

[techno music, spaceship sounds]

Narrator

lift off in three two one

Kat

hello and welcome back to Moving Write Along, the podcast that's by young writers, for young writers. We're your hosts, Kat,

Ruby

ruby,

Ray

and Ray! Before we get to the part you're all waiting for, we've got to announce the winner of the poll from the first episode.

Ruby

y'all get ready for my announcer voice okay. Plotters, pantsers, and plantsers, today we see who takes the crown.

Kat

drum roll please!

Ray

so our producer is sending it to us in three... in two... in one... oh there it is! And the winner. Is! Plantsers!

[laughter]

Ray

I win. You're welcome. Mwahahaha!

Ruby

you know what i think i feel like i knew it deep in my soul because one of my friends just like texted me hashtag team planters and i was like oh no. oh no.

Kat

betrayal! judas. that's judas that's not a friend that's judas.

Ruby

yeah you know what if you're hearing this you know who you are.

Ray

your friend's right though. Planters are superior and the poll told us so...

Ruby

wait who came last?

Ray

so it was obviously planters in first and then plotters in second and pantsers last.

Kat

it's okay i'll just go on being ostracized by the entire writing community it's all right i'm not sad.

Ruby

you're so sad oh so sad.

Ray

Aww.

Kat

okay anyways before i burst into tears we should probably get into the main bit about our episode instead of how i'm a loser now.

Ray

that's right.

Kat

so what are we- what are we looking at today? uh actually what were we doing last time?

Ray

so last episode we touched on what constitutes real writing; we talked about fan fiction, YA fiction, classics, screenplays, everything and it's all writing.

Kat

yeah they are all writing and they also all have something in common that we think we should talk about today, something that's very very important to be aware of when you're writing.

Ruby

and our topic today is misogyny in writing, and whether or not you're a woman, misogyny is apparent in a lot of ways. Small and subtle nuances we grow accustomed to accepting and writing, and then blatant objectifying comments that appear in outdated literature, it's kind of everywhere, it's kind of unavoidable um and it's just something that we think is really important to talk about.

Ray

so if you're wondering what misogyny actually is, because it's a big word, it is defined as the ingrained prejudice against women so yeah you know what you'll- you'll understand it by the end of this episode.

Kat

while in literature it may seem harmless, it impacts everyone, especially young girls reading YA. The issue isn't how men write women, it's how women are written in accordance to what society expects of them and not as realistic human women. This set of standards is impossible to rationally achieve and leads readers to doubt their abilities and worth even perpetuating harmful rhetoric about femininity as a whole.

Ray

and these instances create these expectations for every woman and feminine presenting individual, making a sort of competition between us.

Ruby

I mean let's be real there shouldn't be a competition to be a woman, um and we're all in this together, as the wise words of the high school musical writer Kenny Ortega put it, um and we're all just- (laughter)- and at the end of the day we're all just doing our best to achieve our own goals and make others happy, right?

Ray

exactly.

Kat

and it's really interesting that you mentioned high school musical because high school musical is actually one of the things that we're going to be talking about today, because in high school musical as we clearly see through the character Sharpay, things such as femininity, and especially the color of pink, is demonized. And so we want to talk a little bit about why this is, why it's bad, especially, and what is the history behind it. Now, you might be wondering, why have we decided to do this episode today? i will give you my- yes. I will give you my really complicated explanation that i gave to our

producer for why we should do it today. So you may have noticed that this episode is coming out on October 2nd, now, October 2nd comes before October 3rd. Guess what October 3rd is? October 3rd is national mean girls day. For those who don't know, mean girls is a film that explores a lot about toxic femininity and toxic friendship groups within females and it also has a lot of commentary about how the relationship of females to each other and things like that and or also includes like we said earlier that demonization of pink and femininity, and we're just going to explore a little bit about why these sort of things happen, especially in the early 2000s, when there was sort of this push pack against the idea of this very feminine, feminine girl. And then through that the creation of the not like other girls trope especially, um it's emblematic in the character of Janice Ian from uh mean girls. So, guys, what do you think about the not like other girls trope?

