

# The Secret Language of Books

A Guide to Appeal

2017  
edition

NovelList<sup>®</sup>

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# Welcome

Have you ever wondered if books have their own secret language? We at NoveList think they do, and we call it appeal.

Appeal is how a book whispers to a reader. It's how a memoir leaves them feeling inspired or a novel leaves them wondering if the narrator was being straight with them, long after they've closed the pages.

When books speak to us at NoveList and to readers in your library in appeal, they aren't speaking about subject matter (nurses, diaries, Presidents, Antarctica, etc.), they are speaking style and how the book feels.

Using the groundwork laid by Joyce Saricks, Nancy Pearl, Neal Wyatt, and others, NoveList introduced our vocabulary describing book appeal in 2010. We created this language in response to readers, librarians, and reading trends and, with your help, it's grown and adapted to serve you better.

We've pulled nuance out of "Funny," adding eight additional terms, including "Sardonic" and "Silly." Similarly, we are better able to describe illustration appeal for readers of all ages, from *Goodnight Moon* to *Fun Home*.

Our metadata librarians spend their days discussing and evaluating appeal to make your job of finding a reader's next amazing read, easier. We're proud of this work and we're proud of the role you played in making it happen.

We welcome your feedback to make appeal even better! What term would help you find your next favorite book? Let us know at [novelist@ebSCO.com](mailto:novelist@ebSCO.com).

Happy reading!



*Elizabeth Coleman, MLS  
Metadata Librarian II*

# Starter Questions

Use these to start conversations with readers.

Can you tell me about a book you've read and enjoyed?

What movies and TV shows have you enjoyed?

Which of your favorite authors or series do you wish had a new book?

What are you in the mood for today?

# Pace

**Pace is the rate at which a story unfolds for the reader. We identify books at either end of the spectrum. We also tag those that start slowly, then accelerate as the story progresses.**

## **Fast-paced**

Events in these exciting books unfold rapidly, moving the reader quickly through the story.

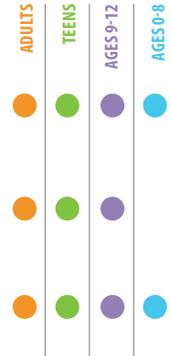
## **Intensifying**

These books gradually build in momentum throughout the story, resulting in a gripping conclusion.

## **Leisurely paced**

Due to descriptive language, focus on detail, or careful development of character or setting, these books unfold slowly, allowing the reader to savor the narrative.

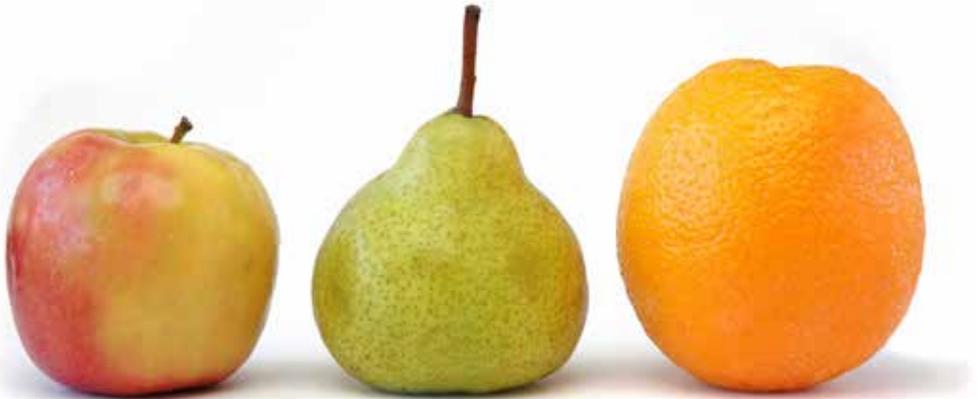
AUDIENCE(S) THIS TERM APPLIES TO:



Why so few pace terms? According to Neal Wyatt, nobody's really looking for "medium-paced" books – it's only an active appeal when it stands out on the spectrum.

# Making Comparisons

Use comparisons to dig deeper into reading preferences. Do you prefer **action-packed** or **character-driven** stories? **Fast** or **leisurely paced**? **Heartwarming** and **homespun**, or **disturbing** and **creepy**?



# Storyline

**Storyline is a quick way to determine a book's focus and structure.**

## **Action-packed**

Pulse-pounding, high-octane excitement is the rule!

## **Character-driven** *Fiction use only*

Interior growth and development of characters is important.

## **Intricately plotted**

These books have intricate, complicated, or elaborate storylines, often involving multiple plots or numerous narrative twists and turns.

## **Issue-oriented**

Issue-oriented books explore controversial themes, which may cover emotional, ethical, or social problems.

## **Nonlinear**

Instead of being portrayed chronologically, events in these books shift between time periods.

## **Open-ended**

Instead of providing answers, these books invite readers to ponder events long after the last page.

## **Plot-driven** *Fiction use only*

Events rather than characters propel these stories forward.

## **Sweeping**

These sprawling stories span decades or generations and frequently include multiple locations and historical events.

## **Unconventional** *\*New term in 2017\**

Using unique or unexpected elements, these books may twist, adapt, or play on conventional storylines.

## **World-building**

These books immerse the reader in vivid imaginary worlds of invented histories, languages, geography, or cultures.

