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Pitch Wars 2014 Tips & Advice

This is where I keep all the tips, advice, and insights I tweeted as a middle-grade mentor during the 2014 Pitch Wars.

by Naomi Hughes 4 years ago 324 Views ▾



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA



Most common MS issues:

1. Main character's motivation isn't strong. If he doesn't WANT something, the conflict has no engine/driving force.

1:23 PM - Jul 28, 2014

♡ 6 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA



Replying to @NaomiHughesYA

2. Plot twists aren't set up. When you reveal the BFF is an alien, we should think "OF COURSE! How did I miss that?" not "what the heck?"

1:27 PM - Jul 28, 2014

♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets





 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @NaomiHughesYA

3. Infodump in the opening. We don't need to know EVERYTHING up front--just show us the scene, & filter in the important details as you go.



1:38 PM - Jul 28, 2014

♡ 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

My advice to new writers: love what you do. Love it so much that you never want to stop learning, so much that you can't think of quitting.

5:45 PM - Jul 28, 2014

♡ 12  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Celebrate your accomplishments. Don't let everything always be about the next hurdle. You wrote a book! NOW GO PARTY. (& save me some cake.)

3:49 PM - Jul 29, 2014


♡ 6  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Being a writer is great because there's never any uncertainty!
slightly hysterical laughter

5:32 AM - Jul 31, 2014

♡ 9  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

. @TRosauthor Yep! Often, prologues are backstory (can be woven in later) or bait & switch (intros a non-main character/story). #Pitchwars

2:09 PM - Aug 3, 2014

♡ 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

When researching agents/editors, check their credentials & clients. Anyone can set up shop, whether they're qualified or not. #writetip

5:06 PM - Aug 3, 2014

♡ 3 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

I love characters w/ strong motivation: they WANT something (for a believable reason tying into char. development) & go after it. #Pitchwars

6:23 AM - Aug 4, 2014

♡ 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets





Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

"Strong motivation" doesn't sound sexy but it's key for your readers. We WANT what your MC wants; it drives us through the story. #Pitchwars




6:37 AM - Aug 4, 2014



♡ 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

If your main character doesn't WANT anything for a strong, believable reason, there's no engine behind your book.
[#Pitchwars](#)




6:38 AM - Aug 4, 2014

 2  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Characters can want anything: solve a mystery, get the guy/gal, etc. The question of whether they'll GET it keeps readers hooked. [#Pitchwars](#)

6:40 AM - Aug 4, 2014

  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Yep! "[@TheUnNovelist](#): Bad dialogue explains. Good dialogue reveals. Great dialogue exposes what is unknown to those speaking." [#Writetip](#)

4:51 AM - Aug 5, 2014



 4  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

[#Querytip](#) from [@jsinsheim](#): don't say your character is "normal." It's vague, and doesn't really tell us anything. Get to the point instead.



8:52 AM - Aug 5, 2014

  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @karen_sp_fitz
.@karen_sp_fitz @jsinsheim I think it's usually "Bob is a normal guy--until THIS happens!" But it doesn't actually give insight. It's fluff.

9:01 AM - Aug 5, 2014

♡ 1  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Be professional online! Like most mentors (AND agents & editors), I will Google-stalk you before I decide whether to work w/ you. #PitchWars

11:40 AM - Aug 5, 2014

♡ 9  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Fun & flair is great--I love unique personalities! BUT keep the rants, continual rejection complaints, & bitter sarcasm offline. #Pitchwars



11:41 AM - Aug 5, 2014

♡ 5  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Polish your query/1st page--but don't forget about the rest! It's heartbreaking to find an amazing opening w/ no follow-through. #Pitchwars

5:19 AM - Aug 6, 2014

♡ 12  15 people are talking about this 




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

You don't have to start w/ a bang; just draw us in, invest us. Start somewhere vital to the plot, & show us your awesome voice.
[#Pitchwars](#)

7:11 AM - Aug 7, 2014

♡ 9 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

I see many YA manuscripts w/ sarcastic MCs. Often it feels default: "he's a teen, so he must be sarcastic." NO. Dig deeper. Be original.

5:45 AM - Aug 8, 2014

♡ 3 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Teens are real, deep, unique people. Defaulting their voices to a sarcastic stereotype diminishes your whole story. Think harder.
[#Writetip](#)

5:51 AM - Aug 8, 2014

♡ 6 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Two years ago, I was chosen as a [#PitchWars](#) alternate. I scraped in with a 1st draft (my second-ever MS) and was generally clueless.

