

Get Real! Booktalking Nonfiction for Teen Read Week 2005

Jane V. Charles

Booktalking is a surefire way to increase your visibility in the YA community, spark an interest in YA literature, and generally reach out to young adults. Visiting schools to booktalk also provides a great opportunity to promote YA programs and events at your library. One major event to promote while booktalking is Teen Read Week (TRW), October 16–22, 2005. With the theme “Get Real! @ your library[®]” this year it is all about keeping it real with informative, yet intriguingly fun, meaningful, and sometimes even outrageous nonfiction.

Veteran booktalkers know that the best way to win over a YA audience is to begin booktalks with works of nonfiction. The more shocking, bizarre, absurd, silly, spooky, frightening, gross, and alarming, the better. People of all ages love learning about and sharing astonishing stories that actually happened. Young adults, especially the younger set, enjoy checking out illustrations and photographs of the disgusting, spine-tingling, and unimaginable. They like stories that make them emotionally and physically respond: feel scared, exhilarated, and curious, and get goose bumps, chills, and sweaty palms. Young adults want to feel involved and connected to the stories you share with them. Because spinning true tales is an effective means

of captivating young adults, why not booktalk entirely nonfiction during your next school visit? And what better time to booktalk nonfiction than during this year’s Teen Read Week?

To successfully booktalk true tales, select books from a wide range of topics that will reach as many young adults as possible. Sports, poetry, history, music, entertainment, crafts, folklore, crime, psychology, UFOs—it is all fair game. Select books from all major collections—adult, young adult, and children’s—that will pique the audience’s interest. Start with lighter nonfiction works, such as urban legends, ghost stories, and fun science, and then introduce more serious topics, such as the civil rights movement or true crime. Your goal is to prove that works of nonfiction are not dry, purely educational reads; they are intriguing, exciting, alive, and often inspiring!

Nonfiction booktalks are especially amenable to audience participation. Ask questions throughout your booktalk, such as, “Who has heard of a ____?” “Have you ever seen a ____?” or “Who knows what a ____ is?” Be flexible. If one particular title or subject is not resonating with your audience, quickly wrap up the talk and

try another book about a different subject. Do not be afraid to read an excerpt from a title if a certain passage is particularly well-written and engrossing. Place sticky notes on pages featuring quotable text or captivating images that you want to share during your talk. Walk around the room with the book open to a compelling image. You know you have succeeded if, after you have displayed the book’s eye-catching visuals, one of your audience members shouts, “I didn’t see it!” or “Show me!”

Booktalking nonfiction is particularly conducive to using a broad range of booktalking techniques. Transform yourself into a raconteur: write a booktalk of vignettes about someone or something amazing from a particular work. Create a talk solely consisting of notable facts and astounding statistics. Take on the identity of a person depicted in the book. Without breaking from character, begin and end the booktalk for that book in the person’s voice. Read one or two short poems before, during, or after your other talks. Pretend your booktalk is about a work of fiction, and then surprise your audience with a “Sound fantastical, preposterous, unreal? This really happened. You can read about it in ____.” No matter what style you choose or what technique you prefer (do not worry, the hook and approach will come to you), always leave the audience hanging at the end. Make them run, not walk, to the closest library to check out the books depicting the true tales you have just shared.

Samples of Successful Nonfiction Booktalks

Following are two booktalks for nonfiction works that a wide range of young adults have responded to positively. I also have included an outline of the talks. When creating a booktalk, I write out the booktalk to get a handle on how I want to approach it, what questions I want to ask the audience, and how I should build suspense and leave the audience hanging. After

JANE V. CHARLES is a YA librarian at the Lakes Regional Library, Lee County Library System, Fort Myers, Florida.

writing and reviewing my booktalk, I create a brief outline that covers the main points of my talk. I review the outline in my car before going into the school. Creating and reviewing outlines of my booktalks helps me to remember the main points of each talk and make them sound natural. It is especially useful when booktalking multiple titles for several classes all in one day.

