

Ten Ways to Build a Reluctant Reader Library

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1. Ask young adults (YAs): *What do you think?*

Incorporating teen advice lends peer credibility to selections and should increase turnover. Form a YA advisory board to gain input about their reading interests. If your YA advisory board is merely embryonic, you can ask teenaged volunteers and teenaged staff to help breathe life into your collection. Create evaluation opportunities by “walking and talking” the YA shelves with teens. If teens seem hesitant to weigh in, hand these coy advisors a pack of sticky notes and a couple of publishers’ catalogs, then ask them to highlight titles that look interesting.

2. Include books that reflect pop culture.

Teens become reading advocates when books can enhance their social conversation: an instant messaging (IM) discussion of the latest buzz in the entertainment world provides an easy connection with friends. As a book selector, make time to track teen trends. Don’t order books reflecting outdated interests; appeal to their desire for all things new or current. *Hip Hoptionary* by Alonzo Westbrook; *So You Wanna Be a Rock & Roll Star* by Jacob Slichter; and *Masters of Doom* by David Kushner are fun, hip titles that will keep your teens edgy and current.

3. Select alternate formats.

Mix things up with *manga*; audiobooks; e-books; zines; magazines; school newspapers; teen news media—anything without a library binding! Clay Aiken’s *Learning to Sing* is available as an e-book and as an audiobook, as is *Star Wars: The Dark Nest III: The Swarm War*. In fact, many titles are *only* available as e-books that can be downloaded to electronic devices. Top priority for teens is, has

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been, and always will be the coolness factor; connecting teens with information and stories via the latest technology is guaranteed to raise their coolness ratings.

4. Read. Read. Read.

Be the go-to gal (or guy) for good literature! Keep on top of the titles by reading the newest and hottest books to hit the stores. If you don't know the content, you cannot enthusiastically pitch a book to an already-uninterested teen. It's the old book-talking standard: "You can't sell a book that you don't like yourself." Read all genres, even those that are not your usual interest, so that you are well prepared to make a variety of recommendations for these diverse readers. If you can't put down a fast-paced love story like *The Man Who Ate the 747* by Ben Sherwood [an American Library Association (ALA) *Alex Award* winner], you know library patrons will get swept into the tale as well.

5. Pair movie titles and books.

Check sources such as the *Yahoo! Movies* website for what's on the burner in Hollywood. When you find a cool movie/book tie-in, think **merchandising**. For example, the buzz right now is that *Batman II* is in the works.

"Merchandise" your Batman collection with face-outs featuring DVDs; video games; graphic novels; and books such as *Batman Inferno*, *Batman Begins*, and the *Batman Beyond* series. Your teen advisory committee or local high school art club may want to create signage featuring a slogan such as *Will there be a Batman II in theaters? You decide at your library!* Consider offering programming in which multiple copies of movie-inspired books are distributed; a few weeks later, ask readers to reconvene to watch the movie and compare formats and presentations. Another tie-in to consider is *Eragon*, which has a related movie release scheduled for this winter. In addition, with the expected release of the third *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie in Summer 2007, new books such as *Pirate's Passage* and classics such as *Treasure Island* would make a great foundation for any collection that covers pirates.

6. Be their connection for addictive series.

Introduce your hesitant readers to can't-quit series that keep them coming back for more. Offer girls *The Princess Diaries* (available through Random House as an e-book or audiobook) and Megan McCafferty's *Sloppy Firsts* [included in the New York Public Library's *Books for the Teen Age 2002* and designated as one of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) *Best Books for Young Adults*]. Push a guy-friendly series by Jeff Stone or David Eddings. For nonfiction fans, try *National Geographic's American Documents* series.

7. Poetry, plays, prose, chat-style books, short stories, essays -- give them a book that they didn't know counted as a book.

Variety spices up every book rack, so revive a neglected collection by replacing low-circulating monographs with literature that breaks up the traditional book format. Add short stories, such as Dan Chaon's *Among the Missing* (named as one of the YALSA *Best Books for Young Adults*), and anthologies, such as *Short Stories by Latin American Women: The Magic and the Real* and *Short Shorts: An Anthology of the Shortest Stories*. *Poetry 180* (edited by Billy Collins); *Cool Salsa* (edited by Lori Carlson); Alice Walker's *Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth*; and *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* are poetic works friendly to shorter attention spans. Completing the last page of an exciting book - - of any genre -- empowers and inspires teens who otherwise have difficulty following a story through to the end.

8. Collect new nonfiction.

Many reluctant readers will never consider reading a novel, and therefore nonfiction is often more appealing. Nonfiction is generally visual; thus it can help reluctant readers make the connection between an idea and the written word. If an entire book is intimidating, readers can browse through and read only sections that interest them. Connecting teen hobbies to appropriate titles is aided by the nature of nonfiction categorization. Pat Conroy's *My Losing Season* (an ALA *Alex Award*-winning title; T.R. Reid's *The Chip: How Two Americans*

Invented the Microchip and Launched a Revolution (an Editor's Choice for Young Adults by Booklist); and Jon Katz's *Geeks: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet Out of Idaho* (one of the YALSA *Outstanding Books for the College Bound*) are excellent titles to include in your collection. In addition, in September 2006, look for Osprey Publishing's graphic-novel series covering individual wars and battles, a series geared specifically to the YA set.