11:59 AM - Aug 10, 2014

♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

I did a lot of things wrong (almost everything, actually). But that's okay. That's how you learn. Writing is on-the-job training.
[#PitchWars](#)

12:01 PM - Aug 10, 2014

♥ 8 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

3. You are responsible for your story. Your mentor/agent/editor cannot "fix" your story, only help mold what's there. [#PitchWars](#)

12:20 PM - Aug 10, 2014

♥ 8 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

4. Listen to your gut. Don't panic about big edits; no one will force you. Listen to advice, then do what's right for your story.
[#PitchWars](#)

12:27 PM - Aug 10, 2014

♥ 7 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

The flip side is also true: don't be afraid to make big changes. (I did a from-scratch rewrite before the agent round). [#PitchWars](#)

12:31 PM - Aug 10, 2014

♥ 3 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

And finally, 5. Get to know the community. The connections you'll make are as valuable as landing a mentor, & often last longer. [#PitchWars](#)

12:34 PM - Aug 10, 2014

♡ 7 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @appifanie

. [@appifanie](#) For me, edits are kind of like spirals: with each pass, you get closer and closer to the story you're really trying to tell.

12:54 PM - Aug 10, 2014

♡ 17 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @SC_Author

. [@SC_Author](#) If you have strong diverse characters who play major roles in your story, it never hurts to say so in your query. [#askmentor](#)

11:52 AM - Aug 11, 2014

♡ 1 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @AMorrison712

[@AMorrison712](#) I mentor MG, so there's not a lot of swearing you can get away with. Some minor words are okay for upper MG. [#askmentor](#)

3:05 PM - Aug 11, 2014



♡ 1 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Don't get too stressed over your synopsis! It just shows plot and pacing, not voice/writing ability. I get that from your pages.
[#Pitchwars](#)

8:59 AM - Aug 12, 2014



♥ 11  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Look out for as-you-know-Bobs: dialogue that exists mainly to "explain" to the reader something the characters already know.
[#writetip](#)

11:56 AM - Aug 12, 2014

♥ 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Don't be a spaghetti writer, churning out books & throwing them at agents to see if they stick. Learn. Improve. THEN try again.
[#writetip](#)

1:36 PM - Aug 12, 2014

♥ 7  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Unless your MC's horrible disfigurement drives the whole plot, we DO NOT need a physical description of her on page 1.
[#Pitchwars](#) [#Writetip](#)

10:28 AM - Aug 13, 2014

♥ 7  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Cliches:

1. Looking in a mirror to describe herself.
2. Saying like something like "I looked at Bob with my blue eyes." [#PitchWars](#) [#Writetip](#)

10:30 AM - Aug 13, 2014




 4  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to [@andis_reeds](#)

[@andis_reeds](#) They're tough to write, but they give you a bird's-eye view of your plot: weaknesses, boring parts, stuff you can cut/combine.



7:08 AM - Aug 14, 2014



  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

In your query, don't use phrases like "in this exciting tale" or "you'll cry, laugh, etc." That's telling. [#Pitchwars](#) [#querytip](#)




3:11 PM - Aug 14, 2014

 10  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Just give us the character, conflict (what does your character WANT?), and stakes (what's at risk?) and build on that. [#Pitchwars](#) [#querytip](#)

3:15 PM - Aug 14, 2014

 9  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Opening w/ a classroom/teaching scene can feel like infodump: "telling" readers the rules of your world via dialogue. [#Pitchwars](#) [#Writetip](#)

9:21 AM - Aug 15, 2014

♡ 2  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Writing "rules" CAN be broken (and are, all the time). Just be intentional: know the rule & why it's there before breaking it. [#PitchWars](#)

12:10 PM - Aug 15, 2014

♡ 27  15 people are talking about this 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

"No prologue?" I've fallen in love with some books BECAUSE of their gorgeously-written prologues. [#PitchWars](#)

12:12 PM - Aug 15, 2014

♡ 11  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

"Show, don't tell?" Sometimes, telling ends up being the best, punchiest way to drive a point home. [#PitchWars](#)

12:13 PM - Aug 15, 2014

♡ 11  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

"Kill all adverbs?" Nah. Be aware of them, don't abuse them--but they're a TOOL. Use them however the heck often you want.
[#PitchWars](#)

12:17 PM - Aug 15, 2014



♡ 22  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

"Write every day?" Your process is YOUR PROCESS. Don't stuff yourself into someone's else's routine if it doesn't fit. [#PitchWars](#)

