

INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

Study:

Reading Mentors: A Reader-Response Study of Intergenerational Mentoring Relationships in Speculative YA Fiction

Researcher(s):

PhD researcher Janieke Koning and Prof. Dr. Elly McCausland (supervisor) at Ghent University

Hi!

I'm Janieke Koning, a PhD researcher at Ghent University. I'm studying how young people like you engage with mentoring relationships between adolescent and adult characters in speculative young adult fiction.

In this interview phase, I'm especially interested in how you experienced the mentoring relationships and webs of mentorship in the stories you read and whether any aspects felt familiar, surprising, or meaningful to you. In this study, mentoring relationships involve older or more experienced adult characters who guide, influence, or support younger or more inexperienced adolescent characters. Your insights will help us understand how these stories and their relationships resonate with readers like you.

Why have I been chosen?

You are between 16 and 19 years old, enjoy reading dystopian, fantasy, alternative history YA fiction, or similar genres, and you have expressed interest in the interview for *Reading Mentors* via email, the survey, or our website. You can still decide not to participate, even if you previously expressed interest. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

Note for participants under 18

If you are 16 or 17, you need **written consent from your parent(s) or guardian(s)**. You also give your own assent. Both you and your parent(s) or guardian(s) will receive an information letter and consent form. Signed forms, indicated permission, can be returned by email or brought to the interview. The interview will only take place once both forms are signed. This follows Ghent University's policy on minors in research and complies with GDPR and Belgian law.

What do I need to do?

Participating means doing an interview that takes up to an hour. All interviews are conducted by me, Janieke. No one else will be present unless you request or allow it. We talk about mentoring relationships in YA fiction, how you responded to them as a reader, and whether any scenes reminded you of experiences in your own life (but only if you're comfortable doing so). The interview is **not a test**. There are no right or wrong answers or interpretations. I am interested in *your* thoughts, reactions, and perspectives.

You can choose to do the interview in **English** or in **Dutch**. The interview can take place **online (via MS Teams)** or **in person at Ghent University (Blandijnberg 2, 9000 Ghent)**. You can choose a day and time that works for you. For in-person interviews, I will send you the exact room number when we plan your appointment.

It is helpful, but not required, if you have already completed the *Reading Mentors* survey. You can find more information on our website: www.readingmentors.ugent.be/en/home.

What happens in an interview?

At the start, I will ask your agreement to audio record the interview so I can create an accurate transcript. **Your name will not be recorded at any point.** Instead, you choose a **pseudonym** (from a list or your own preference), and your recording and transcript are linked only to that pseudonym.

The interview is **semi-structured and relaxed**. I bring guiding questions, but the conversation can follow your ideas, interests, and examples. No observations are made during the interview, and no behavioural data will be collected. You decide what you want to talk about.

Which books can I talk about?

You can choose to talk about one of the following series or books (in English or in translation):

- *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008-2010) and its prequels *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* (2020) and *Sunrise on the Reaping* (2025) by Suzanne Collins
- *The Great Library* series (2015-2019) by Rachel Caine (not translated)
- *The Shadow and Bone* trilogy (2012-2014) and its prequel graphic novel *Demon in the Wood* (2022) by Leigh Bardugo
- *The Testing* trilogy (2012-2014) by Joelle Charbonneau

You do **not** need to prepare anything special or re-read the books if you don't want to. During the interview, we may look at one or more short passages together, which you can read yourself or have me read aloud. If you want to receive passages or sample questions beforehand, just let me know when we are planning your appointment.

Do I have to (continue to) take part?

Nope! **Participation is completely voluntary.**

- You can **stop** at any time, for any reason, without consequences, and without giving any explanation.
- You can also **skip** any question or **pause** the interview whenever you want.
- If you want to withdraw your data **after** the interview, email me within **7 days** with your pseudonym, and your data will be deleted. No questions asked.
- If you need to **postpone** or **cancel** your interview, just email me. No reason needed.

Your relationship with UGent, your school, or any organization that shared the study with you will **not** be affected in any of these circumstances. If you have any questions before or after taking part, you can always contact me or my supervisor.

Extra support

We don't expect the interview to be difficult or upsetting. Some questions may feel personal or emotional. If that happens, just tell me. We'll skip the topic or questions that we're on and move on right away and/or you can take a break. The audio recording can also be deleted at your request at that point.

If you feel upset afterwards or want to talk to someone, you can reach out to a trusted person in your direct environment or one of these support services (available by chat, phone, or email):

- www.awel.be (BE)
- Jongerenadviescentrum (JAC) (BE)
- [@ease](https://@ease.nl) (NL)
- [De Kindertelefoon](https://www.kindertelefoon.nl) (NL)
- [YoungMinds](https://www.youngminds.co.uk) (UK)

Do I get anything in return?

