to craft a query, because you've seen the backs of the book jackets, you've seen how things have been pitched. You hopefully have a bunch of comps to now pick from because you've read them. And so I feel like the biggest thing I can say is just really read a lot and read in your category. That is so incredibly useful. I mean, I think I probably could have avoided an MFA/MA program if I had just read 200 books or something. I feel like you had a tweet about that at one point. I totally agree with that.

Jenn: [00:20:01] Yeah, I will find that Twitter thread and link to it, too, because it's true. I mean, I honestly think that if you read 100 books in your category that were published in the past four or five years, you would equivalently have an MFA?

Paige: [00:20:18] Yeah.

Jenn: [00:20:18] And if you actually went a step further and made a spreadsheet of who published them, and tore them apart and stuff like that, then you would have a publishing degree.

Paige: [00:20:30] Yeah, and it'll help you know, maybe, what agents are a good fit for what you're hoping to write, too, because you're going to see in the acknowledgments who the agent was, typically, and you'll know of what houses or imprints or editors your agent may send your book to. So anytime you can learn more about the market for what you're writing, I think that just, there's so many benefits from that.

Jenn: [00:20:56] Yeah, I also will say, like, just, in addition to that, when you're pitching your book, while I get the impulse to say there's nothing like this in the world, that's problematic, actually. Because if I can't find anything at all like it in the bookstore, there's probably a reason. Or bookstores won't know where to put it and publishers won't know how to publish it well. And I bet you're wrong. I’ll bet there is an audience for this. And so part of why we ask for comp titles, and why it's good to know the market and stuff like that, is so that you can know, like, who are my colleagues, where does this fit in? If people say to me, oh, there's no books about boys or something like that. It's like, well, you just don't read, then, if you think that. Because it's just not true. There are and I rep some of them, and we sell them. So you need to do a little bit more reading, if it ever crosses your mind to think I'm doing this because nobody else is. You're probably wrong. And you should probably find out who those people are. And read those books.

Paige: [00:22:10] Yeah.

Jenn: [00:22:10] Yeah, anyway.

Paige: [00:22:11] Yeah. And I think it doesn't, we're not asking you to find a book that has the exact same plot like that is not good. You don't want someone to have already written the exact book, but that typically doesn't happen. And so when we're looking for comps, it's like you said, it's who are the fans of this book? And who are the readers for this book? I think sometimes people think it has to be exact. And that's not what we're asking for.

Jenn: [00:22:35] Yeah, no, I would say it's more about finding who the audience is, then the exact plot. Or what their tone is, what niche is this filling, or whatever. But it doesn't have to be the exact same book at all. Anyway.

[00:22:57] Okay, now that that is out of the way, I have some listener questions. Do you want to help me tackle them?

Paige: [00:23:02] Yes.

Jenn: [00:23:03] So Chris asks, how would you both distinguish between literary and commercial children's books? Like if Newbery books are the epitome of literary books what are examples of high quality commercial books? And also, what are your personal preferences? And why?

Paige: [00:23:22] Yeah, I mean, I also feel like this is a perfect question for you as a bookseller. But I typically think of commercial books as being primarily focused on sales and literary books maybe being focused on awards. Not to say that… Everyone cares about sales across the board, but the primary concern for commercial books are going to be sales. Some strong commercial properties, I think, like the *Keeper of the Lost City* series is a great example. The *Tristan Strong* series, *Little Blue Truck,* *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. There are some really big, huge kind of names in that commercial space. And being commercial doesn't mean a book is one dimensional. They are just positioned differently in the marketplace. For example, they may be marketed towards reluctant readers. So it's not so much about it being bad or simple. It's just different.

[00:24:24] And I think for my personal preference, I would say, I like a little bit of both. I mean, I really do love, a good fast paced commercial read. But I also really value something that has this commercial conception with literary voice, which I think a lot of ABLA books and clients do. Because why not have both?

Jenn: [00:24:45] Yeah, I would say I don't like to distinguish between them at all. I would like a book that wins a lot of awards and sells a lot of copies, personally.

Paige: [00:24:54] Yeah, because that exists.

Jenn: [00:24:57] That's the dream. So that's my personal preference is books that straddle that line. For example, *Stunt* *Boy*, which, I rep the illustrator. It's an author/illustrator project with Jason Reynolds. And it's magnificent. Obviously, it's a terrific book for anyone, but also, it has sold a billion copies. But also, it's really rich and thoughtful, and well conceived and literary in a way too. So I think that it has both aspects.

