

Revving up your RA through booktalking



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What is booktalking?

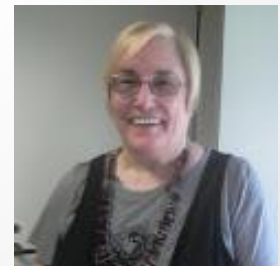
- Booktalking is a formal or informal presentation designed to entice listeners into reading a book.
- A booktalk is what you say to convince someone to read a book.
- Not a book review; don't evaluate
- Based on the assumption that the book is good, and goes on from there.
- Sales pitch for the book - we've all done them when we've said to a friend "you've just got to read this book!"
- Not static but always changing to fit the booktalker and the audience. A flexible art.
- It is an intriguing, enticing glimpse of a book designed to pique the listeners' interest and curiosity, making them want to know more.
- Special form of RA, makes your collection come alive - Choose good books that may go unnoticed by your patrons

Brief History of Booktalking

- Margaret Edwards (1930s) - pioneer in YA services
- New York Public Library (1940s)
- Dr. Joni Richards Bodart (1969)
- *The Bodart Method* - 1st person to write about booktalks and how to do them
- Nancy Keane
- Jennifer Broman (antithesis of Bodart)
- Patrick Jones

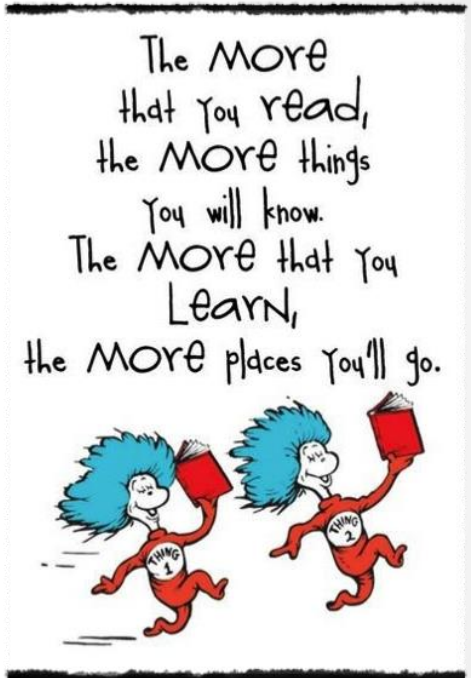
The Bodart Method

- Write the whole talk out verbatim. copy onto index cards/stickers and take with you. (Joni's preference)
- Write the whole talk out and take only the outline on a card with you. First practice from whole talk, than from outline.
- Write down only the outline, key sentences, characters' names. If you don't do the talk often you may have to reconstruct each time.
- Practice everything at once. Talk, body movements, gestures, what to do with the book, what you do with your notes. Showing all titles at once or just the one you're talking about.
- Don't memorize. Think of it has a cartoon strip instead. Deliberately use different words or phrases when you practice.
- Don't look at notes/outline when you get stuck. Try to unstick yourself on your own before going to the notes.
- Practice till it sounds like you're just talking.



Why Booktalk?

- Get people to enjoy reading
- Get people to read more often
- Get people to read more widely
- Support shifting reading interests
- Spark interest in older books
- Get books off death-row promo
- Showcase new books
- Increased library usage (+ circ stats)
- Increase interest in library led bookclubs
- Increased interest in registering as a bookclub
- Build partnerships with schools & community groups
- Fun and effective programming for all ages
- Promote staff profile as book people; walking & talking RA



RA Interview – Chatting over a cup of tea



- RA interview is more personal than the reference interview.
- It is not about finding a book, it is about getting to know the reader.
- Tools are secondary. Your best resource is the patron standing in front of you.

It's a conversation... about books!

- **Conversation starters**

- What are you in the mood for?
- What do you usually like to read? Are you looking for something similar or do you want to try something different?
- Can you tell me about a book you really enjoyed? What about the book grabbed your attention?