9. Rotate your collection frequently.

Teens' interests and tastes change quickly. A newer, fresher-looking collection is more engaging and interesting than the same thing every day. To ensure access to new titles for rotation, buy fewer titles but buy more frequently. Rotating books also allows you to make the most of the space you have. Feature new books in face-forward displays, and store older titles that circulate infrequently. Teens' senses will be delighted by shelves of attractive books coupled with shiny, new face-outs. Stay current on the latest titles by signing up for the *Random House High School e-newsletter* at www.randomhouse.com/highschool/newsletter.

10. Visit publisher websites to request exam copies.

Searching for an easy way to familiarize yourself with the latest in teen literature? Many publishers offer educators the opportunity to obtain discounted exam copies of titles that are being considered for purchase. Visit www.randomhouse.com/highschool for more information on and requirements for obtaining exam copies.

Suggested Reading

Hip Hoptionary™

The Dictionary of Hip Hop Terminology

by Alonzo Westbrook

Harlem Moon | TR | 978-0-7679-0924-2 | 240 pp. | \$12.95/\$19.95 Can.

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Star Wars Dark Nest III

The Swarm War

by Troy Denning

Del Rey | MM | 978-0-345-46305-0 | 384 pp. | \$6.99/\$9.99 Can.

Masters of Doom

How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture

by David Kushner

Random House | TR | 978-0-8129-7215-3 | 368 pp. | \$14.95/\$22.95 Can.

Learning to Sing

Hearing the Music in Your Life

by Clay Aiken and Allison Glock

Fawcett | MM | 978-0-8129-7410-2 | 256 pp. | \$7.99/\$10.99 Can.

The Man Who Ate the 747

by Ben Sherwood

Bantam | MM | 978-0-553-58280-2 | 272 pp. | \$6.50/\$9.99 Can.

Batman™ Inferno

by Alex Irvine

Del Rey | MM | 978-0-345-47945-7 | 352 pp. | \$7.99/\$10.99 Can.

Batman Begins™

by Dennis O'Neil

Del Rey | MM | 978-0-345-47946-4 | 320 pp. | \$6.99/\$10.99 Can.

Eragon

by Christopher Paolini

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Knopf Books for Young Readers | TR | 978-0-375-82669-6 | 528 pp. |
\$9.95/\$13.95 Can.

Listening Library (Audio) | Unabridged CD | 978-1-4000-9068-6 |
\$39.95/\$54.95 Can.

Pirate's Passage

by William Gilkerson

Trumpeter | HC | 978-1-59030-247-7 | 400 pp. | \$17.95/\$25.95 Can.

The Princess Diaries

by Meg Cabot

Read by Anne Hathaway

Listening Library (Audio) | Unabridged CD | 978-0-307-24326-3 |
\$24.95/\$34.95 Can.

Treasure Island

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Bantam Classics | MM | 978-0-553-21249-5 | 224 pp. | \$3.95/\$5.99 Can.

Modern Library | TR | 978-0-375-75682-5 | 240 pp. | \$5.95/\$8.95 Can.

Sloppy Firsts

A Novel

by Megan McCafferty

Three Rivers Press | TR | 978-0-609-80790-3 | 304 pp. | \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.

The Malloreon

Volume One

Guardians of the West King of the Murgos Demon Lord of Karanda

by David Eddings

Del Rey | TR | 978-0-345-48386-7 | 816 pp. | \$17.95/\$25.95 Can.

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American Documents: The Constitution

by Paul Finkelman

National Geographic Children's Books | HC | 978-0-7922-7937-2 | 48 pp. |
\$15.95/\$21.95 Can.

American Documents: The Emancipation Proclamation

by Marianne McComb

National Geographic Children's Books | HC | 978-0-7922-7916-7 | 48 pp. |
\$15.95/\$21.95 Can.

American Documents: The Bill of Rights

by Judith Lloyd Yero

National Geographic Children's Books | HC | 978-0-7922-5395-2 | 40 pp. |
\$15.95/\$21.95 Can.

American Documents: The Declaration of Independence

by Judith Lloyd Yero

National Geographic Children's Books | HC | 978-0-7922-5397-6 | 40 pp. |
\$15.95/\$21.95 Can.

Poetry 180

A Turning Back to Poetry

Edited and with an Introduction by Billy Collins

Random House | TR | 978-0-8129-6887-3 | 352 pp. | \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.

Cool Salsa

by Lori Carlson

Fawcett | MM | 978-0-449-70436-3 | 160 pp. | \$6.99/\$10.99 Can.

Short Stories by Latin American Women

The Magic and the Real

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by Celia Correias Zapata

Introduction by Isabel Allende

Modern Library | TR | 978-0-8129-6707-4 | 272 pp. | \$12.95/\$19.95 Can.

Short Shorts

An Anthology of the Shortest Stories

Edited by Irving Howe

Bantam | MM | 978-0-553-27440-0 | 224 pp. | \$5.99/\$8.99 Can.

The Chip

How Two Americans Invented the Microchip and Launched a Revolution

by T.R. Reid

Random House | TR | 978-0-375-75828-7 | 320 pp. | \$14.95/\$21.00 Can.

Geeks

How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet Out of Idaho

by Jon Katz

Broadway | TR | 978-0-7679-0699-9 | 256 pp. | \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.

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