

Teen Readers' Advisory Interview

Interviewee: Sarah*, age 13, student at a progressive independent middle school in New York City, who lives in Brooklyn. The interview was conducted via Zoom.

Interview questions asked¹:

- Do you have a favorite book?
- What's the last book you read that you really liked? What did you like about it?
- What's the last book you read that you really hated (or just disliked)? What did you dislike about it?
- Is there a book or type of book that your friends like but you don't?
- Do you like when everything is wrapped up in the end, or do you like books that are open-ended?
- Do you prefer a book that you can read for a while or one that you can finish super fast?
- Do you like books that make you cry?
- Are you bothered by swearing or violence, or anything like that?
- Do you read fantasy books? What about science fiction?
- Do you like books set in the past? Is there a particular time period you like the most?
- Do you mind if it takes a few chapters to get into the action of the story?
- Do you have any total deal-breakers? [If you can't think of any, I have some examples: nothing where an animal dies, no love triangles, no bathroom humor or gross-out stuff, not too much blood]

Summary of readers' advisory request:

Sarah wanted suggestions of dark, intriguing, suspenseful realistic fiction, especially mysteries and thrillers. Her favorite books are *Monday's Not Coming* and *Allegedly*, both by Tiffany D. Jackson, and she had recently enjoyed *One of Us is Next*, by Karen M. McManus. She likes sad books that make her cry. She prefers for things to be wrapped up at the end of a book, but she will read a series if she likes the first book, and she enjoys historical fiction, especially books set during the Holocaust, but doesn't like sci-fi or fantasy. She was isolating at home at the time of the interview with a lot of time to read, so she wanted a long list of recommendations.

Book suggestions given:

These are all dark books that are suspenseful and fast-paced.

Books like *Allegedly*:

* Name changed for privacy

¹ Adapted from Booth, H. (2007). *Serving teens through readers' advisory*. Chicago: ALA.

- Complicit, by Stephanie Kuehn: Jamie was relieved two years ago when his older sister was sent away to juvenile detention for burning down their neighbor's barn, but now she's back, and she needs him to know the truth about what really happened.
- We Were Liars, by E. Lockhart: A group of friends are on a private island when something terrible happens. Some people love the twist ending, and some people hate it – see what you think!

Like *Monday's Not Coming*:

- Sadie, by Courtney Summers: This is an intense, dark book about a missing girl and a true crime podcast that follows the clues she's left behind.

Books like *One of Us is Lying* & *One of Us is Next*:

- People Like Us, by Dana Mele: Kay has left her dark secrets in the past and totally reinvented herself, but the discovery of a girl's body in the lake at her private school threatens to expose everything she's worked so hard to bury.
- All Your Twisted Secrets, by Diana Urban: A group of students is invited to an exclusive scholarship dinner, only to realize that it's a trap. Can they figure out what's going on before everyone dies?

Some other mysteries & thrillers:

- Truly Devious, by Maureen Johnson: Stevie shows up for her first year at the exclusive Ellingham Academy with only one goal: solve the 80-year-old cold case that took place on campus. Fair warning, this has a cliffhanger ending, so make sure to have the sequel on hand!
- A Good Girl's Guide to Murder, by Holly Jackson: Having grown up in a small town where a famous murder took place, Pippa decides to look into the case for her senior project and realizes maybe it's not such an open-and-shut case.
- Little Monsters, by Kara Thomas: Kacey is the new girl in town, and everything seems to be going perfectly, until her new friends don't invite her to the biggest party of the year...and one of them doesn't make it home alive that night.

Sad dark books that might make you cry:

- Pointe, by Brandy Colbert: Theo is doing better after a difficult series of years, but when her friend returns home after being held captive by his kidnapper for four years, memories about his abduction start coming back to her. Will she risk everything to tell the truth about what happened?
- Hate List, by Jennifer Brown: Five months ago, Valerie's boyfriend came into school with a gun. Now, she has to return to school, and face everyone, while grappling with the fact that she helped create the list that became his list of victims.

Suspenseful historical novels set during WWII/the Holocaust:

- Code Name Verity, by Elizabeth Wein: A British spy plane crashes in Nazi-occupied France, and the two girls in it face terrible consequences.

- Girl in the Blue Coat, by Monica Hesse: In Amsterdam in 1943, Hanneke is asked to help find a Jewish teenager who vanished from a secret room and finds herself pulled into a web of mysteries.