

My Favorite Thing Is Monsters
ARRT Book Club Study
Leadership Discussion Notes
Thursday, August 9, 2018
3:15-4:00 pm
Northbrook Public Library
16 participants

The Leadership Topic was how to discuss graphic novels in standard and nontraditional book clubs. Led by Mary Constance.

- Mary Constance began by asking participants if they incorporate different formats into their discussion groups. Examples she gave included films, short stories, and poetry
- Attendees stated they have led the following types of discussion groups:
 - Graphic Novels
 - History (led by professor)
 - Romance
 - Science Fiction
 - Crime
 - Film Discussions (including one in which attendees watch film beforehand and one in which they watch the film and discuss at the library)
 - Plays
- Mary Constance distributed “What Are Graphic Novels?” adapted from Teacher’s Guide to Common Core Standard
- Attendees then discussed the challenges of running a graphic novel discussion group
 - Many graphic novels do not have enough content for a discussion. However, Brian K. Vaughan’s *Saga* and Matt Fraction’s *Sex Criminals* made for good discussions.
 - Discussing a volume leaves many unanswered questions. An example was raised with Brian K. Vaughan’s *Paper Girls*. While there is content to discuss in the first volume, how much can a group discuss while so much of the story is still ongoing?
 - Discussing a series can be difficult to coordinate
- Mary Constance distributed and read quote adapted from “The Truth About Graphic Novels” by Kristin Fletcher-Spear, Teen Librarian, Merideth Jenson-Benjamin, MLS, and Teresa Copeland, MLIS. *The Alan Review*, Winter 2005.
- Mary Constance asked if book discussion leaders incorporate different formats into their groups.

- Becky Spratford said she did use a graphic novel in her book discussion group, but she prepared them for the format. She also started by using Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, which she knew would be within her regular discussion group's "wheelhouse"
- Other participants said graphic novels can be a "hard sell" unless the group understands and is prepped for the change in format.
- Another participant added that she runs a Romance discussion group and they group the books, in an effort to discuss themes and/or styles. She suggested trying this pairing with a graphic novel so participants have a process to start out on.
- The suggestion was also made to pair a graphic novel with a film discussion. Using the examples of Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen*, along with the films of the same names, participants may be more likely to try reading a graphic novel when in this context.
- The group was then asked to discuss any issues they could foresee with adding graphic novels to their discussions.
 - Several participants agreed that the font size can be difficult for older patrons. In addition, every letterer approaches fonts in his or her own way, so there is a lack of consistency that could add to the difficulty in reading the stories.
 - Hoopla is an option for enlarging panels, but it can be awkward to use and not every graphic novel will be available.
 - Strong advice from attendees would be to prep discussion group for the graphic novel format.
 - As moderators, we cannot throw them into it
 - If the group gives it a try, they'll likely understand the story the writer is trying to tell
 - It is also important to remember where people are coming from and, unlike us librarians, we must recognize that not everyone is ready to embrace a new format.
- Mary Constance then asked the group if it is a disservice to a group if we add the graphic novel format. For example, would we add a book to a film discussion group?
 - Several participants agreed this was a provocative question
 - Mike Hominick said a graphic novel is still a book, so it was an okay format to use in a book discussion.
- Mary Constance then asked participants for graphic novels they would recommend to discussion groups. Suggestions included:
 - *Blankets* by Craig Thompson
 - *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi
 - *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel
 - *Stitches* by David Small
 - *Y: The Last Man* by Brian K. Vaughan

- Two graphic novels that solely use pictures were mentioned: *Here* by Richard McGuire and *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan
- A librarian also suggested their use of a bingo card format for summer reading. In this way, the library added a graphic novel option to encourage new readership.
- Mary Constance distributed “Using Graphic Novels in Book Clubs” by Jesse Karp, *Booklist*, March 15, 2011.
- We then discussed Fan Cons or Pop Culture Cons
 - Schaumburg, Arlington Heights, and the Joliet Public Library were mentioned as great examples for running a convention
 - An Anime Fest is also a popular theme for a convention
 - Free Comic Book Day could also be rolled into an all-day convention
 - Creating a Popular Culture discussion group could also be a way to reach a new demographic and topics could adjust based on what is currently trending

Final Thoughts on other topics:

- The discussion closed with a question about the next leadership topics. Participants responded that an introduction to book discussions and/or their challenges would be helpful. Lastly, Becky mentioned the next ARRT program which will be held at the Archer Heights branch of the Chicago Public Library. The topic will be “Give Them What They Want: Reader Focused Collection Development”