

ARRTapalooza

RA 101

No longer just books but all formats and collections within the library

Readers' Advisors Don't Need to...

- Read everything
- Remember plots
- Like what we read
- Find the perfect book

Skills to master...

- How to read like an RA
- How to write like an RA
- How to speak like an RA
- How to listen like an RA

Appeal

Why appeal?

- It's the way we naturally think and speak about books
- It takes us beyond plot summaries
- It helps us remember books and share them more easily
- It allows readers to decide whether a book would work or not

Appeal terms are adjectives, positive, easy to understand

RA Conversation

Instant RA

- Read—anything and everything
- Keep a list of what you read
- Talk about books
- Read reviews—in magazines, newspaper, online
- Put up a display
- Have fun!

Bonus handouts

- Booksheet to keep notes on books
- RA on a Shoestring

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CONSIDERING A BOOK'S APPEAL

Pacing

What is the pattern of the pacing? Are characters and plot quickly revealed or slowly unveiled?

Is there more dialogue or description?

Is the book densely written?

Are there short sentences, short paragraphs, and short chapters?

Does a prologue or introduction set up the story?

breakneck, brisk, builds in intensity, compelling, deliberate, densely written, easy, engrossing, fast-paced, intense, languid, leisurely-paced, measured, relaxed, relentless, stately, steady, unhurried, urgent

Tone/Mood

How does the author create mood? With tension or humor? With familiar or exotic details? With nightmare visions or homespun images?

How does the book make readers feel?

Does the tone dominate the readers' impression of the book?

Atmospheric, austere, bittersweet, bleak, candid, chilling, claustrophobic, comfortable, compassionate, contemplative, creepy, dangerous, dark, darkly humorous, didactic, disturbing, dramatic, earnest, edgy, elegiac, emotionally-charged, evangelistic, evocative, exuberant, flamboyant, foreboding, gentle, gossipy, gritty, gruesome, hard-edged, haunting, heartwarming, homespun, hopeful, humorous, impassioned, inspirational, intense, introspective, lighthearted, magical, melodramatic, melancholy, menacing, moody, moving, mystical, nightmare, nostalgic, optimistic, paranoid, persuasive, philosophical, poignant, psychological, playful, reflective, romantic, sarcastic, sensual, serious, sobering, sophisticated, stark, steamy, suspenseful, thought-provoking, thoughtful, unaffected, uneasy, unpretentious, upbeat, whimsical

Characterization

Are the characters developed over time, or are they stereotypes we recognize immediately?

Is the focus on a single character or on several whose lives are intertwined?

Is the reader expected to identify with the characters or observe them?

What is the point of view from which the story is told? 1st person?

Are there series characters, followed through and developed over several novels?

Are there memorable and important secondary characters?

Is characterization the most important aspect of the book?

Authentic, closely observed, detailed, distant, dramatic, eccentric, engaging, evocative, faithful, familiar, flawed, insightful, inspiring, interior, intriguing, introspective, involving, lifelike, multiple points of view, quirky, realistic, recognizable, sassy, series (characters), strong secondary (characters), sympathetic, vivid, well-developed, well-drawn

Story Line

What is the author's intention in regard to story line?

Does the story emphasize people or situations and events?

Is the focus of the story more interior and psychological or exterior and action-oriented?

Does the story take place on more than one level?

Action-oriented, action-packed, authentic, character-centered, cinematic, complex, conclusive, domestic, episodic, explicitly violent, familiar, family-centered, flashbacks, folksy, gentle, imaginative, inspirational, investigative, interior, issue-oriented, layered, linear, literary references, multiple plot lines, mystical, mythic, open-ended, plot-centered, plot twists, racy, resolved ending, rich and famous, riveting, romp, sexually explicit, steamy, strong language, thought-provoking, tragic

Frame/Setting

Is the background detailed or minimal?

Does the frame affect the tone or atmosphere?

Is there a special background frame?

Accurate, contemporary, detailed setting, details of [insert an area of specialized knowledge or skill], evocative, exotic, historical details, intimate, lush, political, rural, small-town, stark, timeless, urban

Style/Language

Does the writing matter? Is language or style the most important element?

Are there unusual styles—diaries, journals, IMs, emails, etc?

Does the book offer a scholarly or popular treatment of a nonfiction subject?

