

Readings and Book Events: Set Yourself Up For Success and Show Up With Confidence

Jaclyn L. Paul

www.jaclynpaul.com | Facebook @JaclynLPaul | Instagram & Threads @lenageorgeauthor

Hi! I'm Jaclyn

- ❖ (Download these slides at bit.ly/MwaJPaul2024)
- ❖ Lifelong writer
- ❖ Author of fiction (as Lena George) and non-fiction
- ❖ ADHD advocate
- ❖ Co-founder of Harborview Press
- ❖ Erstwhile performer and, in an alternate timeline, Broadway pit musician





So you've landed a bookstore event...

- ❖ It's normal to feel anxious and overwhelmed
- ❖ The bookstore isn't doing you a favor (or you them)
- ❖ Mutually beneficial arrangement
- ❖ Both parties need to hold up their end of the bargain
- ❖ A little preparation goes a long way

Today's topics

- ❖ Collaborating with your host
- ❖ Filling (at least some of) the seats
- ❖ Choosing and preparing passages for reading
- ❖ Showing up comfortable and confident in front of your audience

Collaborating with your host

You're in this together



Collaborating with your host

- ❖ You're a professional writer now!
This is your job
- ❖ These events are NOT FREE for bookstores, nor do they guarantee sales
- ❖ Your conversation partner (if you have one) is giving their time
- ❖ You are responsible for turning people out and providing them with an event worth their time



Collaborating with your host

- ❖ Past events are a great model to help establish expectations
- ❖ Do some recon:
 - ❖ Social media
 - ❖ Email newsletters
 - ❖ Website
 - ❖ In-person attendance!
(If you're local)



Collaborating with your host

- ❖ Be proactive with questions
 - ❖ When should you to arrive?
 - ❖ Will they create an RSVP-able event on Facebook or EventBrite? An Instagram post with a “remind me” button?
 - ❖ Typical reading, Q&A, total event length
 - ❖ How many copies of your book will be available for purchase?
 - ❖ What about food and drink?



Filling the seats

Avoid the dreaded empty room



Filling the seats

- ❖ Use any home field advantage you can think of
 - ❖ “In conversation with...”
 - ❖ Book club
 - ❖ Neighborhood groups
 - ❖ Friends
 - ❖ Other non-writing platform(s)
- ❖ Consider when choosing locations for events in the first place