Fleischman, John. *Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story about Brain Science.* Houghton Mifflin, 2002

In 1848 a man named Phineas Gage suffered a horrible, gruesome accident in Vermont. The accident involved a tamping iron. What is a tamping iron? Anyone know? A tamping iron is a round tool that is two inches in diameter, three feet long, weighs about thirteen pounds, and ends in a sharp, narrow point. Well over one hundred years ago, during the nineteenth century, men who worked on the railroad used tamping irons to set explosives. Why did they set explosives? To blast through rock, mountains, and anything else in the way of setting down railroad tracks. Phineas Gage used his tamping iron to set explosives on a regular basis. No big deal. But then, one day, something went terribly wrong. With the iron resting between his legs and the sharp end pointing directly toward his head as Phineas prepared to set an explosive, the iron suddenly shot off—exploded—tearing through his left cheek, whizzing behind his left eye, and exiting through the front part of his brain. The iron left Phineas's head just as quickly as it had entered, taking a bit of his brain along with it. Believe it or not, Phineas was still alive. The iron went completely through his skull, yet he did not lose consciousness. Right after the accident, Phineas was able to talk and move around just like everyone else. He even walked himself into town to get “stitched up” by the local doctor. But there was not much the doctor could do. The doctor said to himself, “Phineas surely will die!” Yet amazingly, Phineas lived. For several years after the accident. But he was not the same Phineas. He was different. Very different. And here the real story begins. (Younger YAs especially enjoy this talk.)

- 1848
- Phineas Gage
- Gruesome accident
- Tamping iron
- Set explosives for railroad
- Something went wrong
- Iron shot through head
- Phineas OK
- But not really

Aronson, Marc. *Witch Hunt: Mysteries of the Salem Witch Trials.* Atheneum, 2003

What is a witch? Are witches real? In the late seventeenth century, the people who lived in Salem, the first town established in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in what is now modern-day Massachusetts, believed that witches were indeed real. The colonists, called Puritans for their deeply religious, strict way of life, believed witches were diabolical creatures who used magic to carry out the devil's evil work. Witches could curdle milk, hobble animals, and cause children to sicken and die. The Puritans believed that witches must be purged from society. More than three hundred years ago, the colonists of Salem believed that witches were living among them, doing great evil. No one knows for certain how it all began. But in early 1692, nine-year-old Elizabeth Parris and her cousin, twelve-year-old Abigail Williams, started acting very strangely. Without warning and for no apparent reason, they suffered pinches and bites, their bodies twisted in unnatural ways, their throats choked, and they talked gibberish. There invisible tormenters were a mystery to all. Soon other girls in Salem showed similar signs of affliction. Hysteria soon gripped the town, and the law stepped in. The girls began pointing fingers and assigning blame. They claimed witchcraft was the cause of their anguish and that witches were living among the residents of Salem, masquerading as good puritans. They could see and identify their tormentors, even though they remained invisible to the unaffected. When the girls named names, the good puritans of Salem believed them. What followed was unimaginable horror. Hideous monsters, pacts

with the devil, spirits, trials, condemnation, hangings, and death plagued this New England colony for an entire year. Was witchcraft really to blame for the girls' trouble? How did town leaders test the accused for signs of witchcraft? What happened to the accusers? (Older YAs especially like this talk.)

- What is a witch?
- Seventeenth-century Salem
- Puritans
- Witches thought to be evil and real
- Elizabeth and Abigail attacked
- Cause: witchcraft
- Hysteria in town
- Law stepped in
- Girls accused
- Town believed
- Witch trials
- Why?

Nonfiction Titles to Booktalk

Following is a bibliographic compilation of recently published YA nonfiction titles. These works address topics and ideas that resonate with young adults. The titles are arranged by

Booktalking Tips

Getting Started

- Pinpoint which schools fall under your purview
- Gather contact information for these schools
- Write a letter of introduction to send to school librarians
- Follow up your correspondence with phone calls
- Schedule a time to meet with school librarians to discuss YA services
- Discuss booktalking in classrooms, at class assemblies, or through school news

Dewey Decimal Classification numbers.

001–031 UFOs and Curiosities

- Deary, Terry. *Alien Landing*. Kingfisher, 2004.
- Mason, Paul. *Investigating UFOs*. Heinemann, 2004.
- Ripley Entertainment. *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. Ripley Entertainment, 2004.

130 Paranormal Phenomena

- Anderson, Rafe. *Total Palmistry: The Love Connection*. Red Wheel, 2003.
- Kallen, Stuart A. *Fortune-telling*. Lucent, 2003.
- Shaw, Maria. *Maria Shaw's Tarot Kit for Teens*. Llewellyn, 2004.

150 Psychology

- Carlson, Dale. *The Teen Brain Book: Who and What Are You?* Bick, 2004.
- MacGregor, Rob. *Dream Power for Teens: What Your Dreams Say about Your Past, Present, and Future*. Adams Media, 2005.
- Quindlen, Anna. *Being Perfect*. Random House, 2005.