12:20 PM - Aug 15, 2014


♡ 19  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Basically: be passionate about your craft. Suck up all the learning, anywhere you find it. Then decide what's right for YOU.
[#PitchWars](#)

12:26 PM - Aug 15, 2014


♡ 21  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Don't obsess too much about the bio paragraph in your query. Credits are a distant second to the story & your writing.
[#PitchWars](#) [#querytip](#)

2:04 PM - Aug 15, 2014

♡ 9  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughes

Mentor personalities: The Game Show Host: We like the same entry... let's make a deal. The Achmed: Steal my mentee & I KEEL YOU. #PitchWars

 4 YEARS AGO



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA



I'm seeing several entries billed as "upper MG," but the voice and premise feel more like lower MG. Know your audience!

#PitchWars

12:25 PM - Aug 16, 2014

 2  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA



In general, it's a good idea to avoid exclamation points in queries. It feels shouty and, to me, a little tell-y. #PitchWars #querytip

12:29 PM - Aug 16, 2014

 1  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA




Boom! Instant tension/conflict in the 1st paragraph of this query. *applauds* Even though the genre isn't my thing, I'm drawn in. #PitchWars

12:23 PM - Aug 17, 2014

 2  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets





 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Don't obsess over your query at the expense of your book. It's heartbreaking to see a polished, killer query w/ lackluster pages.
[#PitchWars](#)



12:31 PM - Aug 17, 2014



♡ 4  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Queries are vital, & YES, you should polish those suckers at every opportunity. But your actual writing is 1000x more important. [#PitchWars](#)



12:33 PM - Aug 17, 2014



♡ 4  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

"Strong female character" doesn't necessarily mean "girl who kicks butt." It means "strong (fleshed-out, 3D) character, who is also female."



4:14 PM - Aug 17, 2014

♡ 20  21 people are talking about this 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

I see a lot of telling on 1st pages. That's not the place to give info. Make something HAPPEN. Draw us in with hints of intrigue.
[#PitchWars](#)

6:37 AM - Aug 18, 2014

♡ 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

We do need SOME context/info to understand what's happening on the 1st page--but sprinkle it in, make it flow. Don't dump it. [#PitchWars](#)

6:44 AM - Aug 18, 2014


♡ 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Goals need to be personal. Your MC can want to save the world, sure--but that's so vague/impersonal it's emotionally meaningless. [#PitchWars](#)

6:56 AM - Aug 18, 2014



♡ 7  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

An example of making "save the world" personal: Frodo wants to save the world because he loves/wants to save his home, the Shire. [#PitchWars](#)



6:59 AM - Aug 18, 2014


♡ 2  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @NaomiHughesYA
. [@TerryRodgers](#) The strength and personal-ness of the goal is, to me, more important than the goal itself. They have to WANT *something*.

7:06 AM - Aug 18, 2014

♡ 2  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Basically, your character's goal and motivation need to have a strong relationship. She wants to [goal], because [motivation].
[#PitchWars](#)

7:09 AM - Aug 18, 2014

♡ 15 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

MG portal fantasies are a tough sell. They need a strong, unique hook to stand out--but I can be persuaded by awesomeness. ;))
[#PitchWars](#)

12:00 PM - Aug 18, 2014

♡ 3 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

I want to talk to you guys about rejection. (And I'm an expert. I got over 100 no's from agents before my 1st full request.)
[#PitchWars](#)

10:50 AM - Aug 21, 2014

♡ 18 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA



As a writer, your career will always involve:

1. Waiting
2. Rejection

And, hopefully, 3. A passion for improvement.
[#PitchWars](#)



10:50 AM - Aug 21, 2014



♡ 87 💬 47 people are talking about this

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Mentors are no exception. We get rejected too: by editors, by reviewers, by our own agents if we write a MS they can't champion. [#Pitchwars](#)



10:50 AM - Aug 21, 2014



♡ 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Every single breakthrough in my writing life came after a mountain of rejection. It can be a challenge: I can do better. [#Pitchwars](#)



10:51 AM - Aug 21, 2014

♡ 36  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

But sometimes, a no is just subjective. You CANNOT please everyone. Trying will make you absolutely bag-full-'o-cats bonkers. [#Pitchwars](#)

10:51 AM - Aug 21, 2014



♡ 24  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

(And yes, that totally WAS a Loki reference.) [#PitchWars](#)




10:52 AM - Aug 21, 2014



♡ 5  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

To sum up, rejection can mean:
Needs improvement
This isn't my thing
This isn't selling
It does NOT mean: you, as a person, suck. #Pitchwars




10:52 AM - Aug 21, 2014

 53  44 people are talking about this 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Try not to introduce too many characters in your opening. If I'm confused as to who is who, it's easy for me to stop reading. #Pitchwars

5:08 AM - Aug 22, 2014


 10  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

#PitchWars folks, look at @notjustanyboggs' #querylunch! You can peek inside an agent's mind as she reads queries (&, you know, eats lunch).