While we can't pay you for your time or participation, we do offer you a **book voucher** as a token of appreciation. The type of voucher depends on where you live:

- **Belgium:** €15 *De Standaard Boekenbon* (digital)
- **The Netherlands:** €15 *Nationale Boekenbon* (eCard)
- **United Kingdom:** £15 *Waterstones eGift*
- **Other countries:** a local book voucher of similar value

Your voucher will be emailed to you within **one week** after the interview. You'll just need to confirm that the email address is correct, which counts as your receipt. There is no cash alternative.

What about travel costs?

If we meet in person, your **reasonable regional travel costs** will be reimbursed. This means standard local train or bus tickets. **Long-distance or international travel is not reimbursed.**

To receive reimbursement, you **must provide a paper or digital ticket or receipt** at the interview. Travel costs can be reimbursed in two ways:

- Cash or Payconiq on-site after the interview, or
- through UGent's Refund-system. If you choose this option, UGent will email you after the interview and you can provide your bank details securely.

If a **parent or guardian** comes with you (if you are under 18), their reasonable travel costs will also be reimbursed on the same basis.

Is my data safe?

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Belgian law of 30 July 2018 (protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data), we respect your privacy.

Your **identity** stays confidential, and your **contact information** is encrypted, stored securely on Ghent University servers, and kept separate from your interview data.

The interview is **audio recorded** for transcription only. Your **name is never recorded**, only your pseudonym. The **audio recording** of your interview will be kept only as long as needed for accurate transcription, stored securely, and safely deleted once the transcript has been reviewed and finalized.

You can **review the transcript** and request corrections or removal of part you no longer want included. If you request a review, the transcript is finalized only after you have had the chance to suggest changes, within one week of receiving your transcript. This helps make sure the transcript is accurate and that you stay in control of how your contribution is represented. You can request a transcript review by indicating this on the informed consent form or by emailing me afterwards, with your pseudonym.

Your data is **pseudonymized**, which means any information that could directly identify you will be removed from our database. We will also redact any specific details you might mention accidentally (like names of people in your life or familiar places) to prevent indirect identification. Only myself and, only if necessary, my supervisor (Prof. Dr. Elly McCausland), will have access to the raw data.

If you also took part in the *Reading Mentors* survey, your interview can **only be linked to your survey answers if you choose to share the 5-digit, unique ID code** you received in the survey. You do not have to do this.

If you want more information about how your data is protect, you can contact our Data Protection Officer: Mrs. Hanne Elsen, phone: +32 9 264 95 17, email: privacy@ugent.be, address: Campus Ufo, Rectoraat 2, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 25, 9000 Ghent.

What happens to the data?

The results may appear in academic publications, conferences, workshops, lectures, or other educational resources, for example. Data is pseudonymized and stored up to 5 years for further analysis. After transcription and review, audio recordings are safely deleted. Paper documentation

(e.g. consent forms, receipts) are stored securely and destroyed safely at the end of the project. Interviews in Dutch may be translated into English; the original Dutch is kept alongside translations, and translation will be clearly marked.

Can I see the results?

Yes! You can request a **summary of the findings** and/or a **digital copy of my dissertation** once it's published. Simply email me or my supervisor, and we'll make sure you receive the information when it's ready.

Who is behind this study?

This research is part of my PhD project at Ghent University. It is funded by Ghent University's *Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds*. Prof. Dr. Elly McCausland is my doctoral academic supervisor and oversees the research process. This study has been reviewed and was approved by the Ethics Committee of the faculty of Arts and Philosophy. Please note that this approval does not imply any obligation to take part in this study.

How to submit a complaint?

If you wish to lodge a complaint regarding the processing of your personal data or if you have any questions concerning your personal data in the context of this research, you may contact the Data Protection Officer of Ghent University at privacy@ugent.be or by telephone at +32 (0)9 264 95 17. You also have the right to submit a complaint to the Data Protection Authority, Drukpersstraat 35, 1000 Brussels (email: contact@apd-gba.be) and/or to the Vlaamse Toezichtscommissie (email: contact@toezichtscommissie.be).

Would you like to participate?

If you'd like to take part in an interview, please fill out [this short Microsoft Form](#).

The form asks about:

- when you're available (days, times, preferred weeks)
- whether you prefer an online or in-person interview, and
- which book or series you'd like to talk about.

After you fill it out, I'll email you several possible interview times, and you can choose the one that suits you best.

If you don't want to take part at all, that's completely fine. I do ask you send me a quick email to let me know, so I won't keep sending reminder emails. You don't have to give a reason and there won't be any consequences at all.

**Thank you for your time and consideration! Warm wishes,
Janieke Koning and Elly McCausland**

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the study or your participation, feel free to contact us:

Janieke Koning

Email: readingmentors@ugent.be

Address: Campus Boekentoren, Blandijn,
Blandijnberg 2, office 130.005, 9000, Gent

Prof. Dr. Elly McCausland (the supervisor)

Email: elly.mccausland@ugent.be

Address: Campus Boekentoren, Blandijn,
Blandijnberg 2, 130.015, 9000, Ghent