

Young Adults Diversity Series (YADS): Fantasy Edition



Image: <http://bit.ly/2I7Q1XV>

Program Description

This is an ongoing in-house program designed for young adults to learn about the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds and how they relate to YA fantasy novels. Teens will meet up once every two months to discuss a fantasy book that somehow represents diverse content.

After a brief discussion between the teens and the librarian or teacher running the program, the author of that month's book will be invited to speak about writing the story and their own experiences with diversity. If the author is unavailable, other members from the community--who share similar experiences to the diverse characters--may be brought in to discuss their relevant life experiences with the teens.

Some of the diverse topics covered in this program series will be:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Religious Beliefs
- Immigration/Refugees
- Physical Ability
- Political Beliefs
- Socio-Economic Status

(All in relation to YA fantasy)

Program Objectives

The YADS will allow teens to learn about different life experiences and perspectives from the chosen books, their peers, and guest speakers. It will ideally raise awareness about diversity through the exploration of fantasy novels and subsequent book discussions in a safe and open environment.

The YADS will also hopefully make teens aware of diversity challenges within their community. Based on local diversity scenarios in the community--such as a recent influx of refugees--librarians can select a fantasy book with refugee themes for that month's discussion. Relevant topics and engaging guest speakers can not only generate awareness in teens, but ideally compassion and acceptance as well.

Target Audience

This program is designed for young adults between 13 - 18, with an interest in fantasy, diversity, and exploring new topics.

Benefits

Teens will be exposed to different life experiences and stories from their own, thereby increasing their understanding of and empathy towards other people. Interacting directly with an author or member of the community will also give teens a tangible example of diversity, and expose them to positive role models. Being part of a group discussion that analyzes a text will help teens practice their critical thinking and reading skills in a fun environment--which could in turn improve their schoolwork. These discussions will also connect teens with their peers, their librarians, and other members of their community.

Librarians will also benefit from this program. Being involved with the discussion will keep them aware of diversity in YA fantasy, as well as the current interests and perspectives of modern teens. This could positively influence future programming endeavors, collection building, and community engagement.

Guest authors at the YADS will be able to discuss their works and hear readers' insight, while guest community members and authors alike will be able to engage in meaningful discussions about diversity with teens, which will likely be very rewarding.

Scheduling of the Program:

This program will be run once every two months. Certain topics may align with other annual celebrations of diversity, such as Pride Week, the National Disability Awareness Month, or Black History Month.

This program will run between an hour and a half to two hours, and take place after school on a weekday. Teens interested in the program will have to sign up prior to the event in order to participate in the discussion.

Staffing Requirements:

YA Librarian: Facilitating the discussions, selecting the books, and arranging for guest speakers.

Coordinator: Booking the space for the discussion, ensuring the guest speakers have all necessary logistical information, organizing teen sign-up sheets.

Marketing: Promoting the program through posters, online advertisements on social media and the library website.

Equipment Needed:

- a. YA Fantasy Books: Multiple copies of each month's book should be available in the library stacks.
- b. Room for program meetings.
- c. Computer/internet connection for visual aids and video conference calls if authors cannot attend in person.

Community Partnerships:

Partnering with local community organizations such as the YMCA or Big Brothers Big Sisters will help the program committee consider diversity challenges specific to the teens in the community.

Proposed Publicity Methods:

The library staff member in charge of marketing this program will create printed flyers for bulletin boards, online posts on the library website, and regular social media posts that will attract the eyes of teens and parents alike. Other library staff will be aware of this program, and can recommend it by word of mouth to patrons that may be interested.

The marketing staff member will also be in charge of outreach to local schools and community organizations involved with teens.

Proposed Budget:

- a. Budget to invite authors for talks - Individual rate per author
- b. Gift cards for guest speakers from the community - \$25/speaker
- c. Snacks - \$30/meeting

Use of Accompanying Library Resources:

The YADS will use the library's meeting room, technology, and YA collection, as well as its website and bulletin board for announcements and advertising.

Program Evaluation Method:

This program will be evaluated by the teen participants, who will have the option to fill out surveys after each session. Feedback will also be collected from the guest speakers, which will be able to highlight both the successes or failures of their experiences.

References

ALA. (n.d.). Programming to promote diversity. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/culturalprogrammingtopromotediversity>

Menzel, M. (2015). Book to Action: putting words into action. Retrieved from <https://infopeople.org/civicism/event/info?reset=1&id=527>