

## **“What’s a good book to read?”: Recommending Fantasy Books with Strong Female Characters**

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Fantasy books are not the biggest thing that’s been trending in Young Adult genres. However, fantasy is a classic genre because it is very comprehensive and includes a lot of themes. For example, magic, vampires, supernatural, mythologies, elves, witches, and werewolves are a part of the fantasy genre. As a librarian, we have a responsibility to be aware of what books the patrons might like to read. However, it needs to be thought, how as a librarian, we can encourage the patrons to read books that may have topics such as feminism, equality, and other relevant issues.

Young adults are most susceptible to the ongoing trends, and hot topics that adults may not be because young adults like to pay attention to the directions of the patterns and model themselves after it. Good examples of trending symbol or role model are the Bella Swan Era or the Hunger Game Era. “How girls perceive themselves in relationship to others determines to a great extent how successfully they are able to grow and achieve identity.” McKinney (1996). Young girls are impressionable, and there’s a higher chance that they would like fantasy books because of the offshoot theme of fairy tales that likely feature prominently in their childhood. The last several years had boost many different fantasy books that feature strong female characters. The book reviews and TV show reviews in this issue will be able to help the librarian with the current trending books or TV shows. However, it needs to be kept in mind that despite suggesting good books that have strong female characters as protagonists or anti-protagonist, the biases and skewed perspectives of female and male roles still can profoundly influence the person reading the book. Kostas (2018)’s research had shown that despite showing a feminist story of Snow White to children, the children still hold on individual views. Kostas’ study illuminates the fact that children typically have an opinion on gender roles by the time they’re five years old. This issue is the ‘reason’ why librarians need to be able to stay on the top of their game by recommending good books that also include strong female characters. Role models are critical to young adults, and one of the main characteristics of the young adult fiction genre happens to be how connected you feel to the characters in the books/TV shows. If you feel overwhelmingly connected to a particular main character based on similarities in thoughts or experiences, it may drive you to model yourself after the character’s ideas or ideals.

In conclusion, if children have strong opinions on gender roles by five years old and have lack of role models that embody the meaning of feminist or equality, it would affect their perspective on strong female characters. It is recommended that librarians estimate the following; story time for children from 1 year old and above, with fantasy stories that may have been changed to a more feminism view. That will influence the children to understand what it means to have equal gender roles rather than feminine and male based functions. For young adults, librarians can recommend the most recent fantasy books that feature strong female characters based on the young adult's preferred fantasy genre. However, the librarian should not leave that at that junction. They should continue to question the young adult if they like the book and what they think of the topics. If that's not possible, perhaps invite them to a fantasy book club that meets once a week at the library to discuss the issues of the fantasy book.

### **References**

- Kostas, Marios (2018) Snow White in Hellenic primary classrooms: children's responses to non-traditional gender discourses, *Gender and Education*, 30:4, 530-548, DOI:10.1080/09540253.2016.1237619
- McKinney, Caroline S. (1996). Finding the Words That Fit: The Second Story for Females in Young Adult Literature. *ALAN Review*, 24(1), 11-14.