Let's talk about books

- Favourites: book(s), author(s), Genre(s)?
- What 5 books would you take to a deserted island?
- An author/book you have thought about reading but never got around to it?
- What would be reading out of your comfort zone?
- What are your favourite places to read?
- What format do you like to read? (e-books, audiobooks, Large print, brand new hardcover, a well loved paperback)



Booktalking Taboos

- Never tell the ending.
- Never booktalk a book you haven't read.
- Do not go by reviews; need personal experience.
- Never booktalk a book you disliked; never talk about a book you wouldn't recommend.
- Never lie or embellish to sell a book



What to do

- Do your own thing, make it your own, be yourself.
- Keep copies (Evernote, filing system)
- Keep notes (blog database, plot, characters' names, points of interest, hooks, setting, appeal factors, special features)
- Give yourself permission to not talk about books with subjects you're uncomfortable with.
- If you have interesting information on the author use it.
- Speak your audience's language. Only use slang you're comfortable with but make sure it is current.
- Omit details, use a broad brush leaving something for the listeners to discover on their own.
- Be creative. (booktalks can be raps, songs, poems or limericks, a letter/postcard, diary entry, news story, multimedia presentations)
- Find the most interesting part of the book and leave them wanting more.
- Can be performed live, podcast, vlog.
- Time your talk so you don't go on too long.
- Speak slowly to give your listeners time to hear and understand what you are saying.

How to develop your booktalking-self?

- Read
- Take notes
- Write (no more than 5 mins)
- Practice (use the mirror, watch yourself on camera)
- Perform (learn about voice & acting techniques)
- Find a community
- Watch booktalking critically (youtube, Vimeo)
- Attend book events (Dewey Divas, Word on the Street, author events etc)
- Create promotional materials (bookmarks, shelf-talkers, displays, booklists)
- Experiment Find out what works best for you, try out different types; find your own style

Always be reading

- Read what your patrons are reading
- Read in every genre - read till you find something you like or can appreciate in every genre/subgenre
- Read for all audiences (children, teen, adult)
- Read in all formats (audiobooks, e-book, print...try the same title in all 3 and compare the experience)
- Read professional materials (Publisher's Weekly, Early Word, Salon, New York Times, CBC reads, Globe and Mail, Shelf Awareness, NPR Books, The Millions)
- Read blogs (Reader's Advisor Online, RA for All, Bookslut, Fantastic Fiction, GalleyCat), YALSA)

Thinking about the booktalk

- **Answer these questions:**
 - What made you pick up the book?
 - What made you keep reading?
 - What was the hook?
 - What was the point where you knew you had to finish the book even if it meant staying up late?
 - What kind of reaction do you want to inspire in your audience?

What are your types?

- **Plot driven:** After describing the main points of the story, stop a cliffhanger (most common approach).
- **Character:** (1st or 3rd person) Become a character describe a character and present their POV.
- **Scene centred:** Focus on particular meaningful scene, describe it in detail and then stop. Tell one scene or story completely, including the ending and finish with “and that only one of things/stories that happened...” Great for anthologies and younger kids. e.g. Neil Gaiman's *Trigger Points*.
- **Mood based:** Create the mood by reading from the book, using quotes, props, sounds (don't read directly from the book). Write it in the style of the book. Use voice techniques to recreate the mood of the book (pitch, pace, tone, rhythm).
- **Personal enthusiasm / excitement:** Write about what gripped you and made you want to keep reading

The Writing Process

- Read the book (1st for pleasure, 2nd for booktalking)
- Take notes while reading (about plot, booktalkable episodes, setting, appeal factors, characters' names, jot down possible hooks and points of interest)
- Find a published talk and adapt it
- Hand write your booktalk or an outline immediately after reading.
- Decide which approach to take. What was the most exciting part of the book and why?
- Write a good copy (electronic copy)

Writing Basics

- Start in the middle of the action and explain the situation later, in your second, third or fourth sentence.
- Use short sentences. Focus on action, not description.
- Speak in the language of your audience--being colloquial is definitely okay.
- Cut out anything not essential to hook your audience. Say only enough to convince them to read the book and stop! Better to be short than go over.
- Your final sentence is another hook, one that should guarantee that your listeners remember the book and want to read it.
- It should leave something unresolved and is frequently a question or exclamation.
- Present tense is more audience involving than past tense.
- Avoid difficult words.
- Create a bridge from one title to the next by using a common element

What's the hook?