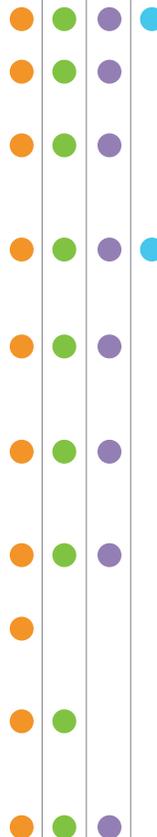
AUDIENCE(S) THIS  
TERM APPLIES TO:

ADULTS

TEENS

AGES 9-12

AGES 0-8



# Using Tone to **Narrow** a Genre

How much sex is too much?  
Whether romance readers are  
looking for some good, clean fun,  
or a down and dirty romp,  
appeal can help find their  
safe word (or comfort  
zone).

## **SWEET ROMANCES**

TRY  
Chaste  
Heartwarming  
Homespun

## **MILD ROMANCES**

TRY  
Mildly sensuous  
Upbeat

## **HOT ROMANCES**

TRY  
Explicit  
Moody  
Steamy

# Tone

**Tone is the feeling that a book evokes in the reader. In many cases, this category best answers the question, "What are you in the mood for?"**

AUDIENCE(S) THIS  
TERM APPLIES TO:

## **Amusing**

They may not make you laugh out loud, but these stories have a light humor that sometimes accentuates more serious themes.

## **Angst-filled**

Characters in these books experience problems associated with adolescence, such as questions about sexuality, popularity, or social standing.

## **Atmospheric**

These books evoke the story's setting, whether it's a gothic mansion or a small Midwestern town.

## **Bittersweet**

A mixed emotional edge—both pleasant and painful—that is sustained throughout the story.

## **Bleak**

A dark outlook, frequently devoid of faith in human nature and tending away from hope or optimism.

## **Chaste**

These books about romantic relationships focus on the emotions of the characters, and contain no sex or descriptions of sexual activity.

## **Conservative** *Nonfiction use only*

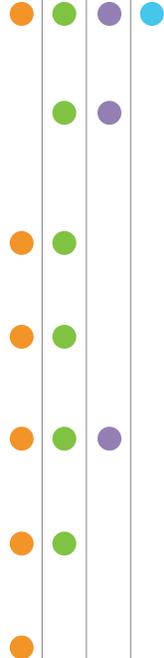
Represents a conservative (often Republican) perspective on American politics and social issues such as the environment, poverty, and the economy.

ADULTS

TEENS

AGES 9-12

AGES 0-8



# Tone

## **Creepy**

Unsettling in a visceral, skin-crawling way, these books make the reader uneasy, and may often have supernatural elements and eerie settings.

## **Darkly humorous**

The humor in these books derives from ironic or grimly satiric treatment of death, suffering, and other morbid subjects.

## **Disturbing**

Approaching the darker side of human nature, these books are unsettling and often portray socially marginal or dysfunctional individuals.

## **Dramatic**

These cinematic books feature exciting and larger-than-life stories, depicting anything from historical events to space warfare.

## **Emotionally intense**

Conveying great depth or complexity of emotion, these books explore the inner lives of characters in detail.

## **Explicit**

These books contain lots of vividly described sex, ranging from the plainest (but plentiful) vanilla to the kinkiest of kink.

## **Feel-good**

A gentle, comfortable, and hopeful feeling (not just a happy ending).

## **Funny**

Laugh-out-loud humor characterizes these books.

## **Gossipy**

Actions and people tend to be over-the-top and salacious.

## **Gross**

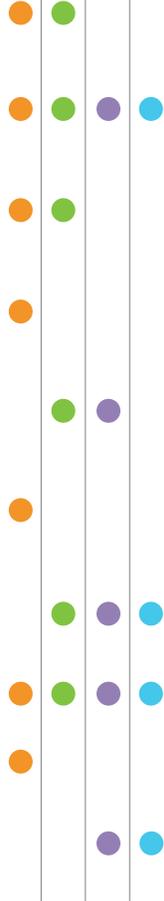
Yuck! Including lots of nasty, oozy, or disgusting facts or details, these books may be educational or purely for entertainment.

ADULTS

TEENS

AGES 9-12

AGES 6-8



# Tone

## Gruesome

Not for the squeamish, these books include a significant amount of explicit gore or other grisly elements.

## Haunting

Often because of hard-hitting storylines, these books have a memorable, unforgettable quality that stays with the reader.

## Heartwarming

These uplifting stories ultimately leave readers feeling emotionally satisfied.

## Heartwrenching

These books convey emotions that are keenly distressing, hitting a nerve with readers and deeply affecting them.

## High-drama

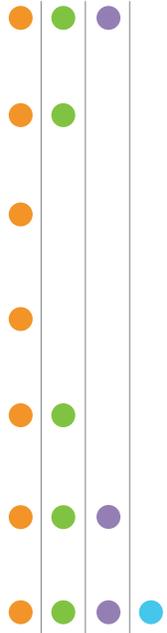
Juicy, sensational, and melodramatic, these books deal with back-stabbing social scenes and catty personalities.

## Homespun

Simplicity is key, often with a rural or small-town setting and characters that are unpretentious and cherish old-fashioned values.

## Hopeful

While addressing weighty issues, these books incorporate some optimistic elements, expressing the belief that things may improve.



Humor comes in many varieties, so you'll want to get specific... Are you looking for light humor? Try **amusing**, **funny**, **irreverent**, or **silly**. Want something more edgy? Look for **darkly humorous** or **sardonic**.

# Tone

## **Impartial** *Nonfiction use only*

Presents a balanced view of a contentious subject.

## **Impassioned** *Nonfiction use only*

These books convey strong emotions to readers because the authors are forcefully advocating a particular point of view, making an argument, or telling an emotional story.