[00:25:32] Or, like, I don't know, *The Penderwicks*, or something like that, where it's lovely writing and literary and has won awards and things. But also, it's really popular. Kids like it, and it's easy to sell. So that best of both worlds, is what I think most editors are looking for and it's certainly what I'm looking for, for sure.

Paige: [00:25:56] Definitely.

Jenn: [00:25:57] And that's not to say there's anything wrong with a highly commercial book, obviously. If I repped *Rainbow Fairies* or whatever, I'd be probably very excited because they sell a billion copies. And that's fine. Is it going to win an award? No, probably not. But that's okay.

[00:26:21] Here's another one from Chris. I would enjoy hearing your take on the division between middle grade and YA. My kids are 13, where do we find the books with protagonists 13 to 15 years old. Why isn't there a category for adolescents? That is to say, sophisticated enough for young teens, but not full of sex, drugs, or rock'n'roll? What do you suggest for writers who want to write for this age? And can you sell a book with a 14-15 year old protagonist to editors?

Paige: [00:26:48] Yes, there's definitely books like this. You can sell these books. 13 to 15 is going to be YA, although sometimes 13 can cross over to middle grade, depending on the story and the character. I think, generally, my advice in this space is to worry less about the number of the age and think about the really unique issues and experiences that distinguish this age group and focusing on that, because if you're trying to just fit in to this, maybe young YA space, just to fit into it, it may be doing a disservice to your book. I think let the experiences and characters kind of take you forward in that way. For selling it, it would work the same as other books, I would look for editors that are looking for this type of project and target houses and imprints that have a good reputation for publishing these types of books.

Jenn: [00:27:49] Yeah, I mean, I would actually say that it depends on what the topic is, and what the tone is, and stuff like that. A lot of these books are actually found in upper middle grade. So you know, like Rebecca Stead’s books, I think, fit perfectly into this category. Coe Booth’s books fit perfectly into this category and they’re middle grade, a lot of the time. So there are definitely books like that. They just, they kind of straddle the line.

[00:28:22] So if it's about a kid and is still doing like, they're 14, but they still have kid interests, you know what I mean? Like, they're still finding their place in their family or their friends group, that kind of thing. Maybe they're still in middle school, but they're in like eighth grade or going into ninth grade. That's still middle grade. If they are 14, 15, and they're in high school, and they're thinking about high school problems, like relationships or breaking away from their family, that kind of thing, then it's probably YA. So it's like, it could kind of tip into either category.

Paige: [00:29:05] Definitely.

Jenn: [00:29:07] But I feel that there are definitely books like that, they're just not in a separate section in the US. In the UK, they do have a separate section, actually, sometimes, that's called Teen. So you have Teen. is like 14, 15, 16. And then the ones with a lot of scandalous content are young adult. And that reaches the higher, upper YA. But we don't have that in the US. And the reason, I don't know the reason. But sometimes I wish we did, but since we don't we have to pick. It has to be other middle grade or YA, because people have to be able to find it. And if it was just floating alone and not in a category, then it wouldn't be able to be found. So you know, yeah, I kind of wish that there was a label for that, but there isn't. But they definitely exist.

Paige: [00:30:05] There’s definitely still a need for these books. They do exist. You can write them. They can sell. Don’t be afraid of them. It's just about making sure that your tone and the voice of the book and that the conceit, like you were saying, really fits with whatever category you're trying to place it into.

Jenn: [00:30:24] Yeah, I would say that Kate Messner is *Chirp* is a good example of one of these books that could go either way, kind of. But it is middle grade, upper middle grade. Anyway.

[00:30:40] Kylie asks, I'd love to learn what you see, as cliche opening pages for middle grade, specifically, what's being overdone?

Paige: [00:30:47] Yes, I see a lot of dreams being the opening. And I think it doesn't always serve the story to start with a dream because you're grounding the reader in something that isn't necessarily real or reflective of the world that the protagonist is actually in. I know that sometimes people do this because they want to try and get to the core of some emotional conflict. But I actually think that you can be introduced directly to their complex and internal wounds in the real world, rather than seeing them filtered through a dream and it's a lot more exciting.

[00:31:25] Another thing that I see a lot of is that some people take the advice of “start with action,” too literally and they start the opening page in the middle of a really intense fight scene or something. And it can be hard to sometimes feel grounded in that moment. And it can be a little disorienting, especially in fantasy, because there's world building details and character names, and in the midst of everything that's happening. And so for me, I would say, tension can exist without action. And my advice would actually be to start with not necessarily action, but with tension.

