

## **Surviving the Face to Face Readers' Advisory Interview**

Many of us dread the question "can you recommend a good book" because no two people's reading interests are the same. It's OK, the patron knows that your reading taste is different; rather, they're acknowledging the library's brand as a reading resource and recognizing that our staff have exposure to tools that can help them.

### **Strategies for Success**

#### **Open Ended Questions**

These are your best friend during any reference interview. Every question that is posed to the reader can be phrased in a way that elicits useful information. Here are some examples:

- o Tell me about the last good book you read...
- o Are there any authors who you love/hate?
- o What are the things you enjoy most in a book?

#### **Think About Appeal**

That last example gets to the reasons why we enjoy a particular book. In school, these are called appeal terms; for the reader, these are the particular aspects of a book that they may like or dislike. When providing readers' advisory, it's helpful to refer to these elements of the book. Here are examples of appeal terms:

- o Pace: this is the way the story moves, *e.g.* fast-paced, leisurely-paced, etc.
- o Storyline: *e.g.* action-packed, character-driven, sweeping, etc
- o Frame: this is where the story takes place *i.e.* the setting or atmosphere
- o Tone: *e.g.* upbeat, dark, etc.
- o Characterization: is there a focus on a single character or on several whose lives are intertwined?
- o Writing style: *e.g.* descriptive, gritty, lyrical, etc

#### **Ask For Help!**

Don't be afraid to tap your co-workers for help! We're all passionate about books and while paranormal romance for teens may not be your thing, don't be afraid to tell the patron that you're going to confer with your colleagues.

## Don't Know What To Recommend? NoveList Does!

NoveList is a high quality tool for helping our users find the perfect book to read. It includes 150,000+ titles for **all ages**. You can access these main features on the database homepage:

- Lists similar reads to bestsellers with huge holds lists
- Author readalikes (under Lists &Articles)
- Genre booklists
- Book discussion guides
- Awards link (most comprehensive site for awards, check here first!)
- Readers' advisory tools

### NoveList and Readalikes

Ask your patron for an author/title/series they loved, and NoveList will help you find something similar. Recommendations for authors/title/series (readalikes) are hand-selected by NoveList librarians who write a brief note explaining why the authors appeal to readers in similar ways. Other recommendations are computer generated hits using the subject headings and appeal terms added to each record by NoveList librarians. If possible, try and use recommendations made by the librarians. How can you tell? Next to the reason why a title or author is similar: is a person's name!

#### Read-alikes

[View All](#)

 Palahniuk, Chuck

 Houellebecq, Michel

 Welsh, Irvine

 Tartt, Donna

 Bingham, Robert

 Martin, George R. R.

 Puzo, Mario, 1920-1999

 Gaitskill, Mary, 1954-

 Ferrante, Elena

### How To Do It:

A patron is looking for authors who write like Bret Easton Ellis.

**Select:** Author. Enter terms “Bret Easton Ellis” Look to the far right of the screen and you will see a list of Readalikes. Select “View All” A list of authors and explanations are retrieved:

- Bingham, Robert
- Reason: boredom, substance abuse, and impulsive sexual encounters are routine for the jaded and self-destructive characters in books by Robert Bingham and Bret Easton Ellis. Their edgy and stylish stories capture the lurid thrills of hedonistic youths and satire the hollow values of wealthy families. -- Derek Keyser
- Martin, George R. R.
- Reason: these authors' works are Gritty and Character-driven, and they share the genre "Horror Stories" and the subject "Violence"

**NOTE:** Robert Bingham is recommended by the librarian Derek Keyser. George R. R. Martin is retrieved by the computer because of the matching subject headings and appeal terms. When using this tool, you should prefer recommendations made by librarians over those relying solely on matching headings and appeal terms.