## **Inspiring**

These books have an inspirational, enlightening, or uplifting quality, which may or may not be religious in nature.

## **Irreverent**

No institutions, people, or beliefs are off-limits in these humorous (and sometimes subversive) books.

## **Liberal** *Nonfiction use only*

Represents a liberal (often Democratic) perspective on American politics, politicians, and social issues such as the environment, poverty, and the economy.

## **Melancholy**

While not grim or hopeless, these books are sad, somber, or gloomy.

## **Menacing**

A sense of threat or menace pervades, evoking feelings of dread.

## **Mildly sensuous**

Sex is present, but it's not given pride of place. Relationships are most important, but sometimes characters act on their attractions.

## **Moody**

A dark and brooding tone that borders on melodrama.

## **Moving**

Emotionally resonant books that make readers feel invested in both the characters and the story.

ADULTS

TEENS

AGES 9-12

AGES 0-8



# Tone

## **Mystical**

Touching on spiritual themes, these books often explore archetypes and incorporate metaphysical events.

## **Noisy**

Because of rousing, energetic pictures or text, these stories lend themselves to loud readings.

## **Nostalgic**

Characters reminisce, or the book looks back toward a particular place or time with longing and wistfulness.

## **Offbeat**

Through plot twists, bizarre humor, and unique personalities, these quirky books recount unconventional, idiosyncratic, or unusual stories.

## **Patriotic**

These books celebrate and show pride in one's country and its achievements.

## **Quiet**

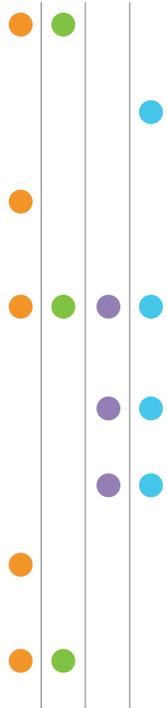
Soothing, low-key stories that have a calming effect on young readers.

## **Racy humor**

Including coarse or risqué material; these books refer to sex in a humorous way.

## **Reflective**

Contemplative books featuring characters who think seriously about their lives and place in the world.



Some tone words are just for kids – for example, **gross, noisy, quiet, silly, scary, & sweet** are all terms that can help you find the perfect book for storytime, read-alouds, or (best of all!) naptime.

# Tone

## Romantic

Not genre romances, but featuring strong romantic elements—either between characters or in the story itself. Happy endings not guaranteed!

## Sad

Issues in these books may be very serious (such as death), or less serious but still challenging (such as a friend moving away).

## Sardonic

Dry humor and biting wit set the tone in these stories.

## Scary

These spooky books have a frightening or menacing feeling that will make young readers uneasy.

## Self-deprecating *Nonfiction use only*

Never taking themselves too seriously, the authors humorously expose their own embarrassments, making readers sympathize, laugh, and sometimes cringe!

## Serious

Marked by seriousness, gravity, or solemnity, these books confront social issues such as war, poverty, gender, or racial concerns.

## Silly

The class clowns of literature, these books are often quite absurd and ridiculous but lots of fun.

## Sobering

Addressing weighty social issues, these serious and hard-hitting books present a perspective that may be revelatory to the reader.

## Spiritual *Nonfiction use only*

These nonfiction books represent a spiritual outlook on religion and spirituality.

ADULTS

TEENS

AGES 9-12

AGES 0-8



# Tone

## Steamy

In adult books, the sex is pretty vivid and goes beyond just innuendo. In teen books, there is still an unmistakably sexy aura, although perhaps not as much graphic detail.

## Strong sense of place

Powerfully depicted locales—real or imaginary—come alive and give a good sense of what makes a place unique.

## Suspenseful

Ranging in intensity from subtle psychological unease to nail-biting suspense, these books keep readers on edge.

## Sweet

With a light tone and appealing innocence, these endearing books are cute, playful, and otherwise delightful.

## Thought-provoking

More than just telling a story, these books take on big ideas—anything from philosophical quandaries to time paradoxes.

## Upbeat

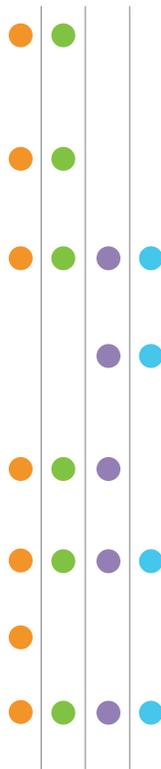
These fun books are lighthearted, hopeful, and optimistic.

## Violent

Not for the faint of heart, these books contain explicit or graphic violence.

## Whimsical

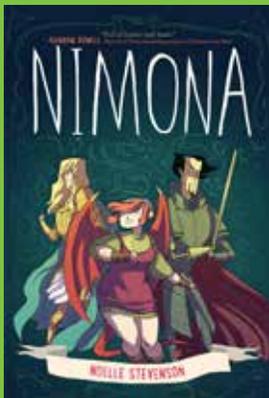
These fanciful and playful books will charm and enchant readers, and often include fairy tales or other elements of fantasy.



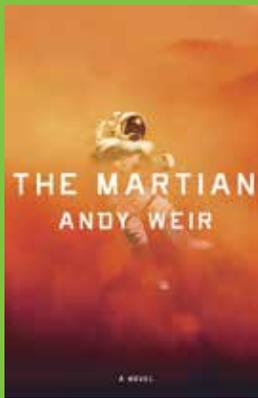
For readers with a passion for place, direct them to books with a **strong sense of place**, and then pair it with a subject heading for a location—anything from Paris to Middle Earth.