Ruby

it's a really good question i think i think it's one that literally so many women have fallen prey to um i know i've fallen prey to it um just like the idea of like not being like everyone else makes you better. just like one thing that we're gonna talk about a lot is just the color pink. um being not like most girls meant that you you didn't like pink you liked wearing like all black. (laughing) our fellow host Kat has some experience with um not liking hello kitty.

Kat

yeah. I do, i do um... i might have been in a very severe not like other girls case when i was about 11. and i had a very beautiful hello kitty pencil case and i thought to myself you know i don't i i wanted to be so much not like other girls- this is so cringy to admit- i crossed out the kitty part of it and i wrote hello death showing that i was i was not like other girls because i was clearly a bit violent apparently as a child, but that is very very that is a great example i think of how that not like other girls thinks infiltrates all of our lives and a lot of us internalize that from the literature we read. I mean Ray, what are your experiences with the not like other girls sort of thing?

Ray

yeah i went through pretty much everything you know, Ruby said the whole 'i hate pink i'm never gonna-' like i i think my grandma bought me a sweater that was like pink once and i nearly threw up because i hated it i would not talk to any of the girls in my class that wore pink, it was really- no it was really bad it was really really bad. And um i brought a lot of other girls down for wearing pink and being okay with their femininity and it took me even- i'm a very feminine person, and it took me even longer to be comfortable with that because of what i read in these books. And i i always loved the color pink but when i started reading more YA books when i started to kind of get into that genre more and move on from kids books, i started seeing that kind of trope and i didn't obviously i didn't realize it at the time because i was a kid, but after that i kind of started to hate the pink. i ended up like repainting my room i went like you know i pretty much threw out every feminine piece of clothing i had in my closet or refused to wear it and it was it was a really um really bad thing for me and every every other girl i was friends with and i ended up actually being friends with a lot of boys in elementary school, specifically fifth grade, that was kind of like the height of my not like other girls um period of life. I would not be friends with any- you know the girly girls. but like i'm a girly girl, i'm literally a girly girl! and i wouldn't be friends with any of them because i was so like 'oh i'm not like other girls i'm friends with boys' and i was like- that's great but uh stop, stop bringing everybody else down.

Ruby

um and yeah i think the not like other girls narrative is something that i think we've all experienced um and i think that it's just it's so prominent, but i think misogyny can infiltrate our lives in so many ways and we're young, you know, that's our thing we're young writers. um but even though we're young we all still have all of our own experiences, um and even like our own ways that we've been misogynistic. uh specifically in literature and everything so...

Kat

the reason why we first opened up with our own experiences of you know uh our internalized misogyny is to talk about how, 1) we got it from literature we read i mean i remember as a child reading a lot of um, especially- did anyone ever read the dork diaries? i read that book and yeah do you agree that book was so so it was all about the idea that quirky- quirky being a quirky girl was better than being a pretty girl. Which it's like you know you're allowed to like traditionally feminist things you don't have to be quirky to be valuable. and i definitely sort of read these kind of books, the dork diaries and things like that and thought to myself that my own characters had to be very kind of masculine or the idea that strength was only sort of in masculine forms. um you know you see in films and stuff like that spies and things like that uh strong strong female superheroes are always strong in a masculine way in that they're very physically strong, rather than strong in a feminine way because there are feminine ways to be strong you know being kind and caring despite whether people are kind and caring back to you that is a very traditionally feminine way of being strong. so i think it's really important to acknowledge our own experiences with misogyny to make sure that we're not writing that in our own books because if you write that and then you give that to a little kid they will then, in turn, internalize that misogyny and then so on and so forth the cycle can continue. so, do you guys have any experiences in writing sort of, when you were younger, writing things that you thought- you're looking back at and you're going wow that was kind of misogynistic?

