Writing a book takes effort and creativity. It can be challenging, yet numerous people have done it, and one of those people is the talented author Brigit Young. Brigit has written four middle-grade novels (*The Prettiest*, *Bright*, *Worth a Thousand Words*, and *Banned Books, Crop Tops, and Bad Influences*) and is working on a fifth one. In this interview with her, learn what it's like to write a novel from a firsthand perspective and see the answers to some questions you might have about writing.

Q: How long does it usually take to write a book?

A: It takes me about four or five months to write a first draft, but it takes another year and a half until the book is published. I go through several edits with my publishers, so the first draft is almost always quite different from the last one.

Q: Why did you start writing?

A: My main interest was always the arts, and at first I was a theatre kid. My love for writing stories came out of that love for plays. I moved to NYC to become an actress, and in my boredom while waiting for gigs, I started to write stories. The path after that became clear.

Q: How do you publish a book?

A: First off, there are two different worlds of publishing: self-publishing and traditional publishing. I'm not an expert on self-publishing, but that's an empowering route to go down, and it's a growing way to get your work out there. As for me, I completed a manuscript and sent it to as many literary agents as possible. They are the gatekeepers to traditional publishers. Once you have an agent (and you have to be okay with rejection! Everyone gets rejected!), they send your book out to editors, and the editors either say yes and offer a contract, or they say it's not for them. It takes a long time, and the most important aspect of becoming an author is to have resilience in the face of rejection. Remember, it's not personal! Someone will connect with your voice if you keep persevering.

Q: How do you come up with the ideas for your books?

A: I usually start with something personal from my own life - like, for example, in my book *The Prettiest* I knew, I wanted to write about the cruel looks-based teasing that happened to my friends and me in middle school. Then I come up with a "hook." I want to find a problem that the characters have to solve. In *The Prettiest*, a list of the "most-pretty" girls could create enough chaos to initiate an interesting tale. That combination of ideas brings me to the plot.

Q: Do you have any tips for people trying to write a book?

A: The biggest tip is to make yourself sit down and write, whether you think you're ready or not. Words don't get on the page unless you put them on the page. On top of that, I recommend reading as much as possible, especially in the genre of your novel. If you're a young person, I would suggest starting with short stories and poems because you don't have to feel like the end is never in sight. Novels are long! And short stories and poems are just as beautiful and important.

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