Unlocking Themes to Improve Your Readers' Advisory
Meet our Panelists

Becky Spratford

Cathleen Keyser

Kathy Stewart
What are themes?

Recurring plot lines or topics

Popular and well-known

over and again
Genre and Appeal
Horror
Menacing
Suspenseful
Compelling

Subjects
Humans and sharks
Sharks
Shark attacks
White shark
Violence
Sheriffs
Genre and Appeal
- Hard science fiction
- Science fiction
- Diary novels
- Fast-paced
- Suspenseful
- Compelling
- Witty
- Snarky characters

Subjects
- Survival
- Astronauts
- Space flight to Mars
- Extreme environments
- Planets -- Exploration
- Determination in men
- Resourcefulness
- Dust storms
- Mars (Planet)
So what are we getting at?
Character types, too

...like a wolf in sheep’s clothing
Character types, too

...like a woman of STEEL
Why don’t subject headings work? ...or work better?
Friendship
When Andy met Sandy by Tomie dePaola

When Andy and Sandy first meet at the playground, they are cautious of one another, but soon find a way to become friends.

Waiting is not easy! by Mo Willems

Piggie tells Gerald she has a surprise for him, but it is not there yet, so Gerald must be patient.
CONQUERING FEAR

Fear
Fear in children
Fear of darkness
Fear of death
Fear in animals
Fear of thunderstorms
Fear of the unknown
Fear of water
Fear of technology
Fear of success
Phobias in children
Phobias in teenagers
Fear in senior women
Fear in teenagers
Fear in teenage boys
Fear in teenage girls
Fear in women

Fear of cats
Fear of crime
Fear of dogs
Fear of dragons
Fear of drowning
Fear of failure
Fear of failure in children

Fear in dogs
Fear of crime
Fear of sudoku
Fear of rodents
Fear of teachers
Fear in librarians

Fear of dentists
Fear of flying
Fear of germs
Fear of spiders
School phobia
Phobias in children
Moods and moodiness

Fear of ghosts
Fear of monsters
Fear of snakes
Fear of wolves
Fear in authors

Anxiety
Emotions
Frights
Phobias
Emotions
Feelings
Fear in birds
Fear in infants
Fear in men
Fear in rules
Fear in boys
Fear in girls
Terror
Agoraphobia
Getting along with others

Cooperation
Feuds
Arguing
Bickering
Fights
Fighting
Making up
Quarreling
Forgiveness
Compromise

Interpersonal relations
Interpersonal conflict
Communication
Cooperation in children
Reconciliation
Conflict resolution
Cooperation in teenagers
Cooperation in boys
Cooperation in librarians
Arguments
Ten tropes you'll find in science fiction - over and over again

Alasdair Wikins
9/02/10 8:45pm - Filed to SCIFI101

Science fiction is a genre of literature with a number of recurring themes and motifs, or tropes. While some science fiction tropes are familiar to everyone, there are some that might be less obvious to the casual science fiction reader. Here are ten of science fiction's most recurring themes.

MOVIES

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PRINT & EBOOK FICTION CIRCULATION COMPARISONS

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<th>Top Circulators in Adult Print Books</th>
<th>Top Circulators in Adult Ebooks</th>
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<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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Numbers will add up to more than 100 percent because respondents could check more than one subject.

SOURCE: L/J MATERIALS SURVEY 2017

For a complete list of our themes, visit https://tinyurl.com/novelistthemes
Got questions? Want to chat?

Cathleen Keyser
Metadata Strategy Manager
NoveList
ckeyser@ebsco.com
Booktalking Your Way
to the Friendliest
Library in Town

Presented by Becky Spratford
For: NoveList
bspratford@hotmail.com
http://raforall.blogspot.com
This is how we feel about books!
Power of Sharing Books

- Share the joy!
- “Books are our brand. Reading is our Business”*
- You are a trusted expert. Own it!
- Your secret weapon?
  - THEMES!-- aka, how people naturally talk about books
Power of Themes In Our Own Reading Lives

1. Think of a favorite book
2. Now, think of what happens in that book, the plot. Who does what and to whom, etc...
3. Next, think about a few other books you really like...
4. Now raise your hand if every book you really enjoy has the same exact plot.

....I’ll wait
Watercooler Moments In the Library

- Plot vs Appeal vs Themes
  - All serve a purpose but themes are the most natural
- Our goal is to make RA Service conversation based not transactional
  - Themes are the quickest route to success
Booktalking in the Stacks: The Basics

- Look for opportunities
- Have an opening line
- Start with a book you love - soundbite
- Is the book in?
- No plot!

- Keep the book on center stage
- It’s a conversation about books
- Develop your own style and patter
- Be enthusiastic
Beginner’s Tips

● Start small
  ○ What are you reading/hearing about?
  ○ Staff favs- yours and coworkers’
  ○ You can use words of others!
    ■ Like NoveList or GoodReads

● Begin with you
  ○ How do you talk about books you like?
  ○ How do you find new titles?
Themes in Action

- Real Life RA Queries Considered:
  - Tudors vs Novels of Place
  - Romance
  - End of a World
- More specific searches in NoveList after we finish up
## The Round House > Top Shelves

Top shelves for The Round House (showing 1-100 of 7,370)

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<th>Category</th>
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The language of themes is perfect for genre readers. They are more in touch with their personal preferences.

- Romance - So many, So passionate [pun intended]

Subgenre vs Appeal vs Theme

Example: *Wrong to Need You* by Alisha Rai

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*Wrong to Need You* by Alisha Rai

Forbidden Hearts

"I knew she would make me laugh, cry... and maybe even understand a little bit more about myself."—Courtney Milan, New York Times bestselling author.

P.S. "What if I had a past I didn't commit, Jackson?"
## Station Eleven (Sep 2014)

**Author:** Mandel, Emily St. John, 1979- 

**Description:** An actor playing King Lear dies onstage just before a cataclysmic event changes the future of everyone on Earth. What will be valued and what will be discarded? Will art have a place in a world that has lost so much? What will make life worth living? These are just some of the issues explored in this beautifully written dystopian novel. Recommended for fans of David Mitchell, John Scalzi and Kate Atkinson. -- Janet Lockhart for LibraryReads.

**Book Appeal Terms:** Definition of Appeal Terms

**Genre:** Adult fiction for young adults; Apocalyptic fiction; Canadian fiction; Literary fiction; Multiple perspectives; Science fiction

**Themes:** Band of survivors; Pandemic apocalypse

**Character:** Complex; Flawed; Sympathetic

**Storyline:** Nonlinear

**Tone:** Haunting; Moving; Suspenseful

**Writing Style:** Compelling; Lyrical; Stylistically complex

**Accelerated Reader:** IL: UG, BL: 6.5, AR Pts: 16

**Min/Max Grade level:** 7 - 12

**Lexile:** 690 **Accelerated Reader:** IL: MG+, BL: 4.4, AR Pts: 11

**Persistent link to this record (Permalink):**
Practice, Practice, Practice

• Create more opportunities to booktalk
  • Advertises expertise and willingness
  • Use resources like NoveList and GoodReads to find talking points [themes]
• Set goals and create friendly competition
  • Becky’s step-by-step guide
• Remember this is fun! You are paid to talk about books
Questions?

Slides: raforall.blogspot.com

RA for All
Matching Readers With Books Through Your Local Public Library

Becky Siegel Spratford
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bspratford@hotmail.com
http://raforall.blogspot.com
@RAforAll
708.250.6698
Thank you!

Learn more about NoveList at www.ebscohost.com/novelist