Ruby

yeah honestly i never realized it so when i was younger i was very much like 'i'm a feminist. Women power.' um and that's very much how i was raised um i come from a family where i have three sisters, so it's a lot of girls um and my mom and then the only man in the house is my dad um and he's very feminist he's very like pro equality like he's great. but um because that i think

i was determined to be a feminist and i wanted that to be reflected in my writing, um but i think literature impacted me in so many ways and i think what it did in regards to my writing is that it impacted my perspective on myself which therefore translated into my writing, so i think i grew up like reading about these um protagonists who were like they were skinny they were beautiful but they didn't know it, they like they were sassy they had all these witty comebacks, um and you know they they weren't inherently kind, they weren't like bubbly. um the bubbly ones were like seen as annoying and like just like ugh- that was a gross noise im sorry- but i think i think i took so much of that upon myself um if you ever meet me in person and you can probably tell also on the podcast i'm a very bubbly person.

Ray

you can definitely tell on the podcast.

Ruby

oh my gosh. i'm a very- i'm very bubbly i'm very excited um i'm not i'm I wouldn't describe myself as not witty, but i'm not like i'm you know i don't have all these like savage remarks to make or anything i'm that's not really like my thing and that's just not who I am. um but then i started feeling like wow i'm not good enough because i don't have this personality that these YA protagonists have and these protagonists they get everything, they get to be they get the guy they get like um the chance to like rule a kingdom or something like they just get all this stuff um and so i think i internalized that and my perspective on myself ended up reflecting on my writing where i always wrote these protagonists that were just like weren't really feminine they they were kind of like you know they were always sassy always like with like a quip. um i basically just i don't know if you guys know selena from throne of glass i literally was determined to write the next her. um and she's a very unique character but i think that she's so i think she's such a clear reflection of that not like most girls kind of girl. um and so i think i think just in my own writing it's happened so many times.

Ray

yeah um for me i was very very largely influenced, and you can tell from last episode when i mentioned my um fan fiction my percy jackson fan fiction, i was very largely influenced by rick riordan and his works but um i like really like loved those books as a kid, uh you know many- like many other writers we we all kind of, you gotta go through a percy jackson phase at some point you you just most people do, and i definitely did. and i really looked up to a lot of those characters, annabeth was one of my favorite people- well fictional people- in like the entirety of the world she was so cool she she still is cool but the problem with the person jackson books that i've kind of um realized honestly just in the past week and i reread one of them the other day and i was like wow i actually really noticed this, was that all of the characters that were well the female characters that were strong and fighting, they weren't feminine. you know annabeth definitely is not feminine um talia isn't feminine reyna is a big example in the uh the sec- the second series she's not feminine, you know most of the female characters aren't feminine. and one of the only feminine characters i can think of in that series is from the aphrodite cabin and those girls are very feminine but they're not fighters and that's the problem, the problem is that the women who aren't fighters are feminine. you can't- it's kind of portrayed in a way that you can't be feminine and be strong at the same time. um i actually didn't really start writing until maybe earlier this year maybe like midway through 2020, was when i started actually taking it seriously, and by then i kind of blew over the whole phase so it hasn't really reflected on my writing that much. but it's definitely still there because it's a very hard thing to kind of realize that's there and overcome it because it's what's so normalized and we're so accustomed to it.

Kat

um something that i thought was really interesting you said is sort of touched upon is the fact that you didn't really see yourself represented in those-, the