- **Cliffhanger:** bring listeners to the edge and then STOP!
- **Empathy:** ask rhetorical questions to put the audience in the character's shoes. Set the tone.
- **The first sentence:** read only the first line for a short but effective hook.
- **Ask a series of questions:** This will create a mood or pique curiosity.
- **If/then:** Present the booktalk in the conditional mode, if, then. Let the audience think of other possibilities.
- **Headlines:** refer to an article in the news, then link to the book. (Great for survival stories, contemporary biographies).
- **Know a secret:** talk about it, around it, but don't tell it.
- **Gross-out:** Describe the goriest or grossest scene in the book. (Great for kids. Great for horror).
- **O. Henry:** create one set of expectations, then pull the rug out with a trick ending; saving a vital part till the end.
- **Mystery:** Turn the book into a game of Clue, and invite the audience to play.
- **Audience participation:** give the audience part to play by letting them repeat a key phrase of the book.
- **Boring, but!:** start with the dry facts, then jump into a scandalous or shocking event.
- **What if?:** Present the moral dilemma facing a character.

Preparing for your talk

- Have the books displayed that you are talking about
- Present book before & after the talk
- Go over the author, title, genre
- Background information
- Who you think this book will appeal to
- Why the audience should try this book?
- Key information about understanding the talk
e.g. if you are going to do a 1st person booktalk make sure the audience understands that you are presenting a character, especially if the character is of the opposite sex.



Performing Tips

- Drink water before hand and have it available throughout the talk
- Conserve energy (1 big presentation vs. 2 smaller ones)
- Stickies on the back of books or outlines close by
- Use bookmarks so you can read parts aloud but know the passage well so you don't lose eye contact with audience
- Don't sweat the blips
- Wear clothing that you feel comfortable in and can move around easily
- Relax, make eye-contact and smile (build rapport) with audience prior to speaking
- Control your body; distractions (swaying, talking with hands, scratching, nervous habits)
- Don't wing it, prepare in advance

Booktalking Enhancers

- Props
- Costumes
- Accents
- Sounds / sound effects
- Mix of booktalks & booktrailers
- Encourage participation & interaction

Adapting Booktalks

- Read it aloud, get a feel for its rhythm, language and style.
- Change it from 1st person to 3rd person (play around).
- Take out words that you keep stumbling over or entire sections of the talk that feel awkward when you're presenting.
- Keep reading it aloud and changing it until it feels like yours.
- Some published talks are ready to go without changes. If they work for you and match your style use it.



Booktalking for kids

- Keep it short 1-3 mins each, entire talk 7-10 mins.
- Variety of talks (genres, lengths, topics & interests, formats, non-fiction, all reading levels-reluctant readers)
- Short sentences
- Fast paced
- 1st person works really well
- Great hooks: Gross-out, know a secret, Mystery, O. Henry.
- bring a whole slew of books and have them pick which ones they want you talk about (see if they can stump you)
- Promote self as a person who knows where the good books live.
- Possible themes: reluctant readers, I survived, Real life superheroes, Great reads for back to school, Spooky reads for Halloween, Awesome Non-fiction.
- Booktalking programs: SRC, back to school, connect booktalk to school projects.

The dreaded RA Question



- Do you have a book for a 10 year old girl?
- I'm in grade 4 and I need something to read?
- I cannot find anything to read, can you help me?

Always affirm courage

- I would love to, this is one of my favourite parts of working in a library, so thank you for making my day
- I may not be able to find just one book so I am going to pull a few and we can go through them together
- Don't take it if you don't like it. You can't hurt my feelings, you are just going to make it so much easier so we can find you something you really do want to read.