[00:32:04] Of course, you know, I say both of these things, and there are always exceptions to the rules. But I think generally, you know, if there's a way to show that tension and build the story in a way that's not through these things, that might be preferable.

Jenn: [00:32:18] Yeah, I mean, I would just, I mean, I'm sure I've said this before on this podcast, but it's like, when you start in media res, or whatever, in the middle of a action scene, we don't know who the people are that we're supposed to be rooting for yet. And we don't care. If somebody is in the middle of getting their jaw slammed with a fist or something. I don't know who they are. And I don't know who I'm supposed to be rooting for. Maybe they're a bad guy, I don't know. So it would be preferable to me to start with the actual people having a conversation or something. And then that leading up to the fight. Like have a paragraph or two or a couple pages before the fight so I know what's going on. So when the fight happens, I have a side that I'm picking, you know?

Paige: [00:33:08] Yeah and you better understand the stakes of what losing or winning the fight actually means.

Jenn: [00:33:14] Absolutely. So Nathan asks, ABLA’s “A no from one is a no from all” policy gives hives to many of my author friends. Dramatic. They fear they'll waste their book’s, one shot at ABLA by querying the wrong agent, can you shed any light on the reason this policy exists? And further, if I query Paige and get rejected, how likely is it that my query was shared with at least one other agent before I was rejected?

[00:33:39] So before we answer this, I should say, we do have this policy at our agency, which is that if you query, you choose one of us. And if we turn it down a no, from one of us, it's a no from all of us. We would prefer you not continue wearing the same book over and over again to all of us. And why is that Paige?

Paige: [00:34:04] Well, we get an enormous amount of queries, and we share. It's not just lip service. For example, Jenn I have actually shared projects with each other and have signed those clients. So there's a chance that you send everyone a query, but they've already seen the query. So I know it's hard to hear this, but it really isn't lip service, we really do share. And I for one really do appreciate when a client is taking the time to really look through all of our individual interests. There may be overlap, but we do have very specific individual preferences and kind of picks the one that they would want to work with the most. I think that's really a nice thing. But yes, we do share. We get this question a lot and we definitely do share.

Jenn: [00:34:56] Yeah, I would say probably have more clients come to me, because one of you has shared with me than actually that I've gotten from my inbox, or as many for sure. We know each other's interests really well, we talk every day constantly, all day, literally, on Slack. So we are sharing if I think, okay, Jennifer March Soloway, has been looking for something like this, I will share it just with her. If I think okay, this is promising and I can tell that it's really good, but I don't have time, or it's not quite for me, I'm going to share it with everybody or share it with those people that are definitely doing that kind of book. We share things every day. So I would say that if your manuscript is strong, and we really think that it has a good shot, even if it's not for us, we've shared it.

[00:36:01] And it's annoying when we all get it over and over again. Because we can tell in Query Manager, it says how many times you've queried what you queried with who you queried what the response was, when and everything else. It's in red letters at the top of your query, so if you're trying to game the system and do a workaround or something and just ping us all, then we can tell that you did that. And it's annoying… why didn't you just follow the our ask? We share. Anyway.

Another from Nathan, who asks, is Paige interested in seeing rhyming picture books manuscripts in her query inbox? And does she see any changes good or bad in the sales prospects for rhyming manuscripts?

Paige: [00:36:46] We did sort of talk about picture books already. But I think in general, they're tough for me right now across the board but especially when it comes to rhyming. Based on what I've seen in my query box, most of the rhyming picture books just aren't there yet. It feels like sometimes the story is just a vehicle for the rhyme instead of the rhyme supporting the story. And so, often, I advise people who are writing in rhyme to just try and write it without the rhyme and see if you're tracking kind of a narrative arc or what the beats are, because it can really help you understand what the story is before committing to rhyme. It's a very restrictive format. And so sometimes the story can take like weird turns just because you're trying to make a word fit in. And so you can go back to rhyme, but try it as a non rhyme just to get the beats down.

[00:37:41] But in general, I'm not against it. There are people that do rhyme super well in the market. There are really successful rhyming books that sell lots of copies. Kids love rhyming, it's really fun. But for me, and I think, it just has to be really well done. So unless it's absolutely incredible, I am probably not the right person for it.