# Characters readers love

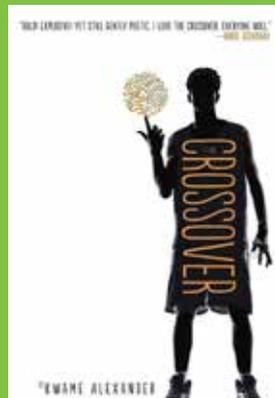
*(and the appeal that tells you why)*



Readers fall in love with Nimona, the **quirky, spirited, strong female** villain, even as she's planning attacks on cities with genetically modified dragons.



Trapped on Mars, **courageous** Mark Watney keeps readers on the edge of our seats, but it's his **snarky** sense of humor that makes him **relatable**.



Competition between brothers as told by Josh, a **believable** character appealing to middle grade kids into sports and **culturally diverse** characters.

# Character

**Only applied to fiction books, character appeal is especially for those readers who love books because of the characters.**

## **Ability diverse**

These characters live with physical, mental, or emotional conditions that can often be challenging.

## **Anthropomorphic**

From cats solving mysteries to crayons quitting their day jobs, the non-human characters in these books offer a unique perspective.

## **Authentic**

These characters behave in ways that accord with their age, nationality, and backgrounds.

## **Awkward**

Often unsure of themselves, these characters lack the social savvy to navigate relationships and other interpersonal situations smoothly.

## **Believable**

These characters ring true for young readers, and behave in ways that are consistent with their age and backgrounds.

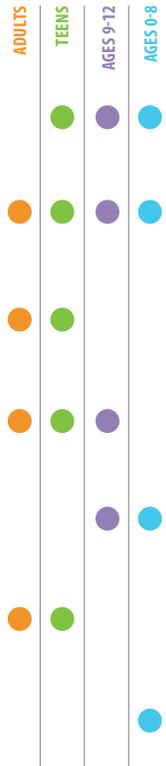
## **Brooding**

Haunted by past traumas or mistakes, these morose characters contemplate (and often must confront) what is wrong in the world.

## **Character duos**

From best friends to odd couples, these books feature dynamic duos who take on the world together!

AUDIENCE(S) THIS TERM APPLIES TO:



# Character

## **Complex**

Intriguing and complicated, these multi-dimensional characters have conflicting motivations and desires.

## **Courageous**

These brave and often self-sacrificing characters have strong convictions and face challenges with determination, despite the odds against them.

## **Culturally diverse**

These books may feature characters from racial and ethnic minorities living in the United States, Europe, Canada, or Australia, as well as characters from non-white cultural groups living in other parts of the world.

## **Exaggerated**

These larger-than-life characters often delight readers by adding to the humor or uniqueness of a story.

## **Flawed**

These characters do not always act in their own best interests, and their sometimes misguided decisions form a central theme in the story.

## **Introspective**

These characters examine their own feelings, thoughts, and motives, and what they find often has major repercussions for the story.

## **Large cast of characters**

Whether because of sprawling storylines, epic scopes, or intricate plots, these books contain lots of characters—how well readers get to know them depends on the author.

ADULTS



TEENS



AGES 9-12



AGES 0-8



# Character

## **LGBTQIA diverse**

Identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or just questioning, these characters are not stereotypes and are important to the story (even if in a secondary role).

## **Likeable**

These appealing characters engage readers and are likeable, despite flaws.

## **Mischievous**

These child characters frequently get into trouble or cause minor disasters due to their curiosity or intentional disregard for the rules.

## **Quirky**

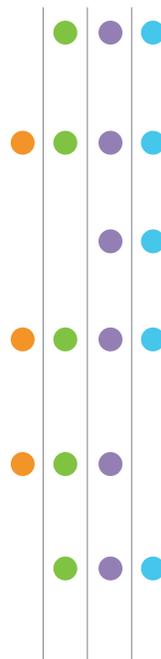
Eccentric and idiosyncratic, these characters range from peculiar to bizarre, and generally add to the charm or humor of the stories in which they appear.

## **Relatable**

Because their emotions and experiences are recognizable, readers are able to identify with these characters and their dilemmas.

## **Religiously diverse**

These characters follow or have a background in a religion other than Christianity. While their active level of involvement in the religion may vary, the character's religious beliefs are an important element in the story.



Responding to the recent call for more diversity (#WeNeedDiverseBooks) in children's literature, we call out different kinds of diversity in our character appeal terms. Look for **ability diverse**, **culturally diverse**, **LGBTQIA diverse**, and **religiously diverse** characters.

# Character

## **Sarcastic**

These young characters sometimes employ sarcasm for humor, and sometimes in response to difficult or challenging situations.

## **Sassy**

These books feature characters (usually women) with outsized personalities and a bottomless well of one-liners and comebacks.

## **Snarky**

These characters employ sarcasm, irony, and biting wit in their approach to life (and often have fun with it!).

## **Spirited**

These lively characters are full of energy and vigor.

## **Spunky**

Feisty and scrappy, these characters have pluck and determination.

## **Strong female**

Whether catching criminals or saving the world, these take-charge women and girls are at the top of their game.

## **Sympathetic**

While sometimes dealing with difficult situations or making poor decisions, these characters are presented in such a way that readers empathize with them.

## **Twisted**

Deviant and often unsettling, these characters push the boundaries of literature through behavior that ranges from disturbing to illegal.

