

Selah's Guide to Normal (22,000 words) is an own voices middle grade novel-in-verse following Selah, a twelve-year-old girl autistic girl with sensory hypersensitivity who must advocate for herself through her newfound love of poetry, or risk expulsion from the school she loves. Fans of Ellie Terry and Laura Shovan will resonate with Selah's journey, which is largely inspired by my own experiences on the autism spectrum with sensory issues and social anxiety.

On the surface, seventh grader Selah Godfrey seems like a neurotypical girl: quiet, studious and polite. But what others don't know is that for Selah, every loud voice and unwelcome touch start a battle inside her because of her sensory processing issues. While Selah imagines being powerful like the dragons she loves, the constant sensory stimuli in her environment leave her feeling exhausted. To survive, she's created a series of "rules" for how to be a "normal person" out in public—don't speak out, don't be weird, keep your feelings inside—but keeping up with her impossible standards is getting harder and harder. When a series of stressors brings Selah to her limit, she breaks down by hitting a classmate who has continuously invaded her personal space. This blows Selah's "normal" cover as people—even her once-friends—label her as weird, unpredictable and dangerous.

With the help of her grandfather and English teacher, Selah discovers poetry and begins to process and cope with the world around her. As parents and administrators escalate their concerns over Selah's presence at the school, Selah must break past her invented rules and fears to share her inmost thoughts with the neurotypical world around her, even if it means being forever marked as "weird."

I am a 2020 Pitch Wars mentee, and worked with mentor Eric Bell on this manuscript. Through DVPit, editors Sam Gentry, Rosie Ahmed and Megan Ilnitzki expressed interest in seeing Selah's Guide to Normal once I have representation. I teach creative writing at the university level, and hold an MFA in poetry from the University of Maryland College Park. I am the author of the young adult novel Post-High School Reality Quest and the poetry collection Drowning in the Floating World, and am the webinar coordinator for my SCBWI region.

The completed manuscript is available upon request. I also have a completed young adult manuscript available for consideration. I look forward to speaking with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Meg Eden Kuyatt

Author and Poet Meg Eden Kuyatt and Eight Years to Bloom

Author and Poet Meg Eden Kuyatt joins Queries, Qualms, & Quirks this week to discuss getting her first agent in high school, how writing is like gardening, holding your projects loosely, writing out of order, and regretting acting on impatience.

Meg Eden Kuyatt is a 2020 Pitch Wars mentee, and teaches creative writing at colleges and writing centers. She is the author of the 2021 Towson Prize for Literature winning poetry collection “Drowning in the Floating World” (Press 53, 2020) and children’s novels, most recently “Good Different,” a JLG Gold Standard selection (Scholastic, 2023).

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