Jenn: [00:38:05] Yeah, I would say that that's probably true of all of us like, and here's the thing. I don't want to denigrate rhyme, because as you say, there are amazing picture books that are rhyming and that kids adore. And they do sell a billion copies when they're great. So the thing is that I feel like a lot of times, people, when they decide, okay, I want to write a picture book, I want to write a children's book, the first thing that they try is rhyme, because that's what they remember liking as a kid, or that's they think it's going to be fun and easy and whatever. Kids love it, whatever. But the problem with that is that they are not good at writing picture books yet. And so what comes out is doggerel rhyme, which is like, as you say, rhyme that is just rhyming for the sake of rhyming, rhyme where the words are twisted around, or like sentences are bizarre structure just so it can rhyme. Or where weird things happen in the story just because the rhyme works and, and that's problematic. It just won't sell. I can't sell that.

[00:39:15] What I can sell, probably, is absolutely perfect rhyme. But it's really hard to write something in absolutely perfect rhyme because it's not only rhyming the ends of the lines, like, you know, a limerick or something. It's having internal rhyme and rhythm, too. It's complicated. It's poetry, it's poetry, guys. Poetry is really hard. Nobody's like, oh, I wrote a poem once. I'm a poet. Or I wrote a rhyming greeting card or something. I'm a poet. Poetry is something that people take their lifetime to learn how to do well, and take hours or months or years crafting a poem. So it's the same thing in rhyming picture books. I think a lot of people think they can do it and that it's easy, and it's a lot harder than it looks.

Paige: [00:40:09] I think. definitely true. And also just true picture books in general, they're a lot more difficult than people think they are.

Jenn: [00:40:17] Oh, yeah. I mean, I think because it's short, people are like, Oh, that's a good place to start. But oh, my gosh, it's hard to write a picture book man, like a really successful picture book. It's doesn't come out instantly, usually. Let's put it that way.

Paige: [00:40:32] Definitely.

Jenn: [00:40:32] So Brendan asks, we've been seeing a lot of resignations at publishers lately, that’s been on Twitter and stuff like that. What is it going to take for publishers to really support their staff, editors, marketing, publicity, etc? Is there a real breaking point with all the resignations we're seeing?

Paige: [00:40:49] Well, first of all, I'm not an editor. So I can't speak directly to their situations, but from what I've heard from editor friends, and just from industry talk is that there needs to be better pay, clear promotional pathways, better work balance, and that publishers need to actually support their BIPOC staff and DEI committees, and to really have more representation at all levels of publishing.

[00:41:20] People work in publishing because they love books. It’s not necessarily to make it rich. So I think it's really helpful that people are starting to see the realities of working as an editor and an agent, just what the enormous workload looks like. I think it just hopefully makes people more kind and understanding. But writers don't have to worry, there will always be books. We always will need people to help usher them into the world. It's just, we need to figure out a way to do this in a sustainable way so new talent isn't getting burned out. And so publishers are actually making good positive change.

Jenn: [00:41:58] Yeah, I mean, I would say too, yes, authors do not need to worry about this. But also, burnout is real. It's real, guys. I mean, I think everybody I know is stressed and struggling a little bit. Because of just, you know, years of pandemic. Things are tough right now in publishing. A lot of inequities in publishing are standing out even more, because people are stressed out.

[00:42:29] So if somebody resigns, then the people that are left get a bunch more extra work that that other person did. And if several people resign, then the people that are left are screwed. So I don't know what publishers have to do to fix that besides hire more people and support them. Pay more. If you're an editor and you realize that you'd make more money, not working than working… Like, if you had to pay for childcare, and you realized that quitting your job would cost less than hiring help for your kid in New York, that's a problem. And being centered in New York is problematic. And oh, gosh, it's big. And it's way above our pay grade.

Paige: [00:43:25] Yep. I mean, I also feel like the world is just a little bit of a hellscape right now. And so all of our problems feel… The cup is already full of stress so any additional problems and things that are happening, it's just overflowing. So I totally agree with you there. I feel like it's exceptionally bad right now. But hopefully it leads to change and evolution because it does seem like we're hitting a point where things really need to shift.

Jenn: [00:43:58] So Paige, that was a lot. You were a champ. Thanks for helping me with those listener questions and for listening to my rambling. And now it's time for book recommendation corner. What books would you like to recommend to listeners to help get a real sense of your tastes, what you'd like to rep. Books you wish you could have repped besides *Harriet the Spy* because we know that one?