ADULTS

TEENS

AGES 9-12

AGES 0-8



# Character

## **Unlikeable**

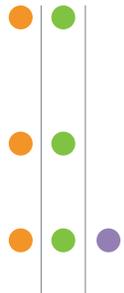
Deliberately painted in an unflattering light, these characters will not gain the sympathy of readers, so there is less emotional investment if and when bad things happen to them.

## **Unreliable narrator**

Readers may not be able to trust the version of events narrated to them in these complex and sometimes disturbing stories.

## **Well-developed**

Sometimes appearing in more plot-driven stories, these characters rise above others in the strength of their development.

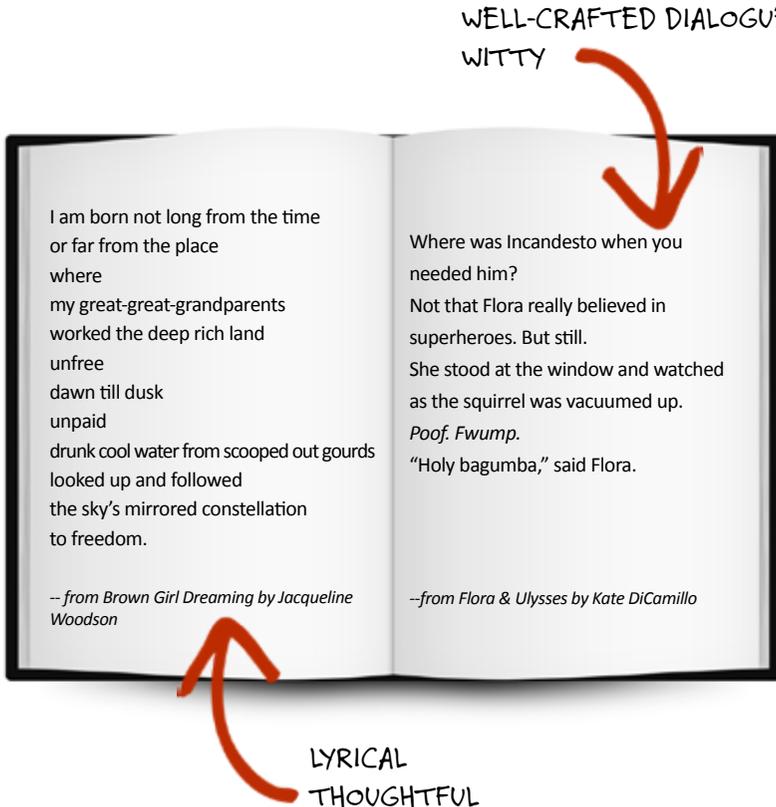


Have a reader who doesn't mind spending time with uncomfortable characters?

Try books with **unlikeable** or **twisted** characters, or with an **unreliable narrator**.

# Different Writing Styles

Appeal helps compare very different styles ...



# Writing Style

**Writing style terms tell us how a book is written, from the complexity of the language to the level of detail in the background.**

**Accessible** *Nonfiction use only*

These books explain a complicated or technical issue in an approachable manner.

**Attention-grabbing**

Irresistible to young readers, these books instantly draw them in.

**Banter-filled** *\*New term in 2017\**

These books are characterized by snappy repartee.

**Browsable** *Nonfiction use only*

Information is arranged in short sections and is often accompanied by illustrations or other graphics to encourage browsing.

**Candid**

The narrative style of these books is frank and forthcoming, even when discussing potentially sensitive or uncomfortable subjects.

**Compelling**

These powerful books draw readers irresistibly into the story.

**Comprehensive** *Nonfiction use only*

These wide-ranging books thoroughly cover the background (and sometimes personalities!) of the subjects they explore.

**Concise** *Nonfiction use only*

Without wasting a word, these nonfiction books deliver a wealth of information in a succinct format.

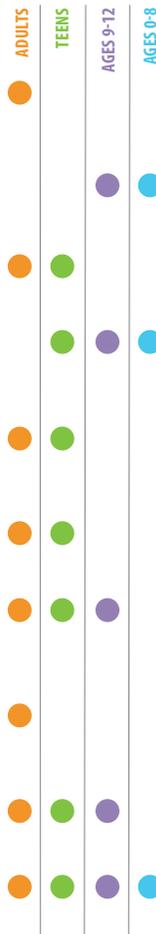
**Conversational**

Written informally, these read as if a close friend were telling a story.

**Descriptive**

Full of elaborate descriptions, with illustrative, expressive language.

AUDIENCE(S) THIS TERM APPLIES TO:



# Writing Style

## **Dialect-filled**

Regional language and slang bring the setting to life.

## **Easy-to-understand** *Nonfiction use only*

These make hard-to-understand things a little easier.

## **Engaging**

These books capture the imagination of readers through narrative style, character, or use of detail.

## **Gritty**

Characterized by a narrative style that includes dark and unsettling details, these books often depict violence.

## **Jargon-filled**

These books use the specialized, technical language of a particular group, trade, or profession.

## **Journalistic** *Nonfiction use only*

Written about newsworthy issues, these books are well-researched but conversational, rather than scholarly.

## **Lush**

Descriptive language evokes the senses, making readers feel as if they are experiencing what is being described.

## **Lyrical**

Elegant, beautiful language, often with a rhythmic or poetic quality.

## **Minimal text**

Generally used with young children, these have few words per page. The words tend to be simple, and sentences are short.