Booktalking Tips

Preparing the Booktalk

- Approach your booktalk as an advertisement
- Introduce the characters and plot in a creative, suspenseful way
- Build up to the most compelling part of the story, then leave a cliffhanger
- Do not reveal major plot points or resolutions
- Prepare an attention-grabbing opening and closing
- Write out an outline of your talk
- Do not memorize your talk
- Incorporate visuals: images from books, props, and so on
- Booktalk a variety of genres

305–310s Social Groups and Statistics

- Morse, Jenifer. *Scholastic Book of World Records 2006*. Scholastic Ref., 2005.
- Trope, Zoe. *Please Don't Kill the Freshman: A Memoir*. HarperTempest, 2004.

320 Political Science

- Greenfeld, Howard. *A Promise Fulfilled: Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weitzmann, David Ben-Gurion, and the Creation of the State of Israel*. Greenwillow, 2005.
- Mendez, Antonio J. *Spies: The Undercover World of Secrets, Gadgets, and Lies*. Firefly, 2004.

340–60 Law and Crime

- Crowe, Chris. *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case*. Dial, 2003.
- Genge, Ngaire E. *The Forensic Casebook: The Science of Crime Scene Investigation*. Ballantine, 2002.
- Koopmans, Andy. *Leopold and Loeb: Teen Killers*. Lucent, 2004.
- Kyi, Tanya Lloyd. *Fires!: Ten Stories That Chronicle Some of the Most Destructive Fire in Human History*. Annick, 2004.
- Rosinsky, Natalie M. *Jack the Ripper*. Lucent, 2004.

391 Customs and 398 Folklore

- Brown, Yorick, and Mike Flynn. *The 500 Best Urban Legends Ever!*. ibooks, 2003.
- Brunvand, Jan Harold, ed. *Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid: The Book of Scary Urban Legends*. Norton, 2004.
- Graydon, Shari. *In Your Face: The Culture of Beauty and You*. Annick, 2004.
- Redesdale, Algernon Bertram, and Baron Freeman-Mitford. *Tales of Old Japan: Folklore, Fairy Tales, Ghost Stories, and Legends of the Samurai*. Dover, 2005.

400 Language

- Harvey, William C. *Do You Really Know American English?* Barrons Educ. Series, 2004.

500 Natural Science

- Benchley, Peter. *Shark Life: True Stories about Sharks and the Sea*. Delacorte, 2005.
- Mackenzie, Dana. *The Big Splat, or How Our Moon Came to Be*. Wiley, 2003.
- Sullivan, Robert. *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants*. Bloomsbury, 2005.
- Winchester, Simon. *Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded, August 27, 1883*. Perennial, 2005.

600 Applied Science and Technology

- Boring, Mel, Leslie A. Dendy, and C. B. Mordan. *Guinea Pig Scientists: Bold Self-Experimenters in Science and Medicine*. Henry Holt, 2005.
- Coile, D. Caroline. *How Smart Is Your Dog?: 30 Fun Science Activities with Your Pet*. Sterling, 2003.
- Cooper, Evan. *Um, Like . . . OM: A Girl Goddess's Guide to Yoga*. Little Brown, 2005.
- Gonzales, Laurence. *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why*. Norton, 2004.
- Grason, Sandy. *Journalution: Journaling to Awaken Your Inner Voice, Heal Your Life, and Manifest Your Dreams*. New World Library, 2005.
- Janeczko, Paul B. *Top Secret: A Handbook of Codes, Ciphers, and Secret Writing*. Candlewick, 2004.
- Kelly, John. *The Great Mortality: An Intimate History of the Black Death, the Most Devastating Plague of All Time*. HarperCollins, 2005.
- Silverstein, Ken. *The Radioactive Boy Scout: The True Story of a Boy and His Backyard Nuclear Reactor*. Random House, 2004.

740 Drawing

- Giarrano, Vincent. *Comics Crash Course*. Impact, 2004.
- Hayashi, Hikaru, and Kimiko Morimoto. *How to Draw Manga Volume 34: Costume Encyclopedia Volume 2*. Graphic-Sha, 2005.
- Hernandez, Lea. *Manga Secrets*. Impact Books, 2005.

- Tusbasa, Hirono, and Nene Kotobuki. *Shoujo Manga Techniques: Drawing Basics*. Digital Manga., 2005.

