

## Listen to a Book in 15 Minutes

The precursor to the following guidelines, "How to Read a Book in Five Minutes," has many mothers. The late **Jane Hirsch** of Montgomery County (MD) Department of Public Libraries developed these guidelines which were expanded by **Lisa Sampley**, Springfield-Greene County Library, and published in the Fall 1998 *Missouri Library World*. Further modifications have been made by **Mary K. Chelton** and **Joyce Saricks**.

These guidelines are suitable for all audio books.

**Audio Cover**—It's hard to look at the "cover" of a downloadable audio book, but it is possible to view the record. For CDs, mp3-CDs, and Playaways evaluate the cover for attractiveness and genre/subject. Does the cover or record help identify genre or subject? Is the audio book cover the same as the print version? Is the narrator's name prominently displayed on the cover? Did the narrator get an entry in the record? Does the case/website clearly state if the audio book is abridged or unabridged?

**Jacket blurb**—There's not much room on an audio book case/online record for a blurb. If possible, keep the print version of the book handy for flyleaf copy. Are any "extras" listed (i.e. author interviews, music, sound effects)? Does the listener get a sense of the story? Are key elements of the plot revealed? Can genre or type be assigned based on the blurb?

**Length**—How many hours/CDs is the audiobook? Are the CDs clearly marked on at least one side? Is the digital audio divided into chapters? How many?

**Listen** to the first few tracks. Does the narrator immediately start reading the story or is there promotional, copyright, or informative material to listen to first? Does the narrator hook the listener immediately or does the listener need time to get into the story? How quickly does the narrator read? Is the pace too slow or too fast for the type of story? Is the reader doing more straight narration or performance? How well does the reader distinguish between characters?

Skip to another CD/track in the audio book and listen for any irregularities in the story. Listen to portions of the final CD/track. Is the reader's voice still recognizable and full of energy? Is it easy to follow character changes? Does the story still flow? Does it appear to mesh with the book description on the back of the case?

**Extras**--Are there any music or sound effects? How is the end of a CD/chapter/track signaled to the listener--with music or a straightforward announcement? Are there any recommendations made at the end of the audio book? Author interviews? Does the listener have the option of speeding up the playback?

**Evaluate appeal and audibility**--Is the book a good listen or a better read? If the book was abridged did it feel as if something was missing? Think about how this audio book could be promoted or suggested to a potential listener or used in a display.