Academic, accessible, anecdotal, austere, breezy, cadenced, candid, chatty, classic, clever, colloquial, colorful, compelling, complex, concise, conversational, convincing, descriptive, dialect-rich, dialog-rich, direct, dramatic, earthy, elaborate, elegant, engaging, experimental, extravagant, fervid, flamboyant, frank, graceful, homespun, informal, informative, intelligent, jargon-filled, journalistic, literary, lush, lyrical, mesmerizing, metaphorical, natural, ornate, passionate, persuasive, poetic, polished, profanity-filled, prosaic, pun-filled, restrained, richly detailed, scholarly, seemingly, showy, simple, slang-heavy, smart, sophisticated, spare, stark, straightforward, stylistically complex, thoughtful, unaffected, unembellished, unpretentious, unusual, vivid, well-crafted, well-researched, witty.

Questions to Consider in Describing Books

What does the author do best?

What makes the book popular? What do readers talk about?

What other authors/titles does the book remind you of?

Who else might enjoy reading this book and why?

How does it fit with other books in a genre?

Factors Specific to Nonfiction

Is it authoritative (well-researched)?

Is it informative?

Is it entertaining?

Readers' Advisory Conversation

Chief differences between Reference Interview and RA Conversation

With RA, often no exact or correct answers; RA is about possibilities
There may not be resources to consult

Warm up Exercises

what's on the shelves
what's on the best sellers list
what's on display—stock up

Conversation Tips

Don't ask: "What do you like?"
"Tell me about a book you've read and enjoyed?"
"Are you in the mood for that or something different?"
Offer possibilities
 don't be afraid to cross genres and the Dewey Divide
 offer non-book formats
 tell the readers why these titles might work
Master pick-up lines, develop a patter

Let the reader talk

about what he has liked—listen for his version of books
about what he's in the mood for today

Explain what you're looking up if you use an electronic or print tool—and how to use it.

Accompany readers to the stacks if possible; it's a great opportunity for conversations and for our brains to start working

When we offer books

Short!
Appeal based, rather than plot, summary
Why this matches reader's interests
It's all about possibilities, not the perfect book
Try to suggest at least 3 titles

Jump-start the conversation by offering suggestions when you...

Answer any question, even directional
Take a reserve
Help a reader find a book, especially if you're unsuccessful
Come across readers in the stacks

Make offering suggestions an automatic response

If you can't answer immediately, take reader's information and get back to her. Readers appreciate the interest and usually don't mind waiting.

Keep in mind...

Always on stage
Suggest, don't Recommend
From the reader to the book, not vice versa
Alternatives to "well-written"
There often isn't a "right answer" as there is with reference questions
It's a conversation, and some of the best conversations happen in the stacks and at the checkout desk

Readers' Advisory on a Shoestring

Marketing Techniques for Readers' Advisory

- < advertise your readers' advisory service (in the library and on your webpage)
- < create easy displays—fiction and nonfiction and all formats
- < display booklists and bookmarks, feature themes and authors
- < let readers overhear you talking about books

On the desk

- < be prepared for readers' advisory questions
- < treat readers' advisory questions as you treat all other reference queries
- < keep resources (electronic and print) at the desk and use them with patrons
- < identify and develop a network of readers' advisory experts—know who reads what and to whom you can turn for help among fellow staff, colleagues in other libraries, and patrons
- < subscribe to Fiction_L (readers' advisory maillist)
(<http://www.mgpl.org/read-listen-view/fl/flmenu/>)
- < subscribe to blogs such as EarlyWord (www.earlyword.com) and Reader's Advisor Online Blog (www.readersadvisoronline.com/blog/)
- < keep statistics of readers' advisory conversations and set personal goals to increase your interactions
- < let patrons know you help with leisure reading questions and suggest books
 - use signs
 - approach readers in the stacks
 - talk about books at the desk
- < set up a Good Books You May Have Missed display
 - use other displays of books and booklists to promote reading
- < collect and share "sure bets"

- < aggressively approach readers and offer assistance
 - “Tell me about a book you’ve enjoyed”
 - “Are you in the mood for that or something different?”
- < "suggest" rather than "recommend" books

Off-desk Activities:

- < keep a list of what you read
- < design a personal reading plan
 - read in unfamiliar genres, popular with your patrons
 - read authors on the best seller lists
 - talk about discoveries with staff and patrons
- < write about books and share your thoughts through social media or library blog
- < read reviews and look for the appeal of the book and its audience
- < practice talking about books--everyday
- < write a personal reader profile; exchange profiles with a colleague and make suggestions
- < subscribe to a genre maillist or blog; read it for 2 months and try another
- < create subject-based bookmarks; make connections between fiction and nonfiction collections; market in-house and on our webpage
- < create annotated booklists
- < lead a book discussion at your library—fiction and nonfiction
- < brainstorm read-alike bookmarks for popular authors
- < develop popular fiction and nonfiction lists that reflect your readers’ tastes
- < undertake a genre study
- < participate in the Adult Reading Round Table for on-going RA training or establish your own networking group