**Pitch Wars 2020 Wishlist for YA Mentor Laurie Dennison**

Welcome to my 2020 Pitch Wars Young Adult Wishlist! Pitch Wars (https://pitchwars.org) is a mentoring program where published/agented authors, editors, or industry interns choose one writer each to mentor. Mentors read the entire manuscript and offer suggestions on how to make the manuscript shine. The mentor also helps edit their mentee’s pitch and query for an agent showcase in February 2021. I'm so excited to be mentoring YA for the fourth year in a row!

\*I am not accepting NA submissions in 2020.

**About Me**

A photo of a black and white cat with the caption, “My cat, Allie.”

A photo of me with my favorite musician, Andrew McMahon.

A photo of a tan and white dog sitting in a chair with the caption, “My dog, Benny.”

I've lived on both US coasts, in northeast Florida and central California, and a few places in between. I love writing, reading, pop culture, alternative music, and my family and our many pets. Here are some of my favorites:

YA Authors: Holly Black, Cassandra Clare, Sonia Hartl, Marie Lu, Laura Ruby, Angie Thomas

TV Shows: Schitt's Creek, Parks and Rec, The Magicians, Lucifer, Broadchurch, Fleabag

Movies: Booksmart, Knives Out, Lady Bird, Baby Driver, 500 Days of Summer, Fight Club

**My Qualifications**

I have a bachelor’s degree in English with a concentration in professional writing and a master’s in English education from the University of Florida. I’ve been a freelance editor for ten years, and I’ve worked in web design and desktop publishing for over five years. I’ve also critiqued fiction independently and as a group leader through the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators since 2013. My work is represented by Chloe Seager at Madeleine Milburn.

**My Pitch Wars Experience**

I write YA of many genres, most recently focusing on darker contemporary and suspense, and I’ve been a part of the Pitch Wars community since I was chosen as a mentee with a YA fantasy in 2012. I was a solo mentor in 2017, a co-mentor with Samantha Joyce in 2018, and a solo mentor again last year in 2019. I love the program because this community changed my writing life, and I want to continue to pass that forward to more writers. For me, Pitch Wars is more about a long-term support system than a single manuscript or milestone.

**How I Mentor**

I will definitely tell you all the things I love about your manuscript, but I also believe in honest feedback in the areas where I think your work can grow and improve. My goal is to help you achieve your vision for the best version of your manuscript. You should expect an intense few months with a lot of work, but I will help you through it. I’m always available for questions through email, DM, etc., and I’m up for calls or video conferences if you are!

A gif of Ted Danson (Michael) from The Good Place that says, “It’s gonna take a lot of work. But the work is the fun part, guys.”

I’ll start with an initial, overarching edit letter, addressing any aspects of the manuscript that might need work. We’ll work together to develop a plan for revision, and we’ll set a timeline for sending back the next completed draft.

For the second round of revision, I’ll address any lingering concerns with a second edit letter. We’ll also work though the pitch and query letter so you’ll be ready to submit to agents, and I’m open to sharing my industry experience to help you move forward on your writing path.

But don't just take it from me! In 2019, I was the lucky YA mentor picked to choose two mentees. My mentee Megan Scott (Insta: @meganscott\_writer, Twitter: @MScott\_writer) had this to say about working with me:

"Submitting to Laurie was easily the best decision I’ve made in my writing career so far. Her support and knowledge has been invaluable through the highs and doubts that come during Pitch Wars. She’s always explained her reasoning, brainstormed and answered my questions, but also left the final call up to me, because as she’s said so often in the process: she’s trying to help get the story what I want it to be. But along with her amazing editing skills, she is a genuinely lovely person. I think this can makes mentees a bit nervous when trying to pick mentors! Are they nice? So I’m going to put you at ease with confirming that Laurie is one of the great ones! I couldn’t be more grateful I can also call her my friend. So submit to her! I can't wait to shout about your amazing book with you and Laurie come the new Pitch Wars season!”