females of the- females? I don't know why I said it like that. the women, or the girls, of um the percy jackson series because i think that is such a big problem is that when we don't, especially as young girls, we don't see ourselves represented the ordinary girls the girls who can't kick flat flip a man across a room or whatever and i think that's also 10 times worse if you're a person of color because as a child it was like if you if you're it was like really bad if you're a girl and then 10 times worse is if you're a girl and a person of color because then it was just like you would only get to be the quippy side character who doesn't get a love interest and i definitely internalize that as well in my own writing in that for a long time i only wrote about like purely white protagonist girls who were also not like other girls because i had internalized so much of that from my own childhood from not seeing like anyone who kind of looked like me, apart from Mulan. which i was in every world bookshop it was just me everyone was like you should be mulan and i'm like no i'm older i'm like why i was like mulan? but yeah so i think it's that's why it's it's really really important to talk about is sort of tropes and um the portrayal of women in in literature especially especially in children's literature because and and also for not just young girls but for young boys as well because i'm sure we've all noticed this trend in that books with male protagonists are seen for everyone, right? harry potter, percy Jackson, they're seen for everyone. that's considered a book for both genders, all genders, right? books with female protagonists are seen as girly books they're seen as not to be taken as seriously it's so hard it was so hard i remember most of my books reading up as a child had male protagonists because i didn't want to be seen as reading the girly books the only book i remember reading that was for all genders was skullduggery pleasant with a female protagonist but even that had a half male half female protagonist- (laughing) well not half female half male but it was like kind of split protagonist. yeah so what do you guys think what do you think of um sort of gender split in uh writing as uh in children's writing?

Ruby

i think i think you're so right um and i'm a big fantasy fan i grew up reading fantasy uh and the fantasy genre beyond YA is very male dominated. um YA fantasy with like girl protagonists has become very popular um but only in YA and like the grand scheme of books and the grand scheme of literature almost all of them are about men uh and so i know that that was hard for me um just like reading it and being like why are they all boys? like i want to read about a girl um which you know was definitely difficult um but i think i think you're so right, Kat. like girl protagonist books are for girls and then boy protagonist books are for everyone like i think that's such a valid point that's happened and i think if there is a YA female protagonist she's so like glamorized like she has to be this certain way like she has to be beautiful she has to be like like she has to be white, she has to be skinny, she has to be pretty, she has to be conventionally attractive um and i think you know representation in YA really has, it's grown but i think it has a long way to go. um an example from my own life i- i'm a like mid-sized kind of person um and almost all like why a protagonist are like super skinny and i took that to heart when i was younger and it really damaged me as a person of like feeling like okay so if my body is worthy, if my body is just as good as anybody else's then why is it that all of my all the protagonists i read are always like these skinny girls? all the skinny girls always get the guys and i think even in today's YA like i can only think of a few examples of books where the protagonist is plus-sized and she's not like and she gets a guy and like she's romanticized um despite even like with her body type i feel like that's such a big issue but i think that's one that i've definitely noticed.

Ray

yeah and speaking what you were just talking about with the whole like uh protagonist being skinny i really want to talk about this because i'm also a very like mid-sized person so reading this literature the thing with you know plus-sized girls and everybody else is that girls who aren't, and I quote, "skinny" or even just have you know a healthy body are always incredibly

insecure and maybe this isn't so much with like fantasy and everything but i know i'm a huge like contemporary kind of writer i read a lot of those books and in those books every girl who's plus-sized or not skinny, is insecure they hate their body they hate everything about them and it's really bad cause it's like no. they are beautiful they're just not conventionally beautiful and we don't show young girls that you know even if you're plus-sized you're still beautiful like you're, you're adorable keep going. but like and the other thing, another thing with this I have- there's a lot to dissect with this whole plus-sized character thing- they're never the main character, like ruby said. ever. they're always a side character and they never you know quote get the guy because they they're not seen as pretty the guys don't like them. another trope is the whole oh uh you know a girl had a glow-up because she went from being plus-sized to being skinny but that's that's the problem with it in literature and it's something i saw a lot growing up and i still i don't think- i cannot name a singular plus plus-sized character in a book that i really like like. I can't- i can't name one off the top of my head.

Ruby

i think when we think of plus size characters i think the immediate name is like nina zenik that comes to mind um and i think well because nina is very romanticized like and she's everybody acknowledges that she's beautiful but she is a plus-sized character um so nina zanik from six of crows i first clarified a book that's wrong oh my gosh

Kat

oh yeah i think that's really you know talking about body image and things like that is also discussing the sort of male gaze versus female gaze in regards to the female body in that especially in male fiction have you have you guys ever read those um men writing women things where-

Ruby and Ray

oh my god yes. it's so bad.