## **Participatory** *\*New term in 2017\**

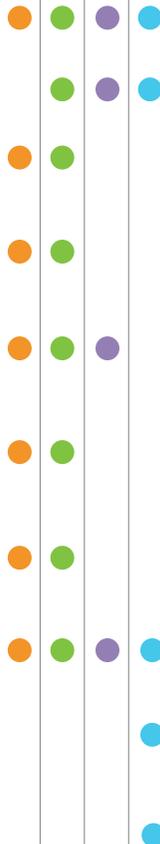
These books will require the reader to engage with the story by answering questions or through physical interaction.

ADULTS

TEENS

AGES 9-12

AGES 0-8



# Writing Style

## **Persuasive** *Nonfiction use only*

These books may present both sides of an issue, but are frequently used to bolster a specific opinion.

## **Richly detailed**

Details enrich these stories, sometimes focusing on a special body of knowledge (e.g., forensics, music, history, etc.).

## **Scholarly** *Nonfiction use only*

Thoroughly researched and addressing complicated issues, the language in these books is academic or technical.

## **Slang-heavy**

Characters in these books make frequent use of slang, which often aids in character development.

## **Spare**

Minimal and elegant with great attention paid to the use of language.

## **Stream of consciousness** *\*New term in 2017\* Fiction use only*

These novels and stories portray the uninterrupted and uneven flow of the characters' consciousness.

## **Stylistically complex**

Due to sophisticated language and narrative structure, these stories can often be read on a number of levels.

## **Thoughtful**

Despite covering a sensitive or controversial topic, these books are considerably written and handle the subject with respect.

## **Well-crafted dialogue**

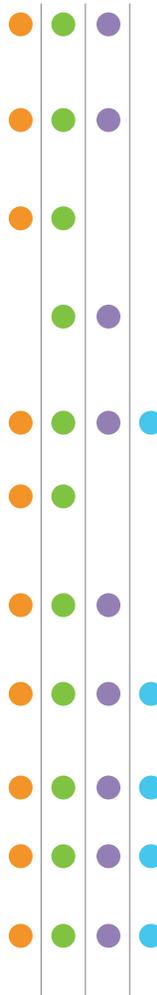
These books contain authentic or notable dialogue.

## **Witty**

These cleverly written books use language in an inventive, humorous way.

## **Wordplay-filled**

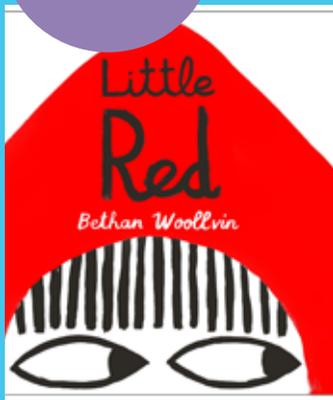
These books are full of puns, palindromes, anagrams, and other clever uses of language.



# Different kinds of Illustrations

Need a storytime book? **Big and bold** illustrations can be seen from across a crowd. **Detailed** books give young readers a chance to pore over the pictures. **Colorful** books are eye-catching for appealing displays!

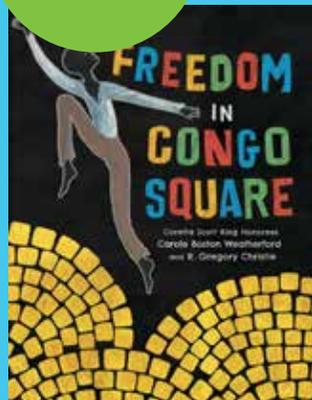
**Big and  
Bold**



**Detailed**



**Colorful**



# Illustration

Both picture books and graphic novels have a unique set of qualities important to their readers, from color and drawing style to the mood evoked by the illustrations.

## Big and bold

These illustrations convey ideas visually in a simple manner easily understood by young children. The contrast between bright colors and bold lines makes the pictures easily visible from a distance, even within a large group (and thus these books are a great choice for storytime!)

## Black-and-white

The artwork is in black and white only, and may range from pen and ink drawings to watercolor-like effects in shades of gray.

## Bold

The shapes or lines in these illustrations have a strong and striking appearance. The artwork may consist of simple, basic, or block-like shapes, and the lines may be dark, distinct, or thick.

## Cartoony

This style features characters drawn with exaggerated, simplified features. Often humorous, it can be used to lighten difficult or disturbing themes.

## Charming

These illustrations are captivating and pleasing to the eye. Often cute and playful, they offer visual support for the light or upbeat tone in a story.

## Colorful

The full-color illustrations in these books feature vibrant colors. The artwork may vary widely, but the color palette is vivid.

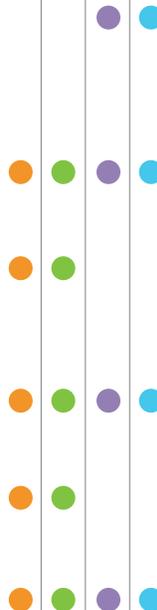
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# Illustration

## **Dark**

Often used for emphasis in stories with a bleak, menacing, or serious tone, these illustrations are full of shadows and dark corners.

## **Delicate**

Deft and fine in texture or structure. Lines are thinly drawn, and the effect of these pictures is subtle.

## **Detailed**

These books convey a lot of information through the quantity and clarity of the detail within the objects and offer readers the chance to pore over the pictures.

## **Fanciful** *\*New term in 2017\**

These illustrations are imaginative and unexpected and may range from whimsical drawings to surrealistic art with a dreamlike quality.

## **Folk-art style**

Recognized by its flat perspective, simplified or stylized shapes, and dramatic use of color; frequently appears to be created by either an untrained artist or one who does not adhere to academic standards for art.

## **Impressionistic**

These evocative illustrations use soft lines, reflected light, and color to capture a sensory, emotion-filled impression of a scene or an object.