My mentee Briana Johnson (Twitter: @wikipediabri) had this to say:

"I can’t thank Laurie enough for all that she did for me throughout Pitch Wars. She was patient and understanding, extremely insightful, and all around incredible mentor. Because of her mentorship, I had a wonderful Pitch Wars experience and came out of the experience with a brilliant manuscript."

Briana signed with Sam Farkas at Jill Grinberg Literary Management earlier this year, and you can read her Pitch Wars Success Story here: <https://pitchwars.org/pitch-wars-success-stories-with-briana-johnson-and-her-mentor-laurie-dennison/>. I have been so fortunate to have the best mentees every year! If you're curious about how my wishlist lines up with the manuscripts I've chosen in the past, Megan's story was paranormal/contemporary fantasy, and Briana's was a near-future light sci-fi. (And Sam and I mentored in Elizabeth Schwab [Twitter: @LizSchwabWrites] in 2018 with a contemporary suspense.)

So, for all of you 2020 hopefuls, what am I looking for this year?

**My 2020 Wishlist**

My tastes run from lighter, heart-warming contemporary to darker mysteries and suspense. I also love whimsical and magical fantasy and light sci-fi. In this strange and unprecedented year, I want to read stories that grab me quickly and keep me engaged and turning pages. I'd love to see...

**Romance**

I've been enjoying a strong romantic element in everything I read lately. Slow burn, friends-to-lovers, enemies-to-lovers, pretend dating...send it all my way! I always have a soft spot for falling in love, but I'd also love to see a healthy established relationship with history and complications.

A gif of Sam Heughan (Jamie) and Caitriona Balfe (Claire) from Outlander that says, “You are my home.” “And you are mine.”

**Contemporary**

This is the broadest category for me! I love everything from light, heartwarming stories to dark and twisty mysteries, thrillers, and suspense. I also enjoy a good adventure! I'm a huge fan of Sonia Hartl, Rachel Lynn Solomon, Dana Mele, Angie Thomas, Kara Thomas, and Diana Urban. I'm also open to literary writing like Laurie Halse Anderson or Nova Ren Suma.

**Contemporary Fantasy**

I'm interested in urban or contemporary fantasy, magical realism, modern gothic, and paranormal. I would really love to see a fresh concept with immersive world building. I say this every year, but if you could comp your story to anything by Holly Black, please send it to me!

A gif of Tom Ellis with wings as Lucifer

**Science Fiction**

My interests are a little more narrow in sci-fi. Again, I love immersive world building, and I would be interested in "soft" or near-future sci-fi, alternate history, or a unique take on time travel.

**Other Areas of Interest**

**Diversity and #OwnVoices**

We live in a diverse world, and teen readers need to see that in the books they read. I’m looking for diversity of all types in all genres.

**Complicated Families**

Again, families in the real world are complicated and complex. I want to see this reflected in all genres. I really loved the perfect blend of family, humor, and romance in Schitt's Creek, and I would love to see a YA that could compare to it!

A gif of Catherine O'Hara (Moira) from Schitt's Creek that says, “When one of us shines, we all shine.”

**Things That Are Not the Best Fit for Me**

This list is purely based on my personal taste and experience, for various reasons. There are lots of other great mentors who are accepting these types of manuscripts!

Westerns, Horror (or any manuscript with excessive gore), Sports as Central Plot Elements, Heavy or Military Sci-fi, Heavy or Epic Fantasy, Novels in Verse, Retellings

I think that about covers it. Thank you for checking out my wishlist. I can’t wait to read your words!

\*\*If you know me personally or if we’ve previously worked together professionally or as critique partners, beta readers, or writing group members, please do not submit to me for Pitch Wars. I want to be completely fair when making my decision, and there many other amazing mentors who would love your submission!

Click here to go back to the Pitch Wars Blog Hop or continue with the YA Wish Lists below.