Kat

it's so bad and it's so kind of um it's infiltrated so much of our literature in in the way that men write women where they talk about their bodies as if it's this object, essentially. and especially if for example you have like big boobs or something like that it is so overtly sexualized which then leads to girls with big boobs being overtly sexualized everywhere because literature says that it's okay for a man to describe in like 20 paragraphs how like a woman's body looks and i think you know when we have these kind of uh body discussions in literature we need to be really really careful about the language we use to not- to just sort of present bodies as normal it's just a body we live in, you know? it doesn't have to be sexualized to be worthy it doesn't have to be traditionally beauty beautiful to be worthy it can just be a body without having to be this like beautiful goddess Venus thing which she then uses to seduce men and stuff like that because that's really it's just icky, isn't it? it's just icky it's just that's- that's the word that's the word we're using is it icky, it's not nice.

Ruby

i think um the objectification of women is just such a major issue and in misogyny um and that definitely leaks into literature like you were saying kat like even women can be put in books like just to function as a plot device um and even like and you know characters function as plot devices, yeah that's fine. but a character who's there throughout the whole entire series who's there in every scene who's a woman whose sole function is just to help like the male MC. i've seen that so many times and honestly i never realized but now it like kind of breaks my heart that i'm like this woman is here just to serve a purpose and just to serve a man um and just like to be a love interest or to be a hot body to look at or like that whole i don't i don't think i'm saying this right, femme fatale, i think that's how you say it?

Kat

It's femme fatale.

Ruby

oh my gosh, femme fatale, ok. okay yeah but the whole like femme fatale how literally the whole purpose they serve is to please male viewers um and that and in this case male readers but also just that is in movies as well like the character that's just there so that the men will be interested. um that's that she's not there to develop she's not there to change she's she's very static character. yeah so i think it is so eye-opening honestly just the discussion about misogyny and literature um and i feel like even just talking with you guys today i feel like i've learned so much that i never had really noticed before but these are the sort of things that we should be noticing that we should be picking out that we should be not reflecting in our own writing.

Kat

something i want to talk about before we move on is um when you were mentioning the thing about the idea of just the woman being there throughout the entire film without having any plot purpose to themselves. Have you heard of the sexy lamp? sexy lamp thing?

Ruby

Oh my gosh, yeah.

Kat

so for those who don't know basically um there's a test to see whether you're being a bit misogynistic with your female character is could they be replaced with a sexy lamp? essentially, do they have any agency of themselves as in do they have any control of their own lives or their own plot lines or are they just used as a function for the man to A) go save or B) to go wow you are a sexy lamp, basically. so if you are wondering there there are

a couple of tests that we could that you can do because i know some of you might be thinking i don't know now how to write female characters without being misogynistic so the sexy lamp test is another one do any of you guys know of any of the other tests that we can that you can do to check if there's misogyny in your or like if you're writing well-developed female characters do any of you guys have any tips?

Ruby

isn't the the bechdel?

Kat

you are saying that one right.

Ruby

oh my gosh, yeah, but basically that's like um do two female characters in your story when they're having a conversation did they talk about anything to do with a man um and it's basically you look at that and you're like if they are the only thing they ever talk about is a man like you did not pass the bechdel test. so just think about that like how much of these women's lives is centered around men because i mean look. i think another test is just look at the real women around you like just look at them and try and take in what kind of people they are, like we want to reflect that in our literature. um we want to reflect that in our own writing of real women with real stories um and stories that have real power because i think i know i've a good a good portrayal of a woman in literature honestly just like i think it means the world to me and it's meant the world to me forever and i'm sure most readers feel the same at least.