## **Inventive**

These creative books challenge the reader's perceptions with non-standard use of illustrative elements (including line, panels, or color).

## **Lavish**

Whether through use of color, line, or detail, these illustrations are elaborate, sumptuous, and striking.

ADULTS



TEENS



AGES 9-12



AGES 0-8



# Illustration

## **Minimally colored**

Featuring a limited color palette, these books can be two-toned or grayscale with one or two brighter colors used as accents.

## **Muted**

The subtle color may have a washed out or subdued quality. This restraint in the use of color often serves to set the tone of the story.

## **Nightmarish**

Deliberately ugly, frightening, or unpleasant. Most likely to accompany storylines that are unpleasant with a creepy, disturbing, or menacing tone.

## **Photographic**

These books use photographs as the primary method of illustration. Often found in nonfiction books where photographs are the primary illustrations.

## **Realistic**

These illustrations use correct proportions and accurate perspective. The content may not represent reality, but the drawing does.

## **Rough-edged**

These illustrations are not sophisticated, polished, or elegant; instead, they have jagged lines and imperfect images, which serve to convey and emphasize the strong emotions being portrayed.

## **Surreal**

These illustrations have a dreamlike or unreal quality, and express the workings of the subconscious. Typically done in a realistic style, they use unexpected juxtapositions of people or objects.

## **Textured**

The visible texture of these illustrations adds realistic depth and detail through the skillful use of artistic medium.



# Appeal to Different **Listeners**



## All About the Voices

Find your new  
favorite narrator!

### **SEARCH FOR:**

Character accents  
Energetic  
Folksy  
Multiple narrators  
Read by the author  
Youthful



## A Story and a Show

Prefer lots of  
showtime extras?

### **SEARCH FOR:**

Audio drama  
Full cast  
Live audience  
Musically enhanced  
Sound effects



## Hooked on a Feeling

Looking to evoke a  
mood or feeling?

### **SEARCH FOR:**

Comedic  
Detached  
Emotionally connected  
Engrossing  
Intense  
Somber

# Audio

**Audio appeal covers everything from the performance (full cast or read by the author) to voice quality, tone, and artistic delivery.**

## **Audio drama**

These are either original audio productions, or were changed significantly from a book to a more dramatic form of the work.

## **Approachable**

Through their clear and well-paced performances, these narrators make challenging concepts or language easier for listeners to understand.

## **Brisk**

These narrators move their stories along with quick, agile readings.

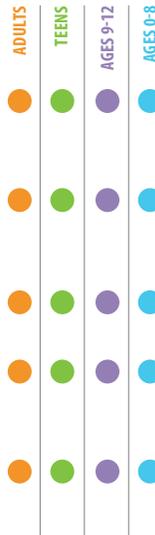
## **Character accents**

Incorporating accents into their performances, these narrators bring both characters and settings to life with their vocal versatility.

## **Comedic**

Through good use of comic timing, these narrators channel the humor of the stories they read and convey it to listeners.

AUDIENCE(S) THIS  
TERM APPLIES TO:



Notice that all the audio terms apply to all audiences? Since they describe the narrator's performance, voice, or the overall production, these terms can apply to audiobooks at any reading level.

# Audio

## **Commanding**

These narrators deliver strong and authoritative performances.

## **Crisp**

These narrators read in clear tones, with precise enunciation.

## **Deadpan**

The humor in these books—sometimes wry and sometimes riotous—is delivered in a cool, impassive manner.

## **Detached**

These performances are emotionally removed from the story, which separates the listener from the impact of violent or disturbing events.

## **Distinctly voiced**

Narrators provide a multiplicity of voices for their characters, sometimes through accents, pitch, intonation, or tone. The result is that listeners can easily identify who is speaking.

## **Emotionally connected**

Because of their connection with the characters, these narrators capture the emotional content of the books they read.

## **Energetic**

These narrators imbue their performances with spirit, animation, and enthusiasm; adding to the humor, excitement, or drama.

## **Engrossing**

These narrators skillfully draw listeners into the story, providing a memorable listening experience.

## **Folksy**

These narrators highlight regional speech patterns, cadences, and dialects; often the characters they portray will be from rural areas, including but not limited to the South.

ADULTS



TEENS



AGES 9-12



AGES 0-8



# Audio

## Full cast

In these performances, multiple narrators perform as individual characters during an interactive reading.

## Gentle

These soothing voices are easy on the ear. Sometimes this narrative style can make difficult subject matter easier to process.

## Gravelly

These narrators have husky, raspy, and throaty voices.

## Immersive

Narration that captures the sensation of a time and place and immerses the listener in the story's setting.

## Intense

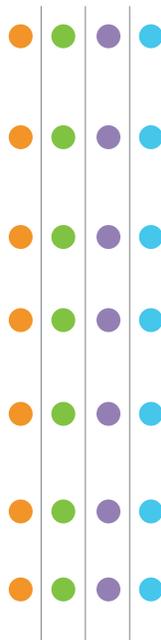
Through dramatic, suspense-filled performances, these narrators keep listeners on the edges of their seats.

## Live audience

Narrators or actors perform in the presence of a live audience.

## Melodious

Lilting, dulcet voices offer a pleasing and almost hypnotic listening experience.



What's the difference between **multiple narrators** and **full cast**? In a **full cast** audiobook, the performers interact with each other while **multiple narrators** typically read alternating chapters or a unique character's part.

# Audio

## Multiple narrators

These performances include more than one narrator, often reading sections or chapters told from one character's perspective.

