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# Julia Green talks about her new novel **Bringing the Summer**

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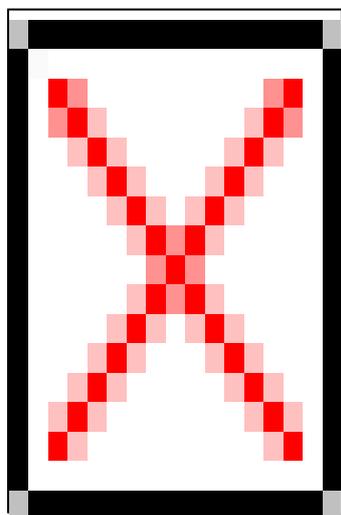
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Julia Green talks about her new novel **Bringing the Summer**

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Julia Green is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University and is the Course Director for the MA in Writing for Young People. Her novels for young people include **Breathing Underwater** and **Drawing with Light**.

'After I finished writing **Breathing Underwater**, I went on thinking about Freya. She remained vividly in my mind: I knew I had more to say and find out about her. Some of my readers asked me questions about her too: they wanted to know what happened next. I decided I wanted to write about her two years later, when she was 16 - the age her brother Joe was when he died. This would be a very significant age for Freya, I felt. And it was wonderful to start imagining how she'd have changed and grown, in those two years, and to write about her when the grief was less raw. I felt sure that the experiences she'd gone through would have made her strong and compassionate, with a real zest for living. She would want her life to mean something, to make a difference. But she'd still be vulnerable, and make mistakes, as any sixteen year old does. Her sense that her own family is too 'small', without her brother, leads her towards falling in love with another family very different from her own... and so the story became clear to me, and I began to write **Bringing the Summer**.

I loved 're-visiting' a character, because I already knew so much about her - the whole back story, the sort of person she is, her family and some of her friends - the story 'world' already existed. However, I wanted the novel to be set somewhere different - not the island where she lives every summer, but back at home, in a city. And the challenges Freya faces at 16 are very different too. I've gone on thinking about her - I would like to write one more novel about her, some time.

I love writing for teenagers because they are such great readers - they put themselves whole-heartedly into the experience and 'live' the story. In my experience, they are open minded and ready to think about the really big questions

(life, death, love, friendship, family) and feel things deeply. It's an extraordinary time of change and transition. You are doing many things for the first time - like falling in love. That makes great material for a novelist. I remember my own teenage years vividly. The books I read then have stayed with me always: I'd really love to have that impact on my readers too.

I do believe that novels for young people should offer hope. I think they should be truthful and honest, and show the darkness as well as the light, because that's how things really are. But my own view of the world is naturally hopeful and optimistic, and my novels reflect that.

My advice to anyone wanting to write a coming of age novel would be to make a connection with that time in their own life, good and bad, and to try to see things from that 16 year old viewpoint. It's not that you are writing autobiographically (the things that happen to Freya haven't been my experience), but you need to make an emotional connection with that age and write from within it. Getting the 'voice' right for a book for teenagers is crucial: it has to be authentic and consistent with the character. It's useful to be in touch with contemporary teenagers too, of course, and to read contemporary fiction for young people. All writing, for whatever age group, takes time and patience and much re-writing. My students on the MA hear me say this all the time: it's all in the re-writing, the re-seeing (re-vision) of the story! Think in terms of 'scenes': bring each one onto the page as vividly as possible. I could talk much more about all this, of course! A year of it, on the MA...'

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