Kat

i think there's also the the fridging test i think i don't know if i'm saying this right um it's basically when you kill off a female character solely to cause

pain to the male character so you know i think i might be lying to you it's basically do you remember those have you ever watched one of those like either detective film or action films where the guy is at the beginning and he's like watching a projector screen of his wife like laughing and she's looking back at him while they're like they're on the beach and stuff like um that is very specific but it happens a lot, right? so in those films the woman the wife essentially is killed off solely so that the man will have a reason to go commit vengeance or whatever, right? and the problem is is that when you have- there's nothing wrong with killing off a character to cause pain to your main character, i mean you know it's a little bit wrong, it's fine to do it. but the problem is is when your only female character's purpose is only to be murdered off so that the male character can have pain and anguish and sit in the dark with all the lights off and like drink from a whiskey bottle. if that is the only reason that you're having your main character's wife die and you're not saying that she's a full person especially not realizing her as a full person as in making her completely perfect with zero flaws, then you're not really writing real women you're just writing plot devices and that's not really that's not reflective in the real world in that you know females we do not exist for to just simply serve as plot devices to go get murdered so that our male companions can go kill someone for us in revenge.

Ray

uh the only other one that i can think of off the top of my mind is um in it i think what what was it an acceptance speech or something? something like that um, reese i'm gonna say this name right, reese witherspoon okay there we go um she said she has a way of seeing like if this movie is misogynistic or not she'll look and it'll take she has this line and it'll take her like two seconds to figure out if a movie's misogynistic or not because she'll just think if they're like if these two characters like a girl and a guy, a woman- oh i don't know- is they're like in the middle of a crisis you know a big like dramatic situation and if the woman turns to the man and she's like 'what do we do now?' it's like okay that's- yeah come on you you have some thoughts here

girl you can do it i believe in you. um but transitioning onto something else we should talk about uh talking about the whole, kat i know you touched on this a bit, the whole dark and brooding kind of trope in men and the thing is misogyny in writing and literature isn't just about women. men are actually included in this as well, so talking about this whole dark and brooding type sometimes they have a troubled past or you know they're not friendly with anyone but the glorified female protagonist, but sometimes they're not even friendly with her. and in all honesty these guys aren't even close to realistic either. you know it kind of sucks to see these amazing you know women characters that have so much- so much on their own so much going on for them and they they fall madly in love with this guy. this woman has such an amazing you know backstory on her own she's such an amazing character and she has such great potential and she falls in love with this guy instead of having her own story.

Kat

yeah that was really good um i think yeah definitely talking about toxic love tropes and also you know what you were saying about how misogyny affects not just women but also men, because so often in literature and things like that men are have to have be very very masculine to be taken seriously they're not allowed to have more feminine, you know quote-unquote 'feminine characteristics', like for example being very caring and nurturing or liking the color pink and often they have to be these sort of huge hulking men and they're not allowed to be sensitive and stuff like that and some people might be saying well what's that got to do with misogyny that's not misogyny because it's against men. well actually, listen up here let me drop some wisdom nuggets for you. that is to do with misogyny and here's why it's because it's saying that being feminine being like a traditional woman or you know a traditional woman is bad for both women and men men you know women are allowed to be more masculine because masculinity is seen as a good thing whereas femininity is seen as a bad thing so when you have these very masculine masculine characters and there's nothing wrong with

having masculine characters but you need to have a balance where you're not saying that masculine is the only way to go. you should also have characters that say that actually you know they like sewing they like wearing fashionable clothes and things like that. you know whatever it is that is traditionally feminine you should also celebrate that. what's your thoughts about that, ruby?