## Musically enhanced

Including anything from a few musical accents to a full musical score, this is most often found in full cast performances or in juvenile audiobooks.

## Read by the author

In these performances, authors double as narrators, and listeners get the chance to hear the text as voiced by the author.

## Resonant

These pleasing voices wash over the listener in rich and sonorous tones.

## Sincere *Nonfiction use only*

With their heartfelt performances, narrators of these nonfiction audiobooks imbue their readings with genuine conviction.

## Somber

These performances underscore the serious nature of the stories.

## Sound effects

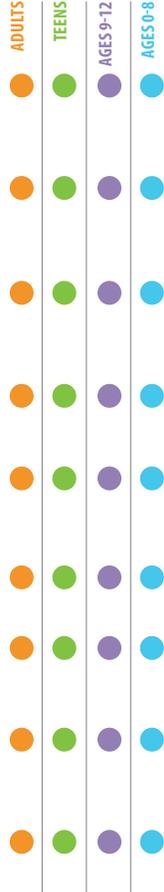
Most often found in full cast performances or in juvenile audiobooks, these productions rely heavily on added audio elements.

## Understated

While they may not be all bells and whistles, these restrained performances provide quietly memorable experiences.

## Unhurried

These narrators take their time with the stories they read, using slower cadences and measured rhythms.



# Audio

## **Warm**

These appealing voices have pleasant, inviting tones.

## **Well-characterized**

More than by simply differentiating their voices, these narrators inhabit the characters in a way that is authentic and convincing, bringing one or more personalities to life for the listener.

## **Wry**

These books are read by narrators who excel at drawing out subtle humor, ranging from understated irony to acerbic wit.

## **Youthful**

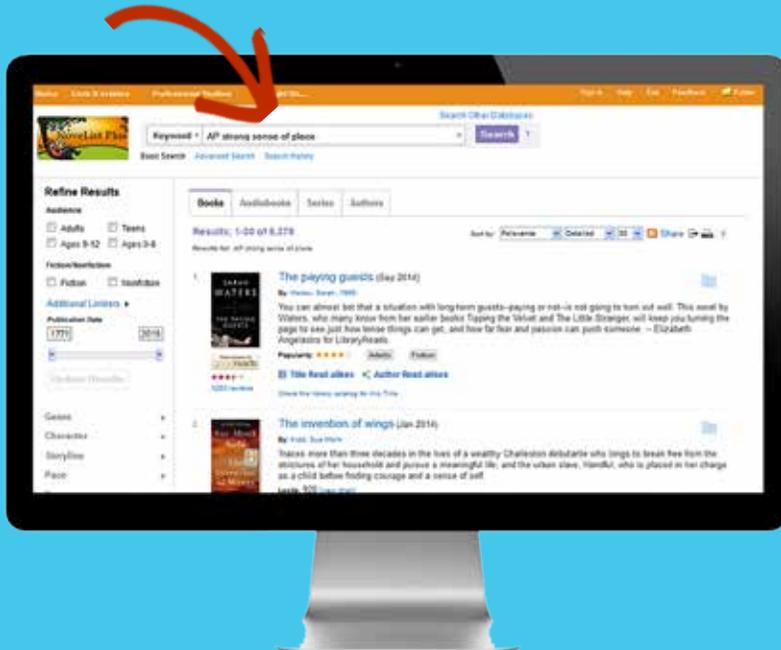
These voices often impart an air of innocence and buoyancy to the stories they read.



Not sure where to start with audiobooks?  
**Well-characterized** is always a good choice because it is used when an audiobook is generally outstanding!

# Appeals in NoveList

Try a quick search for an appeal term using the field code 'AP'. For example, type "**AP strong sense of place**" in the search box.



# Search Tips

Need an atmospheric, gritty, fast-paced historical novel at the drop of a hat? **NovelList can help! Use two or more appeal terms together to increase the precision of your search results. Here are some of our favorite combos! Combine appeal terms using AND with the field code AP in front of each term in the search box. Example: AP quiet AND AP muted.**

## **AP quiet AND AP muted**

Parents looking to help their kids wind down after a busy day might want to avoid noisy, gross, or silly picture books, and instead search for **quiet** ones with illustrations that are **muted**.

## **AP silly AND AP cartoony**

Likewise, adults looking to get some energy going during storytime could look for **silly** picture books that are **cartoony**. Maybe add **wordplay-filled**, too.

## **AP world-building AND AP dramatic**

Readers who can't get enough of *Game of Thrones* should search for **world-building** and **dramatic** for an epic read.

## **AP folksy AND AP character accents**

We love listening to accents, especially Southern accents (NovelList is based in North Carolina, after all!). A search for **folksy** and **character accents** will find audiobooks with a truly distinctive voice.

## **AP heartwarming AND AP inspiring**

A combination of **heartwarming** and **inspiring** is perfect for readers looking for uplifting, feel-good stories. To limit the steam add **chaste**.

## **AP suspenseful AND AP twisted**

Books with a **suspenseful** tone and **twisted** characters are sure to keep you up all night!



Be sure to check out the **Appeal Mixer** in NovelList to try your own combinations.

# Acknowledgements

This book is the result of the work of many people. Thank you to the teams below and also to all the library staff who work tirelessly on behalf of readers.

## **Appeals Team**

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Looking for more information about NoveList  
and our work with appeal?

Visit our website:

[www.ebscohost.com/novelist](http://www.ebscohost.com/novelist)



“In appeal, there are no correct answers, only impressions that we share with other readers.”

*-- Joyce Saricks*



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