



Welcome in to the September edition of Teen Librarian Monthly! This month we kick off with an article about starting Teenage Reading Groups in the Medway Libraries courtesy of Sophie Castle of Medway Libraries.

Knowing you cannot force young people to read if they don't want to have you ever considered using The Force – the second annual Star Wars reads Day is coming up on the 5th October and this year it is international!

Tips on working with teens makes a return, this time it looks at failure and how it can be a good thing. We also revisit the teen read week idea that I suggested last year.

A link to manga tutorials courtesy of Letraset is also included and news of a new online teen reading group coming from Exclusive Books in South Africa (launching this Wednesday).

Two potential dates of interest are looked at – International Talk like a Pirate Day is this Thursday and Ada Lovelace Day is coming up on the 15th October.

Finally, this month's Eight Questions With... interview is with new author Sandra Greaves, author of the brilliant *The Skull in the Wood*.

Musings on Teenage Reading Groups and Summer Reading

Sophie Castle

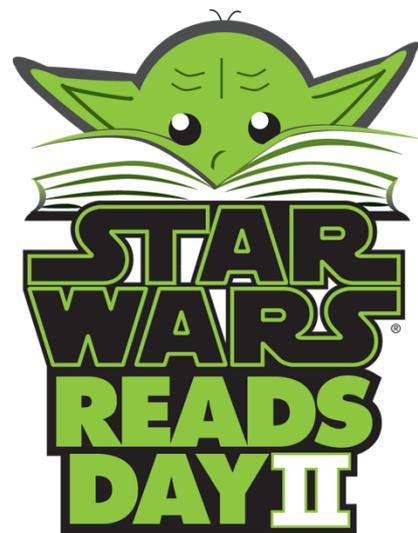
This year seemed a good year to focus on the lack of services in Medway libraries for teenagers. I was determined to focus on the over 13s and discover ways to tempt them back into libraries. Following on from the success of the Teen Reading Challenge in Wokingham Borough libraries, I decided this would be the right time for Medway to run their own version. Firstly I needed to consider branding and after some brainstorming with fellow Community Librarians, the name Summer Readaway was created. Next came the question on prizes that should be offered. Publishers were extremely generous, as were local companies.

To promote the challenge our Marketing team created posters for Medway Secondary schools, in addition there were also assemblies held. This was linked in to our young volunteers, who were keen to help promote the challenge and give feedback. This has led to the continuation of the challenge from September, when four teenage

reading groups will be starting.

The members will define the format for these groups and teenagers will lead them. The feedback we received was overwhelmingly in favour of adults not being involved! So although staff will be in the background ordering books and providing refreshments, etc., the key roles will all be run by the young adults themselves. Maybe this was the mistake we were making all along, as we currently hold no sessions for teenagers.

From September onwards we hope our sessions will take off, as this is an area of the population we are clearly missing out on. Having keen teenage volunteers has definitely helped and hopefully they will continue to shape our services and advise us on what would attract them and their peers into libraries.



There are times when I wished I lived and worked in America, last year Star Wars Reads Day was one of those times. Star Wars is a minor obsession of mine – I saw *Return of the Jedi* in the cinema in 1984 and have repeatedly watched it and the others on video, DVD and Blu-Ray. My favourite Star Wars author is Timothy Zahn and using I think that using Star Wars to encourage young (and not so young) readers is a brilliant idea!

This year however it is different – it is international!

In 2013, any bookstore, library or school around the world can hold a Star Wars Reads Day event. Put the date (Saturday, October 5th) on your

calendar and start planning and promoting an out-of-the-world event. (Schools and school libraries are encouraged to hold their events on Friday, October 4th).

For full details on the day and to download activity packs go here: <http://starwars.com/reads/>

A man walks into a library and asks the librarian if they have any books on paranoia.

