

AUDIENCE ALIGNMENT PLANNER

TAILOR YOUR STORY TO THE RIGHT READERS



STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR STORY'S CORE ELEMENTS

What is your story about?

What are the main themes/messages?

Who is your protagonist (age, key traits)?



STEP 2: MATCH YOUR STORY TO AN AGE GROUP

	MIDDLE GRADE	YOUNG ADULT	ADULT
tone	Optimistic, adventurous, clear	Emotional, authentic, introspective	Complex, layered, sometimes ambiguous
themes	Friendship, family, self-discovery	Identity, growth, relationships	Morality, philosophy, societal critique
plot complexity	Simple, goal-oriented	Moderate, character-driven	High, multi-layered
protagonist age	Typically 8-12	Typically 13-18	Typically 18+
language style	Clear, accessible	Authentic teen voice	Flexible, experimental
content boundaries	No graphic violence/sexual content	Some mature themes, limited explicitness	Mature themes, explicit content possible



STEP 3: EVALUATE YOUR STORY

Which age group best fits your current story elements? **MG** **YA** **A**

What changes could you make to better align with that group?

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If you want to switch target groups, what adjustments will you need to make?

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STEP 4: ACTION PLAN

Determine 3 specific steps you'll take to tailor your story's tone, themes, or characters to your chosen audience.

1)

2)

3)

try this:

Write a scene for the following prompt 3 times: once for a middle-grade audience, once for young adults, and once for adults!

Your character finds a mysterious key that doesn't open anything they own. What do they do next?

bonus tip:

Ask a critique partner or beta reader to guess your target age group *before* you tell them. If they guess correctly, your voice and themes are aligned!