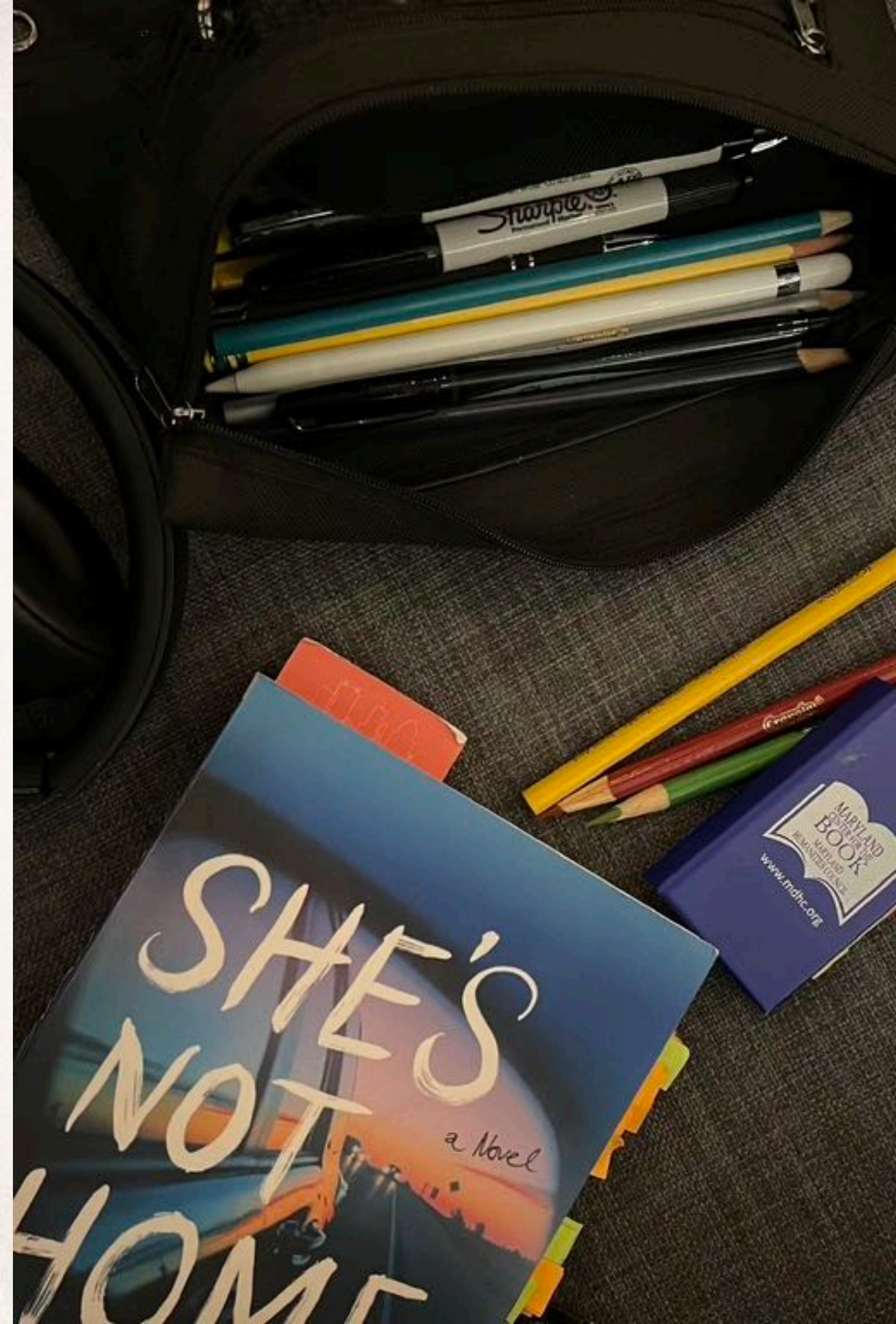


Preparing your reading



Preparing your reading

- ❖ Choose passages weeks ahead of time!
- ❖ Capture / represent your book's overall vibe
- ❖ Compelling and satisfying as standalones
- ❖ Don't give too much away
- ❖ Leave your audience needing more
- ❖ Ask for help if you're stuck



Preparing your reading

- ❖ Always edit for reading!
- ❖ Assume audience is unfamiliar with your book
- ❖ Remove:
 - ❖ Extraneous details
 - ❖ Non-essential characters
 - ❖ References to subplots
 - ❖ Anything that requires context

parents, everything had changed. Mark was no longer the kind of father who danced to the Ramones with his young daughter in the living room. Sheryl no longer thought it a paradise to live as the cool parent. No longer considered the children of such parents lucky.

Meanwhile, Mariana remained under the spell. In part because her best friend's mother encouraged it. From what Sheryl could tell, Debbie and Cat had a relationship much like she'd had with Sheena. She couldn't blame Mariana for wanting this level of mutual trust, this confidence—friendship, almost. She also didn't know how to tell her daughter it wasn't worth the price. Not without saying something to make Mariana defensive of Debbie, who should have known better, but she suspected Debbie still believed Ben's account of things from that night.

Her phone jarred her out of her thoughts. She still hadn't gotten used to the ringer coming through the car's speakers. Without taking her eyes off the road, she pressed the answer button on the steering wheel.

"Hello?"

"Sheryl. It's your mother. Do you have a minute?"

She tightened her grip on the wheel. "A minute. I'm on m

Preparing your reading

- ❖ Mark up text for navigation
 - ❖ Where will you pause and look up at the audience?
 - ❖ Clearly mark beginning and end of reading
 - ❖ Use bookmarks, sticky notes, etc. to turn quickly to correct page
- ❖ You can also type up and print out!



Preparing your reading

- ❖ Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse
- ❖ Make autopilot possible
- ❖ Include your commentary!
- ❖ Use a timer or stopwatch to fine-tune length of reading and commentary

Intro (bookstore staff)

Hi + thank you

- set in fictionalized Tinicum, my hometown
 - ↳ immediately across the bridge!
- my feelings for place inspired story
- special to read story in place where its heart is
- also, special timing today
 - ↳ shock in a Jersey scene too - second home
- dedicated to Mom-mom
- would've been her 92nd
- would've loved this

So - about the book!

- story about grief, friendship, healing, accountability
- mother-daughter at center
- M - 17, senior homecoming, bittersweet time
- S - mom, different parent post accident
- anniversary, Sheena was 17, homecoming
- comes to a head around M's homecoming
 - learns unshared details
 - runs away
 - S contends w/ idea of losing M for real
 - M must, for the first time, truly reckon w/ how her impulse choice can affect others
 - ↳ EVEN people she didn't think would care

Projecting comfort and confidence



Projecting comfort and confidence

- ❖ REHEARSE
- ❖ Arrive early
- ❖ Use the buddy system if you can
- ❖ Plan transportation/parking
- ❖ Plan your ENTIRE OUTFIT well in advance!



Projecting comfort and confidence

- ❖ Plan your look to avoid last-minute panic, helplessness
 - ❖ Clothes
 - ❖ Accessories
 - ❖ Bag
 - ❖ Outerwear
 - ❖ Shoes
 - ❖ Hair and makeup
- ❖ Test it out beforehand
- ❖ Ask a savvy friend for help if needed!
- ❖ Practice a little fashion psychology...





Thank you!

- ❖ Find me online:

- ❖ jaclynpaul.com

- ❖ lenageorgeauthor.com

- ❖ ADHDhomestead.net

- ❖ Join my email list

- ❖ Recording of this talk available
at a later date

- ❖ Slides at [bit.ly / MwaJPaul2024](https://bit.ly/MwaJPaul2024)