Ruby

yeah yeah i mean i think at the end of the day we all are in the patriarchy and it affects men and it affects women and so misogyny um but i think kind of flipping it around another way um that it affects men is that like the dark and brooding male like male characters get forgiven so easily, okay? and i'm bringing out all the six of crows references today but kaz brecker. now don't get me wrong i love kaz brecker just as much as the next person, okay? i think he's wonderful. but he's a mass murderer, guys. we need to acknowledge that he is a murderer, okay? you can still like him, but he's a murderer. if i knew kaz brecker in real life i would- i would call the police okay so we just need to acknow- acknowledge that men in why especially get so forgiven of their of the- the actions that they take because 'oh he's like a troubled past like oh my gosh his mom like when he was younger like she told him once that he was like not funny and now it's really scarred him. so it's okay that he killed someone.' you know? just like things like that come up so easily and that's not to say that like certain elements of the past can't um justify actions because i think kaz brecker is another good example of that. his past really does delve into his character and make make it clear why he is that way but i think that this double standard it doesn't i don't think i've ever seen it apply to women um if a woman like messes up then she is an unlikable female character which is another word that oh my gosh it drives me crazy. um women in literature just don't get forgiven i think the way that men do uh and delving into that whole world of unlikable female characters, i could do this all day, but literally i've never heard that term apply to a man it's always the woman um and i think it's largely been applied

to women who take initiative who are ambitious um oh my gosh oh my gosh taylor swift song, 'the man' is a perfect reflection of this. okay? how there's this double standard like if she was as ambitious as her male counterparts she would be called the man she wouldn't not be called like all the horrible insults that she's called. um and i think that totally applies to literature as well.

Kat

and when you talk about unlikable female characters that really reminds me of something i read once where it says that female characters are so much like often called annoying with no reason and if you're saying that a female character is annoying with like no particular reason then maybe look a bit deeper into that and check it out if it's actually misogyny would you tolerate this more from a man and on that sort of perspective is things like mary sue characters and gary sue characters. for those who don't know, mary sue characters essentially a term coin to describe a character that is uh sort of author self-insert and she's basically perfect and she does all the things perfectly you know perfect and everybody's in love with her and stuff like that. and someone pointed out that characters like james bond and a lot of action film stars um stars a lot of gary- gary sue, the male equivalent of mary sue characters. but they do not receive as much flack as mary sue characters do, and that is because of (mimicking trumpet noises) misogyny. and the problem is you can definitely criticize you know female protagonists because sometimes you know they are rich and badly the problem is is when you can't take you can't separate the valid critiques from the actually misogynistic ones because there are valid critiques you definitely should critique them validly but when you're just saying that they're annoying without giving a reason why then you gotta you gotta examine that a little bit more just look into it a little bit more.

Ray

this made me think of something else i wanted to bring up as well, especially ruby mentioning "the man"- we're bringing in all the swifties right now, but um you know a lot of times what happens with women in literature is that, like you said i think both of you, um is that whenever a woman has ambition and she's bold and things like that and she's not like this timid shy you know things like that whenever she has like a real ambition and she's willing to go get it she's called this annoying character like you both said and i think a really good example of that is Korra from legend of korra because everybody hates Korra for like- she's literally she's a bold strong character she's literally the avatar but everybody hates her. they- they like the whole fandom attacks Korra because they think you know she's full of herself and she thinks she's the best and conceited, and in the beginning i'll admit she is a little bit conceited and you know she thinks she's greater than everything that comes her way, but that's not the point the point is she's ambitious and she's ready to go out there and do her job as the avatar and what happens is people see that she's not this conventional traditional woman you know she's not shy and timid and people think oh well that's not good it's like what no she's just strong and you know i think that's what happens with that and another okay maybe this isn't the best example because she is a bully. bullying is bad. don't bully, kids, okay?

Kat

we interrupt this for a quick psa- don't bully.

Ruby

no bullying.

Kat

wise words.

Ray

um but clarisse, also from percy Jackson, i love clarisse. again not because she's a bully! she is a bully, okay? don't- don't bully!

Ruby

she develops, guys. she develops.

Ray

she does! and that's my point, the point is she's so much more than just the bully you know in the first book she kind of sucks, because she is a bully. by the fifth book, i won't spoil anything because i just realized i was about to, i won't spoil anything, but um she has this really intimate scene where she she just has so much emotion, and you can see it very clearly it's- and she's strong she's brave.

Ruby

and then bringing up this example again, oh my gosh, Selena? Selena? Selena sardarthian? i don't know how to say her name.

Kat

you don't know how to say anything today.