11:19 AM - Aug 22, 2014


 6  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @ginad129
. @ginad129 YES. Stakes are *so* important--they have to be present (or at least understood by implication), and they have to be SPECIFIC.

2:01 PM - Aug 22, 2014

 2  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 





Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Remember to make your conflict and stakes specific!
"Everything spirals out of control" and "she risks everything"
won't cut it. [#PitchWars](#)

4:03 PM - Aug 22, 2014

♡ 11 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets





Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

What EXACTLY is your character trying to achieve? What
EXACTLY will happen if he/she fails? [#PitchWars](#)

4:04 PM - Aug 22, 2014

♡ 7 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Here's a good basic pitch to build from: "When (character)
discovers (catalyst/conflict), he must (goal) or else (stakes)."
[#PitchWars](#)

4:06 PM - Aug 22, 2014

♡ 97 💬 49 people are talking about this







Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

For the most part, a main character needs to be active, not
reactive. His own goal should drive him, not the actions of
others. [#PitchWars](#)

7:35 AM - Aug 23, 2014




♡ 29 💬 19 people are talking about this





 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

If he's too waffle-y or wishy-washy (instead of making his own decisions & taking steps toward a goal), he can seem weak/whiny. [#PitchWars](#)



7:36 AM - Aug 23, 2014

  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

For me personally--I'll take an "unlikable" but decisive main character any day over a weak-willed, whiny one. [#PitchWars](#)


7:39 AM - Aug 23, 2014

 10  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

I know synopses are evil devices of torture and sorrow, but man, now I GET why so many agents ask for them. Plotting skills FTW! [#PitchWars](#)

12:33 PM - Aug 26, 2014

 9  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Truth: it doesn't get easier after you land an agent. In fact, it gets harder--but you also get better equipped to handle it. [#PitchWars](#)

12:48 PM - Aug 26, 2014

 14  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

After you get an agent, you may do a few rounds of editing with them (if they're an editorial agent) before you go out on sub.
[#PitchWars](#)

12:55 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

"Going on sub" is a crazy thrill-ride full of terror and chocolate-bingeing and nail-chewing and obsessive email-checking.
Wheee! [#PitchWars](#)

12:57 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Sub is a case-by-case scenario. THERE IS NO NORMAL. Some sell in a few days. Some, a year plus. Comparing will drive you NUTS. [#PitchWars](#)

12:59 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 5 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

("Sub" is when your agent sends your manuscript out to editors, in case that's not clear. It's like querying, level 2.) [#PitchWars](#)

1:01 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 1 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Once an editor falls in love w/ your ms, there are a few more hurdles (depending on the house): editorial meeting & acquisitions. [#PitchWars](#)

1:06 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

An editorial meeting is when the editor meets with fellow editors/publishers to discuss the book before they move forward. [#PitchWars](#)

1:07 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 3 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Acquisitions is similar, but usually involves some sales and marketing people too. They have to believe they can sell your book. [#PitchWars](#)

1:08 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 1 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Once everyone is in agreement, boom! Offer! *cue happy dance* The editor usually sends the agent a deal memo w/ offer highlights. [#PitchWars](#)

1:10 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 5 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @GwenCole_
.@GwenCole_ Yep.
This is your brain: :)
This is your brain on sub: O__o#publishinglife

1:21 PM - Aug 26, 2014

♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

I've been drafting #PitchWars feedback all week, and I want to talk about some of the most common problem areas I'm seeing with many subs.

6:32 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 9 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

BUT keep in mind: some issues are subjective, & some relate back to writing "rules" (which CAN be broken if you can pull it off.) #PitchWars

6:35 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Issue 1: character is passive (mainly reacts to plot) instead of active (helps drive plot). This was evident mainly in synopses. #PitchWars

6:38 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets




Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Some MCs start off being passive, and are later forced to become active. But this should happen quickly--usually within 1st act. [#PitchWars](#)

6:43 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 3 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Issue 2 (this one breaks my heart): genre isn't selling, or the story doesn't have a strong enough hook to stand out in genre. [#PitchWars](#)

6:46 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 5 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