## NoveList And Reader Reference

Sometimes you will meet a user who can only remember the plot outline, key character, or term from a book they've read. NoveList has features that can help us put a title to a reader reference question.

rich people	TX All Text
AND ▼ mentally ill	TX All Text
AND ▼ murder	TX All Text

### How To Do It:

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#)



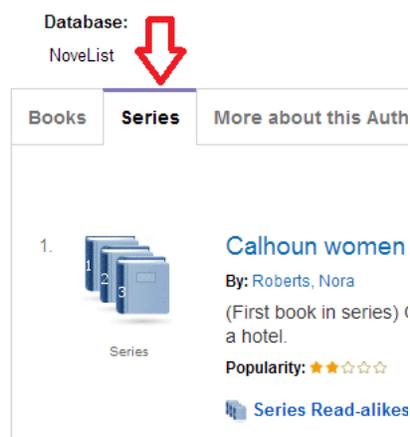
A patron is trying to remember the title of a novel that she recently read. She does not remember the author or the title. She tells you that the book was about a bunch of rich people who live in a sanctuary in the mountains and there is a mentally ill woman who murders her mother.

- Extract key terms or controlled vocabulary from her description
- Enter the following terms “rich people and mentally ill and murder”
- 17 results and title *The Reserve* by Russell Banks is accessed

**NOTE:** Use the Advances Search and TX All Text limit.

## NoveList And Finding Books In A Series

Series are comprehensive and ordered in chronological order. If you spent time with our user community both young and old, you probably know how popular series are. Even if you have some familiarity with a series, it can be challenging to remember which title precedes which! Don't worry, NoveList will help you.



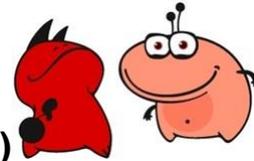
### How To Do It:

A patron has asked you to find information about any series written by Nora Roberts

- Enter author name or series name in the search box e.g. “Roberts, Nora”
- At the results list page, choose SERIES tab
- Results list will now display alphabetical list by series titles
- Open e.g. *Ardmore Trilogy*
- NoveList will display all Ardmores titles in series order
- NoveList will also display the alternate series title: *Irish Jewels*

## Connecting Kids and Teens to Their Next Great Read

Nurturing young readers is a big part of our mission. On this page you'll learn about the resources the Library has available to help you be a recommendation hero to our younger patrons and their families.

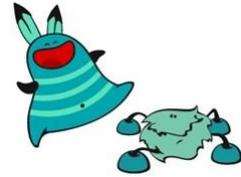


### Know Your In-House Resources (And Ask For Help!)

Whether you're in a Branch or roving a floor at Central, you have access to host of resources that can help you put the right book in the child's hand.

- **Branch Children's Librarians:** your friendly branch expert! Feeling stuck when a parent asks you for suitable tween recommendations? Maybe you're curious about the best books for a reluctant teen manga-holic? The Library's CTS staff are experts at all things Kids and will be happy to point you in the direction of what's hot in kids books.
- **The Children's Library:** the awesome staff of the Children's Library can be reached via telephone or email to help you with a tricky book list or up-to-date hot title.
- **[VPL Kids](#):** the portal to all things kids on the vpl.ca public page. Take a moment to explore this great resource and you'll find a wealth of information to help you connect parents and kids to great reads. Here is where you will also find a link to our famous...
- **[Kids Booklists](#):** this is **the** place to start if you need to connect kids and their parents to some good reads:
  - **100 Picture Books to Love:** just like it says, perfect to help parents and early childhood educators get started
  - **Recommended Reads:** the best of the best, selected by our outstanding CTS team
  - **Concepts and issues:** a great way to connect school-age readers to books that can support topics learned in Social Studies and English classes
  - **Award Winners:** check here for the latest and greatest selections from the Young Readers' Choice and Red Cedar Awards
- **[Raising Readers](#):** this is an outstanding VPL resource that will help you connect parents and early childhood educators to literacy development tools.
- **[VPL Teens](#):** this is the Library's online home for our young adult user community. There's a host of resources here to help connect teens to their next great read. Young Adult literature is very popular so if a young person is wait-listed for a big title, try connecting them to a readalike using the tools below:

- [If You Like... Authors](#): readalikes for teens based on authors
- [If You Like... Titles](#): readalikes for teens based on titles
- [Teen Booklists](#): take a moment to explore this fantastic collection of teen curated booklists. Who knows better about what's hot and what's not in books than our Teen Advisory Groups?
- **NoveList Kids & Teens**: our readers' advisory database has a special feature for kids and teens. To learn more about using NoveList to optimize your recommendations click [here!](#)



## More Resources from The Children's Librarian's Toolkit

Being up to speed on what's popular with our young readers is an important part of connecting kids to their next favourite book. Stay current with these great external resources:

- [Common Sense Media - Best Apps & Games](#): have you been asked about apps and games for kids? If not, you will be soon. Know what to recommend by relying on this authoritative website.
- [Kirkus Reviews Children's Books](#): stay current with venerable book review magazine's coverage of kids and teens' titles

## For Every Reader, the Right Format

Providing equitable service is a cornerstone of the library mission. When it comes to reading recommendations, it means that we connect our users to alternate formats as well as our print collections.