745 Crafts

- Sethi, Maneesh. *Game Programming for Teens, Second Edition*. Muska & Lipman/Premier-Trade, 2005.
- Stoller, Debbie. *Stitch 'n Bitch Nation*. Workman, 2004.
- Torres, Laura. *Best Friends Forever!: 199 Projects to Make and Share*. Workman, 2004.
- Wenger, Jennifer, Carol Adrams, and Maureen Lasher. *Teen Knitting Club: Chill Out and Knit Some Cool Stuff*. Artisan, 2004.

770 Photography

- O'Donnell, Joe. *Japan 1945: A U.S. Marine's Photographs from Ground Zero*. Vanderbilt Univ. Pr., 2005.

780 Music

- Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*. St. Martin's, 2005.
- Christe, Ian. *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal*. Plexus, 2004.
- Krull, Kathleen. *The Book of Rock Stars: 24 Musical Icons That Shine through History*. Hyperion for Children, 2003.
- Raha, Maria. *Cinderella's Big Score: Women of the Punk and Indie Underground*. Seal, 2004.

790s Entertainment

- Britton, Wesley. *Spy Television*. Praeger, 2004.
- Compton, Shanna. *Gamers: Writers, Artists, and Programmers on the Pleasures of Pixels*. Soft Skull, 2004.
- Fishman, Katharine Davis. *Attitude!: Eight Young Dancers Come of Age at the Ailey School*. Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2004.
- Vinther, Janus. *Special Effects Make-Up*. Routledge, 2003.
- Wilson, John and Peter Travers. *The Official Razzie Movie Guide: Enjoying the Best of Hollywood's Worst*. Warner Books, 2005.

796 Sports

- Caprio, Robert. *Are We There Yet?: Tales from the Never-Ending Travels of WWE Superstars*. Simon & Schuster, 2005.
- Davis, James. *Skateboarding Is Not a Crime: 50 Years of Street Culture*. Firefly, 2004.
- Editors of Sports Illustrated. *Sports Illustrated: Full Throttle: 2005*. Sports Illustrated, 2005.
- Editors of Sports Illustrated. *Sports Illustrated: Hot Shots: 21st Century Sports Photography*. Sports Illustrated, 2004.
- Green, Naima. *Surfing: Rules, Tips, Strategy, and Safety*. Rosen, 2005.
- Nardo, Don. *A Roman Gladiator*. Lucent/Thomson Gale, 2005.
- Tomlinson, Joe and Ed Leigh. *Extreme Sports: In Search of the Ultimate Thrill*. Firefly, 2004.

808 Literature Collections

- Chetwynd-Hayes, R., and Stephen Jones, eds. *Great Ghost Stories*. Carroll & Graf, 2004.
- Datlow, Ellen, ed. *Stroke of Midnight*. Tor, 2003.
- Little, Denise. *Rotten Relations*. DAW, 2004.

811 Poetry

- Carlson, Lori Marie. *Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States*. Bilingual edition. Henry Holt, 2005.
- Eleveld, Mark, ed. *The Spoken Word Revolution: Slam, Hip Hop & the Poetry of a New Generation*. Sourcebooks, 2005.
- Nelson, Marilyn. *A Wreath for Emmett Till*. Houghton Mifflin, 2005.
- Rylant, Cynthia. *Boris*. Harcourt Children's, 2005.
- Stipe, Michael. *Haiku Year*. Soft Skull, 2004.

910 Geography and Travel

- Jones, Charlotte Foltz. *Westward Hol: Eleven Explorers of the West*. Holiday House, 2005.

Booktalking Tips

Delivering the Booktalk

- Limit your booktalk to three to five minutes
- Review your outline before the talk
- Open your talk with a few questions
- Make eye contact
- Walk around the room, gesture, and change your facial expressions
- Ad lib—keep it natural and free-flowing
- Bring a variety of materials to display: magazines, CDs, audiobooks, DVDs, and so on
- Before you start, tell your audience that if they listen closely, they will earn prizes—candy, bookmarks, temporary tattoos, mood pencils, and so on—for correctly answering questions about your booktalk

920 Biography and Genealogy

- Bedell, J. M. *Finding Courage: History's Young Heroes and Their Amazing Deeds*. Beyond Words, 2004.

940 World War II

- Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*. Scholastic Nonfiction, 2005.
- Payment, Simone. *American Women Spies of World War II*. Rosen, 2004.
- Santella, Andrew. *Navajo Code Talkers*. Compass Point, 2004.

