

Introducing Daisy Whitney

[Daisy Whitney](#) is a reporter, new media whiz, host and creator of the [New Media Minute](#) (which is not only carried on her site, but [TVWeek](#) and

YAY, DAISY!!!

One thing that constantly amazes me about Daisy is that she has a million things to do, a million deadlines to meet, is constantly on the move from one location to the next (when she's not filming)--but she is always *available*. When Cracked Up to Be came out, she took time out of her schedule to spread the word and share it on the New Media Minute, which is something that still humbles and means a lot to me to this day.

My To-Do list got slightly overwhelming this week and when I began to tackle it, I totally wanted to curl up in fetal position. It was TOO MUCH. If I had to face down Daisy's I would be too busy crying to compose this blog entry and share this interview with her with you. Yes, that's right! I asked Daisy for an interview and she consented! I'm REALLY excited about this one, because no lie guys, if you love edgy, strongly written YA, you NEED to put her on your radar. And this entry is totally about putting Daisy Whitney on your radar.

So please consider this...



AN INTRODUCTION TO DAISY WHITNEY

Congratulations on the sale of your YA novel, The Mockingbirds, Daisy! I can't WAIT to read it. Can you tell us what it's about and the projected release date?

Oh Courtney, it's OK to admit you've read it! (Courtney is one of my writing friends and the male love interest in the story has her last name in homage to her fabulousness and her inspiration to me!)

Courtney's note: YES, I HAVE READ IT. I wasn't sure if I had to keep it under wraps. But yes, you guys, it is amazing. You will love it when it comes out. I promise. It's an edgy, powerful read and I can't wait to read it in its final incarnation! Also I am totally attracted to the love interest with my last name. I feel like that is wrong because that makes us practically related, but oh well. He is HOT. /tangent

THE MOCKINGBIRDS is about an underground, vigilante group of boarding school students who are committed to righting the wrongs of their peers. They are a secret society at a prestigious prep school and they operate as the judge, the jury and the muscle the school can't be. They take their inspiration from Harper Lee's [TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD](#), which is the canonical story of justice and right and wrong in American literature. The central case in my novel centers on a date rape at the school. My publisher Little Brown is aiming for a Fall 2010 release date, though that may change.

Fingers-crossed for a Fall 2010 release! But I will eagerly (and impatiently) await whatever the date ultimately turns out to be. What inspired you to write *The Mockingbirds*?

THE MOCKINGBIRDS took shape over the course of several months from 2008 to 2009 so there were various inspirations along the way, depending largely on where I was in the revision process for the novel. Not to be totally sycophantic, but reading your novel *CRACKED UP TO BE* last September was the first inspiration. (I strong armed Courtney into sending me an ARC ahead of everyone else!). Your book opened my eyes to all that the young adult genre could be. I had previously been writing women's fiction. Those early novels are unpublished so I was ready for a change and switching genres to YA turned out to be the best decision. I wanted to write about how we handle things that are difficult, like date rape, bullying, hate speech and what it takes to make a right or a wrong decision, where the shades of gray are and what it means to take a stand.

The funny thing is, the first draft did not include the Mockingbirds at all! The novel was called THE POSTER CHILD and was about a girl who was date raped and the repercussions. It wasn't until I wrote the words "THE END" that I knew something just wasn't working with the story and to make it work I needed to create an underground group. That's when the idea for the Mockingbirds emerged and the inspiration for that came from TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD.

I remember the early days of brainstorming and I love knowing how the idea evolved. When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

This is where I create my "author mythology" right? About how my mom used to find me whiling away the hours writing in my secret notebook, typing out my first novel at age five, reading it to the family at the dining room table, while acting it out with family pets? Suffice to say, that didn't happen. When I was growing up I wanted to be a Broadway star. The only problem is I can't sing, dance or act. Then I wanted to be a ski jumper. But I am a complete klutz and I hate cold. Then I went to college to study environmental science and wound up with an art history degree. Finally, when I was 22 I decided to be a journalist. For the next 12 years I had no desire whatsoever to write a novel--though I dabbled with screenplays in the late 90s and wrote two or three very bad ones. In fact, I took great pride in being the only journalist who didn't want to write the Great American Novel. Then, when I'd finally read enough chick lit, I said in 2006, "I can do this!" And just sat down one day to write a novel. Six months later, I had 115,000 words and the first draft of my first novel. When I wrote the final words for that draft I knew for certain I wanted to be an author.

