

Bad Daughters: A Celebration of Unpleasant and Unlikeable Girls
Event Outline (prepared by Samantha Mabry, moderator)

Event Description:

Writers of books for young people are often asked to craft female characters who are “strong” and “fearless,” but who also are “relatable” and “likeable.” Is there a place in children’s fiction for girls who are truly unpleasant, not particularly brave, and make bad choices? Five writers of young adult and middle grade fiction discuss the ways in which they create female characters that defy, displease, and disappoint, as well as how they respond (or don’t) to the expectations of their readers.

Participants: Samantha Mabry (moderator), Nova Ren Suma, Lilliam Rivera, Jennifer Mathieu, and Tehlor Kay Mejia

This is a panel discussion, as opposed to a reading, but after introductions, we might start with brief readings (one page-ish) from our works (or the work of others!) that we think might fit the theme.

Then, we would dovetail into **possible questions:**

- What have you come up against either in editorial or general readership regarding writing “unlikeable” characters? In other words, has anyone ever commented on “likeability” or asked you to make a female character more “relatable.” Do you feel as if expectations have changed/are changing in young adult fiction?
- Do you feel as if you have an obligation to create “role models” for your readers?
- What are some “bad daughters” from literature or film that have stuck with you and/or influenced your writing?
- In each of our novels, the main characters disobey or defy the expectations of the people who care for them (friends, teachers, family members). Why have you written a character that does this?

NOTE: As the date of the conference draws closer, I will solicit questions from the other panelists and update this document.

We’ll end with a good amount of time for questions from the audience!