To be a readers' advisor *par excellence* and to meet this mission, you must first be familiar with the full range of our formats.

### Know What You Carry

- Audiobooks
- Large Print
- EBooks and Downloadable Audiobooks

### More on the Joys of Alternative Formats

Each of the formats identified above have special considerations. As you work towards a recommendation with the user, be sure to consider the following:

**Audiobooks:** don't be afraid to recommend these to any user looking to enjoy a good story as they can often work as substitute if the print selection has a massive queue.

- Where is the preferred location for reading the audiobook? In a car, at home on a CD player, or through a mobile device?
- Know that we have compact disc audiobooks, mp3 audiobooks, and downloadable audiobooks *via* your BC Libraries to go. Know that some audio systems will not work with some formats.
- Many audiobooks are abridged. Is this acceptable for the user?
- Know the narrator! Maybe William Shatner reading Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* isn't the best fit?

**Large Print:** just like audiobooks you can sometimes connect users to this collection if the smaller-typeface copy is checked out.

- Remember that large print titles are larger all over and some of our users might find them heavy to hold
- There is often a publishing industry lag between when a title is produced in smaller typeface and when a large print copy becomes available; we might not have the latest bestseller available in large print yet!

**EBooks and Downloadable Audiobooks:** the ability of many hand-held devices to increase font size makes our eBook collection a *de facto* large print collection while the

downloadable audiobook collection offers users more choice.

- Be aware that accessing our digital collections requires some technological savvy and may require support
- There are many types of eBook and downloadable audiobook compatible devices available. Does the user have a device that supports our collection?

## Further Resources to Help You

- [The Centre For Equitable Library Access](#)

This organization advocates for and coordinates library services to persons with print disabilities across Canada. Want to be a true master at readers' advisory? Familiarise yourself with this site and be sure to take note of their fantastic book discovery resource:

- [Recommended](#): pulls together community picks, thematic picks, bestsellers and noteworthy titles. Not just a great resource for alternative formats, but a great resource for all reading recommendations!

# Think Genres!

## Mystery

### What's it all about...

The Mystery genre describes detective or crime fiction. Plots revolve around professional or amateur detectives investigating and solving crimes. This is a broad genre that also includes crime scene fiction, legal mysteries, cozy mysteries, hard-boiled private eye fiction, and humorous mysteries.

Regardless of the specific flavor, and there are many, readers of mysteries enjoy participating in the puzzle with the protagonist. The ordered moral setting where good and bad are may be readily identified and conclusions see justice served are also appreciated.

### The classic works:

- *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) by Edgar Allen Poe
- *The Maltese Falcon* (1929) by Dashiell Hammett
- *Cover Her Face* (1962) by P.D. James
- *Knots and Crosses* (1987) by Ian Rankin

### Resources to find the best in Mystery:

- **11 Most Popular Contemporary Mystery Authors:** Bernard Drew's reference work provides author sketches and bibliographies
- [www.topmystery.com](http://www.topmystery.com): regularly updated blog with news and reviews
- [www.mysterybooks.ca](http://www.mysterybooks.ca): good coverage of popular titles with annotations and read-alikes
- **Books to Die For:** an anthology of the genre that includes authors writing about their favorite mysteries

# Think Genres!

## Chick Lit

### What's it all about...

This is a fiction genre that speaks to issues of modern womanhood through a lighthearted lens. Chick Lit is not a subcategory of Romance: the heroine's relationships with her family and friends is often just as important as her romantic relationships. Settings are contemporary and urban, with attention to details about fashion and *au courant* locales.

