

Talking Book Voices Podcast Transcript: Episode Four

NARRATOR:

Welcome to Talking Book Voices, the podcast. Get ready to embark on an adventure with us as we dive into and celebrate the magic of the Texas Talking Book Program. Let's raise our voices together and make the world of literature accessible to all. The Texas Talking Book Program is a division of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, and it serves as a regional library for the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, a division of the Library of Congress. The Talking Book Program provides specialized library services to individuals who have qualifying visual, physical, or reading disabilities, such as dyslexia.

In each episode of Talking Book Voices, we will delve into the heart of this program, uncovering its history, sharing inspiring stories, and exploring the vast collection of materials it has to offer. We will bring you the latest updates, interviews with program experts and patrons, and useful tips to make the most of this invaluable program for Texans and beyond.

So, whether you're an avid reader, someone with a print disability seeking accessible materials, or just curious to learn more about this great program, this podcast is made for you!

Don't forget to visit texastalkingbooks.org for more information. So, let's begin Texas Talking Book Voices, a podcast by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

LAURA JEAN:

Hello podcast listeners, my name is Laura Jean and I've been a Readers Advisory Librarian here at the Talking Book Program for nine years now. And before that, I worked as a library assistant at various different academic and public libraries for about 12 years in Tennessee. And then I came to Texas to attend the University of Texas at Austin, in order to become a librarian and was hired by the Talking Book Program and the rest they say is history.

So, you may be wondering what exactly does a reader's advisory librarian do? Think of us as your friendly neighborhood public library. We do the same kind of things that librarians at Austin or Houston Public Library do. We answer basic reference questions. So, let's say you need something quick. You need to know who won the 1964 World Series or you're wondering who your state legislators are, and we can help you with that. We also provide in depth research assistance. So, for example, you're looking for information on how to make the best decision when purchasing a walk-in shower, well we can provide you with information so you can make the most informed decision. Or maybe you want to know if a specific book that is not in our collection is available in an accessible format, elsewhere. And we might take a little bit of time to make sure that we provide you with the best information, but we'll get back to you with an answer in a day or so.

We also host book club, so we're responsible for selecting books for our book club discussions. Although recommendations are always welcome, as well as writing discussion questions and moderating the discussion. Our book clubs are virtual, so you can participate no matter where in Texas you live, and all you need is a telephone to participate. We also do BARD and other technological troubleshooting. We can help troubleshoot technical problems with downloading books from BARD or using the BARD app on your smartphone, Kindle Fire, or tablet computer. And finally, we provide readers advisory assistance. So, if you're looking for a specific book or a specific type of genre of book, or you really aren't sure what you want to read, but you sure know what you don't want to read, we're here to help you figure out what you might enjoy reading next.

So, what exactly is readers advisory? One of our major responsibilities is to know about the different types of books that are available to our patrons, and then to assist you in finding the kind of books that you will most enjoy reading. But that's only the first step. In order to do that effectively, we have to ask a lot of questions, and sometimes they seem like silly or annoying questions, but we're really only asking them to help pinpoint exactly what it is you like about your favorite books, so that we can find other books that share those qualities. For example, we may ask you who your favorite authors are, so we can find authors who write in a similar style or tone that you might also like. We might ask you what your favorite book is and what you liked about it. This can help us narrow down a favorite genre or author. From there, we can make recommendations of similar titles or authors. And if you haven't read in a while or if you're in a reading rut and don't worry, it happens to all of us. We may ask you what your favorite TV shows or movies are. This gives us ideas about potential genres you might enjoy.

And what exactly is genre? Well, genres simply one way to group books according to similarities and forms, style, or subject matter. In the future we plan on hosting some podcasts on specific genres like westerns, cozy mysteries, and religious fiction, but a more general or broad way to think of genres is to group them by similar characteristics. So, there are adrenaline genres, you know, if you like books that are fast-paced and have a lot of action, you're probably going to enjoy adventure, suspense, and thrillers. Or location genres, so perhaps you're like me and you enjoy books with a strong sense of place. Vivid descriptions of the environment in which the story is set occur in genres like science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, and westerns. Emotional genres, so maybe instead you like those books that make you feel intense emotions, like horror, romance, gentle reads, or what I like to think of as feel-good books or what sometimes known as women's fiction. All have sympathetic characters going through experiences that cause us to sympathize along with the characters. Intellectual genres, so maybe you like books that make your brain really work. Books with puzzles to solve or psychological quandaries to ruminate over. Maybe even unusual or experimental formats or concepts. And if that's the type of book for you, you'll tend to like mysteries, psychological fiction, and literary fiction. And even though there are genre specific literary awards for literary fiction, most of those may be tempting for you, too. And nonfiction, so maybe you prefer the real world. Reading about concrete things rather than the fictional ones. You prefer to watch documentaries rather than sitcoms? Do you like watching Nova? We'd probably start you off with scientific nonfiction. Or, if you prefer watching The History Channel or American Experience on PBS. We'd probably start by suggesting various nonfiction, history-oriented books.

Well now that I've given you some food for thought about what readers advisory librarians do and ask some questions to make you think about what kind of books you might prefer. Give us a call. Let us help you figure out what to read next.