Ruby

i'm sorry i'm trying! um but bringing up her again um she is ambitious and she's conceited and she's all these things that we see in characters like korra who are very hated, um but i think the difference with selena is she's very sexualized, and i think that that's why she's more beloved because she's like quote unquote sexy and flirtatious and just all these different things and i think that that redeems her and i think that's why she doesn't get labeled as this unlikable character and looking at all of this and all this conversation it can feel a little hopeless um i know that even for me i am a woman and i'm always like 'am i writing my women bad?' um but there's so

much room to hope for better stories, our stories and other people's stories um we grew up with these aforementioned examples but there's a new generation behind the pages now and we can make the changes we wish to see in the world and we wish to read in our books.

Ray

and here's just a few ideas, because there's a whole bunch of different ways you can do this, but here's a few ideas on where and how to start.

Kat

one of the things that you can do is avoid the harmful stereotypes like the ones that we've been discussing all episode long. so things like in teen films and YA fiction a lot of the time where the bullies were very feminine and they were demonized for being feminine maybe try not having a very feminine bully whose only characteristic is that she likes pink and is mean, and also maybe try avoiding using females only as plot devices. allow them to have their own stories, allow them to have agency. also maybe don't have really unrealistic female love interests, you always have to be pristine and pretty and have to conform to a very sort of narrow western standard of beauty. you can tell a meaningful story without using these stereotypes and tropes, and actually your story will probably be better and more interesting and more developed because of that because you're gonna have fully developed characters and really interesting female characters so i definitely think that you should just try- try and see if you can avoid these ones right from the heart and stay genuine and if you were to be in a story you'd want it to be a real person you don't want to you wouldn't want a caricature of yours that serves to put a negative narrative, especially about your gender.

Ruby

and i think it's important to know that not every female-led story has to be one about finding love. women are so much more than their relationships women are so much more than who they love, and just really try and think

outside the box women throughout history have been behind inventions and taken part in progress just as much as men um and i think looking at female history it's obvious how complex and how vital women are to everything, and that includes literature. um and do try and do females justice do their history justice and continue on the legacy even in fiction.

Ray

and last but not least we want to end this lovely episode with a writing prompt. so this one's more of a self-check on layers of characterization in your characters, and especially your female characters, but it goes back to our initial talking point here: reflect on your work in progress.

Ruby

yes. and think about what we've talked about with misogyny and consider all these questions: what are your characters like? are you noticing any themes carried over from mainstream YA that bring more harm than good to your narrative? add more depth to your female characters what- what makes your character insecure? what struggles do they face? and especially if they're a woman consider if you're writing them as well as they could be written. don't be afraid to make them realistic, not always pretty and not always perfect, because let's be real nobody is.

Kat

beautiful words from ruby. so um whether you specialize in novels, screenplays, even poetry, your words matter, your story does, your characters do, you do. think about the influences literature and television have had on you while you're growing up and try not to make the same mistakes that maybe you have internalized from them. knowing more about your influences can enable you to write something even better for the next generation. that's all from us and we'll see you next time writing cadets!

[techno music builds, voices fade]

Ruby

y'all i came after the throne of glass series i've only read the first book.

Ray

aww it's ok-

Ruby

I'm scared!

Ray

I'll protect you!

Ruby

Oh god-

Credits

thank you for listening to the Moving Write Along podcast, made possible by The Young Writers Initiative. Tune in next week where we discuss the creepy, the scary, and the horrifying in our horror special. You can follow us on instagram @movingwritealongpodcast or find us on tywi.org. And while you're on the website, why not check out the chapters program where you can bring the url to the irl. And there's always fun events going on over on our discord, The Writer's Town. Thank you to everyone who submitted to the chapbook contest and keep an eye out for an email in early November with the results. Thank you to our amazing team without whom this wouldn't be possible, queen bee Simone, you can sit with us Jazmin, exactly like other girls Delaney, and not your Mary sue, Cosette. All sound effects are taken from the free sound project and all music was from filmmusic.io by kevin macleod today you heard take a chance and beauty flow.