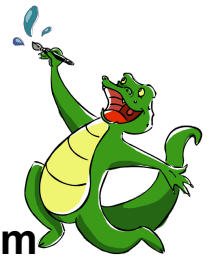


# Jack Heath at CYA Conference, 2011

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*He's pretty amazing... He'd completed his first manuscript for publication at just 17 years of age...*

The rapid-fire jokes and one-liners kept time with his energetic back-and-forth pacing – which, if not for the jokes – would have almost been hypnotic. **Jack Heath** exudes energy; it crackles and sizzles and spills out into the audience. And he was a fabulous post-lunch kick-start for those of us whose brains were already flagging under the weight of so much information. Jack is an entertainer – whether it be holding a live audience or capturing the imagination of his readers.

But it wasn't simply a fun respite. There were many gems scattered among the, often self-deprecating, mile-a-minute gags.

For example:

- Write what you want to read. Step outside your writer shoes and into reader shoes. What do you love to read? Long to read? Write that. As a thirteen year old he wanted to read about helicopters, explosions, tanks, robots and people falling long distances. Guess what he writes about? And doing it successfully.
- Think about the kinds of books you love and then think about why you love them.
- Important lessons, Jack Heath style:
  - If someone has a criticism they're usually trying to help you. (Neil Gaiman)
  - When someone tell you something is wrong, they're usually right.
  - When they tell you how to fix it, they're usually wrong.
- There's no substitute for good publicity
- A good way to judge whether something is good is the reactions of those reading it. A good story should make you forget you're on a bus, a train or in a bath hat's turned cold.
- Story is a bridge between the author and the reader's imagination.
- Don't over-describe.
- If you can reduce words without reducing impact – that's good writing.
- Take care with book trailers: They take away the reader's freedom to imagine. You only need to put in what they can't imagine.
- Slang dates a teenage focused work.

- Teenagehood is the bootcamp for life.
- The emotional journey of all teens remains the same – irrespective of the era.
- There are two types of villain and one type of hero:
  - Villain 1: Wants something that someone else has and will take it.
  - Villain 2: Wants something for the greater good but is misguided.
  - Hero : Reverse of first villain. Make sacrifices of themselves for the good of someone else.
- To elicit reader sympathy for the main character (hero), have the hero sacrifice something early in the story that will benefit someone else.