Panelists

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#NoveListConversations
Library Reads

The top ten books published this month that librarians across the country love.

libraryreads.org
What are gentle reads?

1. Feel-good books that project a comfortable sense of well-being
2. They reflect wholesome values and have a satisfactory ending
3. They are void of profanity, explicit sex, or violence
What happens in gentle reads?

Homecoming

Timeless feel

Good natured humor

Witty colorful characters
Why do readers like gentle reads?

- Peaceful, easy feeling
- Kinder, gentler
- Hope and escape
- Everything ends well
Gentle Reads – Tricky Business
A History of the Genre
The Stage is Set

1678

1880

1895
Tumultuous 60s

- The Spire by William Golding (1964)
- The Winter of Our Discontent by John Steinbeck (1961)
- Wise Blood by Flannery O'Connor (1962)
- Herzog by Saul Bellow (1964)
The Cornerstone Books

1968

1979

Christy

Love Comes Softly
Love Comes Softly

- Nostalgia
- Love
- Redemption
- Old-fashioned values
- Not overly preachy
- Publishers had to take notice
I've been very reluctant to read inspirational romances lately because of the preachiness I often find in them, but *Love Comes Softly* was a truly uplifting novel that brought me back to some simple spiritual truths that had somehow gotten lost in the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

*Quote from Hope Chest Reviews*
The Great Split

**Christian Fiction**
- Started tapping into Genre fiction
  - Frank Peretti
  - The Left Behind series
  - Anything tapping into Y2K fears
  - Christian fiction boom in 1990s

**Gentle Reads**
- Continues on with prairie romance
- Bonnet fiction
- Historical romances
- But this is part of appeal for some readers: predictable
The Great Overlap

Gentle Reads

Christian Fiction

Gentle Reads that aren’t Christian

Christian fiction that isn’t gentle
Know Your Terms
Christian Fiction

- Characters experience conflict centering on Christian principles.
- The main characters deal with life's ups and downs by acknowledging that God is in control.
- They must make tough choices and do God’s will, regardless of the consequences.
Inspirational Fiction

• Uplifting books with characters that enact positive changes.
• They are meant to inspire others that good things can happen.
• Usually have spiritual themes, but not specifically Christian.
Clean Reads

The absence of explicit, language, or violence in their books
UpLit

• Gentle with a contemporary edge
• Feature characters with more life experience
• Some nonfiction, too!
Authors to Know
Lorna Landvik

- Eclectic characters
- Lots of laughs
- Norwegian heritage
- Folksy feel
Jennifer Chiaverini

- Intergenerational conflict
- Quilting is prominent
- Women put aside differences
- Historical detail
Alexander McCall Smith

- Cozy mysteries
- Strong sense of place
- Short stories
- Likeable, flawed characters
Anne Tyler

- Second act
- Hidden secrets
- Strong sense of place
- Family relationships
Michele Andrea Bowen

- Own Voices
- Church lady fiction
- Congregational drama
- Tests of faith
Gentle Reads Starter Pack

- Representative of genre
- Well-reviewed
- Wide appeal
- Stand-alone or series starter
- Available on audio
The Seaside Café
by Rochelle Alers

- Culturally diverse
- Home again theme
- First in projected series
- Relationship fiction
- Drama
Arsenic and Adobo
by Mia P. Manasala

- Culturally diverse characters
- Cozy culinary mystery
- Strong sense of place
- Tightly knit community
- Upbeat
Last Bus to Wisdom
by Ivan Doig

- Historical fiction
- Heartwarming, nostalgic
- Unlikely friendship
- Strong sense of place
- Coming of age
Long Way Gone by Charles Martin

- Christian fiction
- Moving, Strong sense of place
- Home again, Prodigal returns
- Strong writing style
The House in the Cerulean Sea
by TJ Klune

- Fantasy
- Chosen family
- LGBTQIA diverse, Own voices
- Regency setting
- Heartwarming, Hopeful, Offbeat
"HELLO, HOW CAN I HELP YOU?"

"SO I CAN'T REMEMBER THE TITLE OR THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK, BUT THE COVER WAS BLUE. I THINK. CAN YOU FIND IT FOR ME?"
Diversity in the Genre – Is it There?
Titles with Diverse Characters

If you can’t find any labeled “gentle reads”, just use appeals!
Gentle Reads RA Conversations
“I need something that’s guaranteed to be free of . . . ”
“My teen thinks she’s too old for the teen section. I am willing to let her try books in adult section as long as you tell me it’s safe.”
Questions to ask

• Do you want something that celebrates a particular faith?
• What level of action do you want?
• How would you describe the level of romance you want in your books?
• What things do you want to avoid in your books if possible?
• What sort of relationships do you want to read about? Family, friends, lovers, all of the above?
“I want something that is . . . ”

- Warm and fuzzy, comfy, cozy
- An escape
- No stress
- Let’s me tune out
“I want something that is . . . ”

- About the good old days
- A nice story
- Old-fashioned
- Not depressing
Publication Dates
Everything Old is New Again!
Publishers
Awards
NoveList Story Elements

Honey, that's great coffee!
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Home again
Coming back to the place you left behind

#NoveListConversations
Communities Set Apart

These stories are set inside enclosed communities of faith.
Life in small towns

Books set in a place where everybody knows your name.
trends

loading...
Second Act

- The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper
  by Phaedra Patrick

- The Single Ladies of Jacaranda Retirement Village
  by Joanna Nell

- It's Not All Downhill From Here
  by Terry McMillan

- The Love Story of Missy Carmichael
  by Beth Morrey
Bookstores and Libraries
Adaptations
Books we can’t wait to read
More Authors to Know

- Sarah Addison Allen
- Fredrik Backman
- Abby Collette
- Nina George
- Pat G'Orge-Walker
- Emily Grayson
- Stacy Hawkins Adams
- C. Ingelman-Sundberg
- Neta Jackson
- Kate Jacobs
- Joan Medlicott
- Robin W. Pearson
- James Michael Pratt
- Ann B. Ross
- Angela Thirkell
- P.G. Wodehouse
References

*Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*
by Joyce Saricks, First Edition

*Christian Fiction, a Guide to the Genre*
by John Mort
Questions?

Which would you rather be? Divinely beautiful, or dazzlingly clever, or angelically good?
THANK YOU