Paige: [00:44:17] Yeah, I pretty much love anything by Rita Williams-Garcia. *One Crazy Summe*r is one of my all time favorite books. I also love Malinda Lo. I think everyone knows and loves *Last Night at the Telegraph Club*. But I also loved *A Line in the Dark,* and of course *Ash*. And I remember she came to the Simmons Summer Institute when I was a student and I was just so impressed by her and her incredible talent. So yeah, those are two that kind of come to mind. Two authors that I would love to be their agent if I could.

Jenn: [00:44:54] Yeah, hard same. So are you reading anything great right now?

Paige: [00:44:59] Yes. It’s been a little bit of a struggle. I feel, like a lot of people, some of my pleasure reading has been derailed a bit these days so my to be read list is embarrassingly long, but I did recently read *Squad* and I promise I'm not buttering you up, but it is so good. I just love the angry girl power and I think Maggie Tokuda-Hall is a master storyteller and can do anything. And my current read right now is *Savvy Sheldon Feels Good as Hell* by Taj McCoy. It’s so much fun so far. And I'm really enjoying it. Perfect for my brain to read.

Jenn: [00:45:41] Yes, that is a grown up romance. I read it too. It's adorable. And she is a client now, right? Jem’s?

Paige: [00:45:46] Yeah, she is. She’s working with Jem. It’s very exciting.

Jenn: [00:45:48] Amazing. Cool.

[00:45:52] So finally, I always ask of this guests, what are you currently obsessed with? It does not have to be bookish, but it can be. I will go first and you can think of an answer. So in addition to still being on my *Below Deck*, and Legos kicks, which I'm so sorry, guys, it's really all I do is watch *Below Deck* and do Legos. Anyway. I'm currently obsessed with *The Winning Time*. It's an HBO series about 1970s, ‘80s LA Lakers and their controversial owner. I'm not like a huge sports fan. So it's a little weird that I'm like, all in on this show about sports. And full disclosure, this is absolutely not appropriate for children in any way, shape, or form. There are more swears and bare breasts per cubic inch on the show than you can imagine. But the method of storytelling is really fun. There's like a lot of breaking the fourth wall. It's quite a soap opera. And I wasn't quite born yet when the show starts. I was alive in Los Angeles and I was a Lakers fan during the team's winningest era. And so it's fun to see Easter eggs about LA and it's really fun to see how this one man, this owner’s audacity and sense of showmanship really reinvented what was a struggling sport at that time. Because at that time, when the series starts, basketball was nothing. Like it was being beaten in the TV ratings by golf and bowling. So you can imagine, if people would rather watch bowling than NBA. That's weird. Also, if you like insanely good production design, every inch of the show looks and feels like eerily really authentic to the era. Anyway, yes, *The Winning Season* on HBO even if you aren't a sports fan it’s a lot of fun as long as you don't mind cursing.

[00:47:38] Paige, what are you obsessed with?

Paige: [00:47:42] Oh, gosh. Well, I've been obsessed with *House Hunters International* for a long time, but I did just get Discovery+ and because I haven't traveled overseas during the pandemic. I have been really heavily bingeing these and it's just like real estate porn and I love living vicariously through these people that are most often cranky and have very unrealistic expectations but it's just really fun. So lots of HGTV and Food Network because [crosstalk].

Jenn: [00:48:20] Yeah, why doesn't my tiny 100 square meter flat in Prague have a ginormous American-style kitchen? I'm mad about it.

Paige: [00:48:33] I want to be in city center but I need outdoor space.

Jenn: [00:48:37] Oh my gosh. Yes. I also love that and I think that's probably why I'm still obsessed with *Below Deck* because I miss going places and seeing people and the beautiful coast of Italy and stuff like oh my God. Okay. I don't want to go on a cruise but I do appreciate watching other people on cruises.

Paige: [00:48:57] Yeah, it’s very glamorous.

Jenn: [00:49:00] Yes. And it has the soap operas stuff. Anyway. Paige, thank you for coming and tell the folks at home where they can find you on social media please.

Paige: [00:49:09] Yes @PTerlip is my handle on both Twitter and Instagram.

Jenn: [00:49:15] Nice. I will have all those links as well as all the books we talked about in the episode in the show notes on my website, JenniferLaughran.com. Thank you so much for joining me, Paige. It was great to talk to you.

Paige: [00:49:26] Thank you! It’s so much fun.

Jenn: [00:49:29] Yay. Thanks so much to my guest Paige Terlip for joining me and a special thanks to the Patreon supporters who supplied questions for this episode. All the books we talked about and all the links to Paige online can be found in the show notes on my website. As usual, JenniferLaughran.com/literaticast. Thanks for listening and see you next time.

[Literaticast theme plays.]