The librarian says "They're behind you"

Tips on Working with Teens: failure is Always an Option

Today we live in a very risk averse society – it has been this way for a while now, I can still remember when I suggested starting up a teen reading group soon after I started work in the UK, I was told that it was not a time for growth in the teen service side and rather I should focus on supporting existing groups as I was not a member of the children's team and if my attempt failed I could destroy any chances of a future group being started in my library. Fortunately with the support of my line manager I was given the go ahead and started laying the groundwork for the launch of a new teen group.

For two months I chatted to the teens and other young people that came in to the library, I gave out leaflets and parental permission forms for addresses and then posted out invitations to the launch of the group. About 12 or so teens came in to see what was up and were hanging round the library to see what happened. As the hour sounded some of the kids asked me what was going to happen, I told them it was for a teenage reading group – it was the fastest clear out of a library I have ever seen, they recoiled in disgust and ran for the hills.

I was distraught, after sitting in shock for about 15 minutes and whimpering softly to myself; I stood up, dusted myself off and with the help of two colleagues rounded up some of the teens who had not bolted too far and with the promise of snacks and drinks lured them back into the library. Over some small cans of coke and a bag of mini chocolates we spoke about what they would like to do in the library, which authors they enjoyed reading and how we could tempt them back the following month.

In just over three years I built a teen group that had around 70 active members – they did not all come every month (average attendance was about 40 per session) but it taught me how not to

go about getting a group started.

Failure is not always bad, it can teach us what does and does not work in a particular situation. My initial failure led me to finding a way to connect with young people that I may not have discovered had the initial group activity (centred around The Matrix Movies and comics and books centred around the concept of mind control) worked.

I have tried other activities that have not worked with the various groups I have worked with over the years some have taken on a life on their own while others have withered away.

Do not be too concerned if a brilliant idea has failed to gain traction in a particular environment or with a specific group – it does not mean that it is a bad idea it just means that that it does not work with that group or it may need a bit of tweaking to get it right. If it does not take in a different situation put it on the shelf for a while and reuse it in a different context or offer it to colleagues in other areas as it may prove to be successful with them.

Fear of failure can lead managers to ask staff to go for the safer option of starting a reading group or a manga group but not even those are guaranteed to succeed – by all means go for those options if you are unsure but do not be afraid to tailor those to the interests of the kids that use the library and attend the group, it may fail but it may succeed beyond your wildest hopes! All that failure means is that you have found something that does not work in that particular library; and by then the teens will have started talking to you and that gives you the opportunity to try something different with them!

Do not be frightened to try something new with the kids you work with, it may well work and if it doesn't it will still give you something to talk about with them and offer other avenues of engagement. Once you have a few teen successes under your belt it gets easier to try out new ideas, both your own and ideas from friends and colleagues! Another plus of failure is if you do fail you can use the experience to learn new things – about yourself, your library and the teens you are working with.

Remember: failure to try is not trying to fail – it is failing, not just yourself but also the kids in the library and that kind of failure is the worst kind as it teaches you nothing!

Teen Read Week

Coming up for a year ago I wrote an article suggesting that British YA Librarians adopt a program run by our American cousins, called Teen Read Week. You can read the post here: <http://teenlibrarian.co.uk/2012/10/15/uk-teen-read-week/>

Coming up on the anniversary of that idea I am very much aware that nothing much has happened and for that I do apologise! I had thought that we could mirror the American dates but as a number of colleagues pointed out to me the month of October is when the Write Path programme runs. I am currently considering the second week in December as a possible time for it to run, unless anyone has a compelling reason for it not to happen then. If you can think of a reason that is should not be then, please let me know!

Manga Tutorials

Do you run or are you thinking of starting a Manga group in your library? If you have answered 'yes' to either of these questions then you may be interested in this series of tutorials on drawing in a manga style, publishing e-books and using colour markers for manga art courtesy of Letraset.