I love that. It's like writing found you. What are you most looking forward to about being a YA author?

I think the BEST books being written today are for teens and what I love most is you can write virtually anything – there are no formulas, rules or structures you should follow. You can write romance, fantasy, suspense, humor, quests, high-concept, fantastical, paranormal, edgy, dark, light, weird, and so on. And you can mix and match many of those in one story. Teen readers crave and demand inventiveness and new ways of storytelling, so it's a treat and a pleasure to write for them.

Well said. In your blog entry announcing your sale, you wrote, "There were many ups and downs on this path to soon-to-be-published-author-dom." What advice would you give to any aspiring authors who are dealing with their own ups and downs and twist and turns?

1. The universe isn't punishing you when you get rejected. There is no curse against you. It's just the way it goes--you will get rejected! It is an immutable law. You will also always disagree with why you were rejected.
2. Remember what Randy Pausch said in *The Last Lecture*: "Brick walls are there for a reason. They let us prove how badly we want something."
3. It's not easy, it's not supposed to be easy!
4. The little voice in your head is always right. Trust that little voice. I mean, that voice was crazy enough to tell you to try something as nutty as writing a novel! So when that voice says you need to make a big change or even a little change in your novel, listen to that voice.
5. Revise relentlessly and ruthlessly.
6. Don't be a weenie when people give you criticism. It's usually in your best interest.
7. Don't rely on your boyfriend or your mom for the only feedback. Find other writers who also aspire to be published and become critique partners.
8. Find the agent who is right for you and then trust your agent--don't micromanage her!
9. Offer sacrifices to the Gods of Publishing every day.

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10. Email me and I will tell you my story to cheer you up, which involves several unpubbed manuscripts and gobs of rejections!

That is fried gold, right there. Name some of your favourite YA releases!

Besides CRACKED UP TO BE (*Courtney's note: aw*), I loved [IF I STAY](#) by Gayle Forman. The writing and characters are beautiful. [Elizabeth Scott](#) writes the best boys and kissing scenes and I loved [PERFECT YOU!](#) Sarah Ockler is a lyrical writer and her novel [TWENTY BOY SUMMER](#) is romantic, poignant and perfect. Lisa Schroeder's [FAR FROM YOU](#) is a wonderful and inventive novel, all the more so because it's written in verse. I also loved [INEXCUSABLE](#) by Chris Lynch. It's raw and powerful and amazingly well-written. And I enjoy Suzanne Young's series [THE NAUGHTY LIST](#), coming out in February. Oh, [BEAUTIFUL](#) by Amy Reed is beautiful (October release)!

FANTASTIC list. Where can readers find updates on The Mockingbirds' road to publication and keep up with you on the web?

I hope readers will visit my site [DaisyWhitney.com](#), where I've begun blogging regularly about writing and the path to publication. I will be building out the author section of the site, so for now you'll find a lot of info on my other life as a media reporter. But rest assured, I have big, grand plans for fabulous website tie-ins, promotions and videos to help tell the story of THE MOCKINGBIRDS and my main site will always lead to the book info.

I've had her site bookmarked forever, so I'm way ahead of the game. Just sayin'.

THANK YOU, Daisy, for the interview!

And seriously, guys. She's an author you need to watch. I'm looking forward to following every step of the publication process of The Mockingbirds and I hope you are too! And is it too early to make a call like this? I don't think so: The Mockingbirds is going to be a HIT and I can't wait until everyone reads it... because then I can talk about it with them!!!

BECAUSE NOT TALKING ABOUT IT IS SO HARD. SERIOUSLY. IT'S AWESOME. I WILL END THIS ENTRY BEFORE I SAY MORE. Also: dsdlkfsdf!!! *impatient noises*

* image of Daisy from [her website, Mockingbird & Harper Lee cover from Wikipedia](#).