

According to Oaks, his editor didn't even require any changes. Well, except for one: shorter chapters. "It's kind of funny," says Oaks, "because many people have read my book without even knowing it was YA."

"Ultimately, good writing is good writing, and I look for that in both YA and adult books," says MacKenzie. "Besides," she adds, "if publishers feel that your book has crossover potential, they will work to capitalize on that." Certain characteristics are required, however, if a book is to be considered YA, she says. As an example, she cites the recent novel *Rooftops of Tehran* by one of her clients, Mahbod Seraji. MacKenzie considered pursuing YA houses because the novel's protagonist is seventeen. "We didn't want the book to be limited by any readership," she says. "There is some heavy subject matter in the book," which was ultimately why she pursued the adult market in the end.

Kuehnert, Oaks, and MacKenzie all agree on one point: They are all drawn to coming-of-age stories.

What Kuehnert has come to like about the YA genre is the honesty in many authors' voices. "I mostly read YA at this point because there's a lot less pretension." She is particularly drawn to the coming-of-age story because she's "fascinated with the whole experience, and I guess I'm just a teenager at heart."

Oaks gained confidence in his decision to go YA when a boy in a Connecticut middle school e-mailed him requesting biographical information so he could finish his book report on *Why I Fight*. "I like to think that the book is affecting that specific group of readers who are struggling through adolescence," Oaks says.

And Kuehnert believes young adult fiction is here to stay. "I'm glad to see it get some of the spotlight it deserves," she says. "I just hope it continues to be taken more seriously."