Booktalking for Teens

- Know the popular authors and genres e.g. urban fiction
- Get familiar with the read-a-likes of the popular reads e.g. *Fangirl*, *Divergent*, *John Green*, *zombies*
- Can be longer but keep it fast paced
- Try a variety of lengths
- Teens respond well to the “empathy hook” as reading is more of an emotional experience than an intellectual one. Less about ideas.
- Use booktrailers (there are some great ones created by students on youtube)



Booktalking for Adults

- Longer in length (15 to 20 mins)
- Try adding booktrailers from publisher's sites e.g. Random House
- Visit bookclubs - customize to suit their reading interests
- Possible themes: BYOBaby bookclub reads, From the Headlines, Popular non-fiction, Hot off the press, Old bookclub favourites (popular reads for bookclubs 7 to 5 year ago),
- Do a genre study (a mix of different genres or a mix of subgenres e.g. Romance: romantic suspense, regency romance, steampunk romance, contemporary romance)



Where to booktalk?

- **Formal & Informal settings:**
 - School visits
 - Library programs
 - Children's programs
 - Summer reading club
 - Bookclubs (in house and off site)
 - Staff training
 - in the stacks
 - on the desk
 - Roving

That's what its all about!

- Style
- Passion & Enthusiasm
- Storytelling
- Performance
- Sharing a love for books
- Developing life longer readers & learners
- Cultivating relationships
- Building partnerships
- Increasing library profile in the community
- Increasing usage stats



Booktalking Resources

- Teaching books (pronunciation guide)
<http://www.teachingbooks.net/pronunciations.cgi>
- Scholastic (ones by Joni are signed)
<http://www.scholastic.com/teacher/ab/booktalks.htm>
- Bookwink.com <http://www.bookwink.com>
- Random House
<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/resourcecats/book-talks/>
- Nancy Keane (some written by her but most submitted by others and need tweaking to make more interesting)
<http://www.nancykeane.com>
- Naomi Bates (booktrailers)
<http://naomibates.blogspot.ca>

Books on booktalking & RA

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- Jarrell, J.S. and Tara C. Cannon. (2011). *Cooler than fiction: A planning guide for teen non-fiction booktalks*. North Carolina: McFarland.
- Orr, C. and Diana Trixier Herald. (eds). (2013). *Genreflecting: A guide to popular reading interests*. 7th ed. California: Libraries unlimited.
- Schall, L. (2011). *Value-packed booktalks: Genre talks and more for teen readers*. California: Libraries unlimited.

Tools for Reader's Advisory

- *Reader's Advisor Online*
http://www.readersadvisoronline.com/blog/index.php??ws=WS_RA&as=blog%2findex.php&token=A99BE41015DDFA1F8F0B496896365F03
- *Early World* <http://www.earlyword.com>
- *Adult Reading Round Table* <http://www.artreads.org>
- *RA for All Blog* <http://raforall.blogspot.ca>
- *Nancy Pearl* <http://www.nancypearl.com>
- *Reader's Advice* <http://www.readersadvice.com>
- *What to read next?* <http://www.whatshouldireadnext.com>
- *Whichbook* <http://www.openingthebook.com/whichbook/>
- *Novelist* (subscription database)
- *Genreflecting* by Cynthia Orr & Diana Tixier Herald (book)
- *Fantastic Fiction* <http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk>
- *Bookslut Blog* <http://www.bookslut.com>
- *Fiction L* (Morton Grove Public Library Listserv)
- *Publisher's Weekly / PW Daily*
- *GoodReads, Library Thing* (better than Good Reads for reviews), *Facebook discussion groups*
- *Book Award Sites* e.g. *RITA, ALEX, Hugo*

Let's Connect

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Sources

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- Scholastic Website -
<http://www.scholastic.com/teacher/ab/booktalks.htm>