<http://letrasetblog.com/category/tutorials/>

Online Teen Book Club

EXCLUSIVE BOOKS

We are seeing the rise and rise of teen literature, with a variety of genres and a plethora of brilliant authors. But how do we find more to read? What should we be avoiding? And which book handles issues the best? Bookclubs have always been the heart of the book industry, the word of mouth that has given authors the boost needed to become famous. And we know teens love to read: the superstardom of authors who write for teens and young adults proves it.

With this in mind, we are beginning our online Teen Book Club! To start, we will get together on Twitter every fortnight to share and discuss great teen and young adult reads. Based on the success of the first few, we will plot a course for tweet-ups at stores and other book-related events.

So whether you are a reader, blogger, author or publisher, we would love it if you could join us with the hashtag [#EBTeenReads](#) live from 2pm – 4pm (1-3pm GMT) Wednesday 18th of

September. You can follow Exclusive Books on twitter here: <https://twitter.com/exclusivescoza>

For full details on the club follow this link:

<http://blog.exclusives.co.za/the-inaugural-online-teen-book-club/>

Upcoming Dates of Interest

International Talk like a Pirate Day Thursday 19th September

Have you ever had your timbers shivered, make someone walk the plank or just yelled out "avast me hearties!" for no particular reason? If so then ITLAP Day may be for you!

I am a fan and generally use any excuse to weave piratical talk into whatever I am doing in the library on that day

Ada Lovelace Day 15th October

"Ada who?" I hear some people say, which is a shame as Ada Lovelace is considered to be the first computer programmer creating the first algorithm having worked on Charles Babbage's analytical engine.

Ada Lovelace Day is about sharing stories of women — whether engineers, scientists, technologists or mathematicians — who have inspired you to become who you are today. The aim is to create new role models for girls and women in these male-dominated fields by raising the profile of other women in STEM (Science Technology Engineering Maths).

<http://findingada.com/>

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Eight Questions with... Sandra Greaves

Q1 What influenced your decision to write for Teenagers?

I've always loved children's literature and YA. I didn't make a conscious decision to try and write for teenagers, but when I started plotting 'The Skull in the Wood', my characters Matt and Tilda just emerged as aged 12 and 13. I feel very happy writing that for age group, and I'm interested in writing for an older YA readership too.

Q2 How do you get into the heads of your characters?

It's a cliché that your characters take over, but they genuinely do. I try and imagine how they behave in all sorts of situations, not just the ones on the pages of the book. I even wrote a few scenes that I never intended to appear in the book, just so that I knew how Matt and Tilda had reacted at crucial times in their lives.

Q3 Do you know instinctively what will appeal to Teens or is it more a hit or miss process?

Mostly I write about what appeals to me – I don't consciously gear it to a particular age group. If I get excited about it, I hope that teens will too.

Q4 What is the most satisfying part of the writing process for you?

Writing the early drafts is amazing – a story just seems to take shape out of nothing and the process is utterly magical. But I like the detailed editing too – I think you have to enjoy that if you're ever going to finish a novel, because if you get bored at any stage, your readers will too.

Q5 Do you ever read the works of other Teen/YA authors? If yes what can you recommend?

At the moment I'm reading Patrick Ness's 'Chaos Walking' trilogy and really enjoying it. Meg Rosoff's 'How I Live Now' blew me away, as did Sally Gardner's 'Maggot Moon'. And I loved Louis Sachar's 'The Cardturner' – it just amazed me that you can construct a whole novel around playing bridge!

Q6 Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

Not really – I like to make things up, and none of my characters are based on real people. But of course, things that have happened to me do have a knack of edging in where I least expect them.

Q7 Are you working on anything new at the moment or do you have anything planned?

I'm in the early stages of a new novel – but it's way too soon to talk about it!

Q8 Do you ever do Library visits to Teen Reading Groups? If yes, what is the best way to get into contact with you or your agent about it?

I'm going to do some library and reading group visits in the autumn, and I'm always happy to do more – it's great to meet committed readers! At the moment it's best to email on tina@doublecluck.com at my publishers and requests will be passed on to me. And I'll have a website up and running soon.