MG superhero books (my FAVORITE genre *sob*) are a hard sell right now, as are portal fantasies. They CAN sell... but it's tough. [#PitchWars](#)

6:49 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 4 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

That isn't to say I won't take on a story just because it's a tough sell. Actually, my alternate's genre is in that category. ;) [#PitchWars](#)

6:50 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 1 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Issue 3: too much telling. We don't need info or backstory right up front. You can have narrative, but make something happen.
[#PitchWars](#)

6:56 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 5 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

"Make something happen" doesn't mean you have to start with an explosion. Just start somewhere vital to the plot, & draw us in. [#PitchWars](#)

7:00 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 7 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Issue 4: Voice was off. I saw some 12yo characters that thought like 8yos, and some that sounded like 15yos. [#PitchWars](#)

7:08 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 1 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Voice is a tough fix, & somewhat ambiguous. But reading a lot in your category helps (as does spying on your chosen age group).
[#PitchWars](#)

7:08 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 12 💬 18 people are talking about this

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Voice is a huge issue for me. If you have a stellar voice & a lackluster plot, GIMMEE! I can help fix it! But the opposite... :([#PitchWars](#)

7:12 AM - Aug 29, 2014



 9  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Those were pretty much the biggest, most prevalent issues I saw in my inbox. Now do you guys want to hear why I chose my picks? [#PitchWars](#)




7:12 AM - Aug 29, 2014

 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

I chose my mentee's MS because they have amazeballs plotting skills, good voice, & a neat concept that I think agents will want. [#PitchWars](#)

7:13 AM - Aug 29, 2014



 7  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

I chose my alt because they have a great voice (sensing a theme here?), I adore their genre, and their story is just plain FUN. [#PitchWars](#)

7:14 AM - Aug 29, 2014



 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

Replying to @davidoarr

. @davidoarr My personal favorite opening technique is 1-2 voicey narrative (NOT infodump) paragraphs, then sliding into a scene. #PitchWars

7:16 AM - Aug 29, 2014

♡ 4  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

#PitchWars entrants, never lose your amazing attitudes. That hunger to improve, that willingness to take critique? That will pay off.

4:01 PM - Aug 29, 2014



♡ 27  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

"I feel" phrases mean you're telling emotion, not showing. Showing is more powerful: "I felt scared" v. "dread twisted in my gut." #writetip



5:08 AM - Aug 30, 2014

♡ 20  23 people are talking about this 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

"Sense" words (see, hear, etc.) can indicate telling & steal power from your scene. "I saw a zombie" v. "a zombie lurched at me." #writetip

12:13 PM - Aug 31, 2014

♡ 10  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

If you don't get picked in [#PitchWars](#), don't give up! So many of you are *so* close--maybe not this draft, maybe not this contest, but SOON.

4:47 AM - Sep 2, 2014

♡ 7 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

What to do if you don't get picked:
1. Realize that you are NOT a failure. Contests (and publishing in general) is subjective.[#PitchWars](#)

4:50 AM - Sep 2, 2014

♡ 31 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

What to do if you don't get picked:
2. Read feedback closely. Did mentors spot the same issue? Or symptoms of the same issue?[#PitchWars](#)

4:52 AM - Sep 2, 2014

♡ 26 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

What to do if you don't get picked:
3. Get fresh eyes. Get a new (hopefully experienced) beta reader who writes in your category.[#PitchWars](#)

4:56 AM - Sep 2, 2014



♡ 7 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

What to do if you don't get picked:
4. Be open to change. It could be time to reimagine your MS--or time to move on to a new one. [#PitchWars](#)




5:10 AM - Sep 2, 2014

 12  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

A query doesn't tell the ending of your story. Its job is to entice the agent, to draw them to WANT to read. Think back-flap copy. [#querytip](#)

12:18 PM - Sep 3, 2014



 3  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

A synopsis DOES tell the end of the story (and all the other important parts). Its job is to give the agent a bird's-eye view of your plot.



12:20 PM - Sep 3, 2014

  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 

 **Naomi Hughes** 
@NaomiHughesYA

When pitching, try to be as specific as possible (without being confusing) about conflict & stakes. 1/2 [#pitmad](#)

6:56 AM - Sep 6, 2014

 4  See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets 



Naomi Hughes
@NaomiHughesYA

Vague: Sam faces her fears to save a friend.
Better: When Sam's bff is kidnapped by mermaids, aquaphobic Sam must rescue her.

2/2 #pitmad

7:06 AM - Sep 6, 2014

♡ 6 👤 See Naomi Hughes's other Tweets

♡ Like

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