950 Asian History

- Yan, Ma. *The Diary of Ma Yan: The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl*. HarperCollins, 2005.

973 U.S. History

- Armstrong, Jennifer. *Photo by Brady: A Picture of the Civil War*. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum, 2005.

- Kneib, Martha. *Women Soldiers, Spies, and Patriots of the American Revolution*. Rosen, 2004.
- Marrin, Albert. *Old Hickory: Andrew Jackson and the American People*. Dutton Juvenile, 2004.
- Miller, Brandon Marie. *Declaring Independence: Life during the American Revolution*. Lerner, 2005.
- Walker, Sally M. *Secrets of a Civil War Submarine: Solving the Mysteries of the H. L. Hunley*. Carolrhoda, 2005.
- Greenberg, Jan and Sandra Jordan. *Andy Warhol: Prince of Pop*. Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2004.
- Robinson, Sharon. *Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America*. Scholastic, 2005.
- Runyon, Brent. *The Burn Journals*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2004.

Professional Resources

Although there are many excellent print, electronic, and online resources on booktalking for teens, these are some of the best!


Autobiographies and Biographies

- Marquez, Heron. *Roberto Clemente: Baseball's Humanitarian Hero*. Carolrhoda, 2004.
- Giblin, James Cross. *Good Brother, Bad Brother: The Story of Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth*. Clarion, 2005.
- Bodart, Joni Richards. *The Booktalker*. Accessed July 3, 2005, www.thebooktalker.com.

- Bodart, Joni Richards. *Radical Reads: 101 YA Novels on the Edge*. Scarecrow, 2002.
- Gillespie, John. *Teenplots: A Booktalk Guide to Use with Readers Ages 12–18*. Thomas Libraries Unlimited, 2003.
- Keane, Nancy. "Booktalks: Quick and Simple." Accessed July 3, 2005, www.nancykeane.com/booktalks.
- NoveList Database. Ipswich, Mass: EBSCO Publ, 2005.
- Schall, Lucy. *Booktalks and More: Motivating Teens to Read*. Libraries Unlimited, 2003.
- Young Adult Library Services Association. "Professional Development Center Topics: Booktalking." 2005. Accessed July 3, 2005, www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/profdev/booktalking.htm. **YALS**

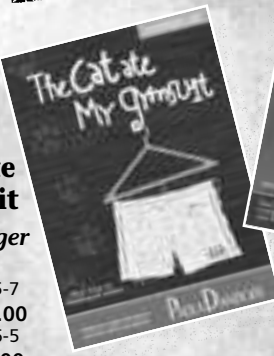
FULL CAST AUDIO

Where Great Teen Novels Become Great Teen Listening!




Buddha Boy
Kathe Koja
2 Cass. Lib. **\$20.00**
ISBN 1-932076-52-2
3 CD Econo **\$28.00**
ISBN 1-932076-53-0
3 CD Binder **\$34.00**
ISBN 1-933322-20-9

"Spencer Murphy aptly conveys Justin's fears, ambivalence, and outrage...a surefire springboard for discussion about bullying, peer pressure, and tolerance." – *School Library Journal*



The Cat Ate My Gymsuit
Paula Danziger
2 Cass. **\$20.00**
ISBN 1-932076-55-7
3 CD Econo. **\$28.00**
ISBN 1-932076-56-5
3 CD Binder **\$34.00**
ISBN 1-933322-21-7

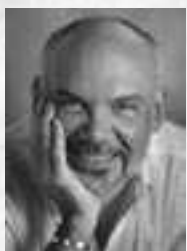
"The shining star in this production is Caitlin Brodnick, who plays Marcy to perfection." – *Booklist*, ★ *Starred Review*



Gilbert & Sullivan Set Me Free
Kathleen Karr
5 CD Econo. **\$34.00**
ISBN 1-932076-74-3
5 CD Binder **\$42.00**
ISBN 1-933322-27-6

Too new for review, but here's what the author had to say:

"I am totally enchanted by Full Cast Audio's recording of my book. The entire cast has made its characterizations spot on. Better, they've thrown their hearts in as well." – *Kathleen Karr*



Bruce Coville's
FULLCAST AUDIO
"WE PUT MORE ACTORS IN EVERY BOX!"

Available from your distributor or directly from
1-800-871-6809 www.fullcastaudio.com

Copyright of Young Adult Library Services is the property of American Library Association. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.