The term gained traction in the 1990s after being coined by the *New Yorker* to describe the self-conscious femininity of female reporters in New York. The publishing industry then adopted it.

Titles can be recognized by through their bright and colorful covers, often with a cartoonish and feminine pop-art sensibility

### The classic works:

- *Sex and the City* (1996) by Candace Bushnell
- *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing* (1998) by Melissa Bank
- *Bridget Jones' Diary* (1999) by Helen Fielding
- *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003) by Lauren Weisberger

### Resources to find the best in Chick Lit:

- **Novelist**: search for Chick Lit and click on "Lists and Articles"
- [www.chicklitbooks.com](http://www.chicklitbooks.com): regularly updated blog with reviews
- [www.chicklitclub.com](http://www.chicklitclub.com): regularly updated blog with news and reviews

# Think Genres!

## Fantasy

### What's it all about...

The genre label Fantasy is usually applied to novels whose plots, themes or settings feature supernatural phenomena and magical elements. Within the pages of a Fantasy novel, readers can expect to meet wizards, dragons, vampires and more.

Some common features of Fantasy fiction include imaginary worlds and inspiration from mythology and folklore. Dark Fantasy, Paranormal Fantasy and Magic Realism are some of the many examples of Fantasy subgenres.

### The classic works:

- *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) by J. R. R. Tolkien
- *The Book of Three* (1964) by Lloyd Alexander
- *The Earthsea Trilogy* (1968) by Ursula K. Le Guin
- *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996) by George R. R. Martin

### Resources to find the best in Fantasy:

- [www.bestfantasybooks.com](http://www.bestfantasybooks.com): a website that provides broad advisory coverage to Fantasy and its many subgenres.
- [www.fantasybookreview.co.uk](http://www.fantasybookreview.co.uk): UK based fan resource with current reviews and subgenre descriptions.
- **Read On: Fantasy Fiction**: fan-authored and authoritative, features recommended fantasy titles organized into thematic lists.
- **Genreflecting: Fluent in Fantasy**: part of the Genreflecting Advisory series, features a guide to major works and subgenre story anthologies.

# Think Genres!

## New Adult

### What's it all about...

The label New Adult emerged in the last five years: the phrase was coined through a St. Martin's Press writing contest in 2009. Novels within this genre feature college-age protagonists who are transitioning into adulthood in contemporary settings.

This emergent genre has been controversial with critics complaining that it is less of a literary form and more of a marketing gimmick to appeal to the hard-to-reach 18 to 25 year old demographic. It has even been suggested that New Adult is merely Young Adult with more explicit situations!

Regardless of the criticism, the New Adult is here to stay with a healthy fanbase that publishers have taken note of. What was driven primarily by self-published titles has now been incorporated into the mainstream.

### The classic works:

- *Slammed* (2012) by Colleen Hoover
- *Losing It* (2012) by Cora Carmack
- *Beautiful Disaster* (2012) by Jamie McGuire
- *Crash* (2012) Nicole Williams

### Resources to find the best in New Adult:

- [www.naalley.com](http://www.naalley.com): fan-created website with publishing news, author interviews, and book recommendations.
- **NoveList**: search with "new adult fiction" as a genre term for book lists and readalikes.
- [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com): search with "new adult" in genres for booklists and recommended books.

# Think Genres!

## Horror

### What's it all about...

Horror fiction's most basic definition is that it is designed to *scare* the reader. The genre's tone can vary from comedic to dour or hectic to suspenseful, but all stories tend to maintain an atmosphere of menace.

The novice reader should be aware that unsolved or unhappy endings are the norm; fans of the genre treasure this aspect. Monsters of some kind often frame the story. Horror fiction can be expected to have more graphic violence or sexual situations than many other genres and this can shock new readers.

It is recommended that the advisor look to how soon the mayhem starts and match the degree of savagery to the readers' tastes!

### The classic works:

- *The Call of Cthulu* (1929) by H.P. Lovecraft
- *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) by Ira Levin
- *Carrie* (1974) by Stephen King
- *Ghost Story* (1979) by Peter Straub

### Resources to find the best in Horror:

- ***Read On: Horror Fiction***: a reference work for librarians and patrons categorizing titles both current and classic
- ***The Horror Readers' Advisory***: outlines the history of the genre with tips for readers' advisors too
- [www.monsterlibrarian.com](http://www.monsterlibrarian.com): regularly updated site to help both readers and readers' advisors
- [www.horror.org](http://www.horror.org): website of the Horror Writers Association with industry and author news

# Think Genres!

## Science Fiction

### What's it all about...

The genre label **Science Fiction** is usually applied to novels that cross entertainment with science speculation. Alternative worlds or futures are presented within the realm of plausibility informed by scientific principles, in contrast to the magic and supernatural content found within the Fantasy genre.

Common features of Science Fiction include settings in outer space, futuristic technology, characters such as aliens and robots, and dystopias and post-apocalyptic social-political systems.

### The classic works:

- *The War of the Worlds* (1898) by H.G. Wells
- *The Martian Chronicles* (1929) by Ray Bradbury
- *Dune* (1965) by Frank Herbert
- *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979) Douglas Adams
- *Ender's Game* (1985) by Orson Scott Card

### Resources to find the best in Sci-Fi:

- ***Anatomy of Wonder: a Critical Guide to Science Fiction***: full history of the genre with lists of awards and author biographies,
- ***Read On: Science Fiction Reading Lists for Every Taste***: Steven Torres-Ramon authored readers' advisory guide
- [www.sfreviews.net](http://www.sfreviews.net): in-depth reviews of current and classic titles
- [www.thehugoawards.org](http://www.thehugoawards.org): one of the most prestigious awards for science fiction writing, the site features winners since its inception

# Think Genres!

## Romance

### What's it all about...

Romance novels feature two people who are attracted to each other but experience conflict and misunderstanding along the way, thereby placing their relationship in jeopardy.

This is an expansive genre with many popular subtypes including contemporary, historical, erotic, suspenseful and even paranormal romances. But regardless of the plot or setting, the reader knows that in the final pages, love will prevail for a happily ever after ending.

### The classic works:

- *The Flame and the Flower* (1972) by Kathleen Woodiwiss
- *Outlander* (1991) by Diana Gabaldon
- *Almost Heaven* (1991) by Judith McNaught
- *Bet Me* (2004) by Jennifer Crusie

### Resources to find the best in Romance:

- [www.rwa.org](http://www.rwa.org): *Romance Writers of American's* site includes a special section for librarians
- [www.rtbookreviews.com](http://www.rtbookreviews.com): the website of *RT Book Reviews Magazine* with reviews, as well as author and industry news
- [www.smartbitchestrashybooks.com](http://www.smartbitchestrashybooks.com): Sarah Wendell's fantastic and funny site with regularly updated news and reviews
- ***Beyond Heaving Bosoms***: authored by Sarah Wendell, this guide is funny and insightful
- ***Romance Fiction: a Guide to the Genre***: Kristin Ramsdell's guide in the *Genreflecting Advisory Series* is comprehensive

# Think Genres!

## Western

### What's it all about...

The genre label **Western** is usually applied to novels that are associated with a specific time and place in American history that depict the desolate, difficult life encountered by American frontier families.

Specific settings include isolated forts, ranches and homesteads, Native American villages, or the small frontier town with its saloon, general store, livery stable and jailhouse. Heroes of these stories are usually cowboys or gunfighters bound to no social structures but their own code of honour, who roam from place to place on horseback, fighting villains.

### The classic works:

- *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) by Zane Grey
- *Shane* (1949) Jack Schaefer
- *Hondo* (1952) by Louis L'Amour
- *Lonesome Dove* (1985) by Larry McMurtry
- *The Good Old Boys* (1999) by Elmer Kelton

### Resources to find the best in Western:

- ***Read the High Country: a Guide to Western Books and Films***: John Mort authored title in the *Genreflecting Advisory Series* spans the entire spectrum of the genre
- ***What Western Do I Read Next***: Wayne Barton's guide to 1900 western titles is designed to connect aficionados with their next read
- [www.westernfictionreview.blogspot.ca](http://www.westernfictionreview.blogspot.ca): regularly updated blog with news and reviews
- [www.westernwriters.org](http://www.westernwriters.org): the website of Western Writers of America with industry news and links to Spur winners of past and present