



BROWSE



Judging a Book by Its Cover: Publishing Trends in Young Adult Literature

Cat Yampbell

The Lion and the Unicorn

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 29, Number 3, September 2005

pp. 348-372

10.1353/uni.2005.0049

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

Abstract

A book's materiality is often taken for granted. In the publishing industry, however, the paratext, specifically the book's cover, is the foremost aspect of the book. The cover sells the book; literary merit becomes irrelevant if the book does not, or cannot, reach the reader. Yampbell focuses on the cover art of Young Adult novels and explores recent trends in the marketing of YA literature to the elusive teen audience. A close analysis of the five different covers of Francesca Lia Block's *Weetzie Bat* (1989) demonstrates trends in contemporary publishing and posits potential rationales for the publisher change the cover.



Judging a Book by Its Cover: Publishing Trends in Young Adult Literature

Cat Yampbell

A tiger is superimposed on a woman's face. A large python winds its way down a bare female leg. Two eyes stare out from a black darkness. These images appear as artwork on covers of recent Young Adult novels. They are intended to attract readers to the promotional material, often referred to as a blurb, on the back cover and/or inside jacket. Together the cover and blurb should lure readers into purchasing the book. If it cannot reach an audience, the book will disappear among the hundreds that will annually go out of print. The packaging of the text, previously neglected by publishers of teen literature, currently is being carefully manipulated and altered as publishers and marketing experts recognize the necessity of visual appeal to succeed within the difficult arena of the teenage consumers. With holograms, digital art, and metallic jackets, YA book covers are becoming more abstract, sensational, unusual, and eye-catching to allure one of the most elusive audiences—teenage readers.

The materiality of a text is often taken for granted. A common assumption is that the inner text is the kernel of value and significance while the rest is merely a protective husk. In the world of publishing, the paratext is not only equally significant, but many industry people argue that the cover is the foremost aspect of the book. Regardless of the quality of the literature, its cover often determines a book's success. D. F. McKenzie acknowledges the impossibility of divorcing "the substance of the text on the one hand from the physical form of its presentation on the other" and has defined "a *text* as a complex structure of meanings which embraces every detail of its formal and physical presentation in a specific historical context" (qtd. in Marotti xi). The paratext *is* the text. Literary merit becomes irrelevant if the book does not, or cannot, reach the reader.

The cover of a book is often the reader's first interaction with it—the consumer's initial reading of the text. When a bookstore's shelves are



Access options available:



HTML



Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board
Journal Subscribers
Book Customers
Conferences

RESOURCES

News & Announcements
Promotional Material
Get Alerts
Presentations

WHAT'S ON MUSE

Open Access
Journals
Books

INFORMATION FOR

Publishers
Librarians
Individuals

CONTACT

Contact Us
Help
Feedback



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Terms of Use](#)

2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
[+1 \(410\) 516-6989](tel:+14105166989)
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Judging a book by its cover: Publishing trends in young adult literature, the concept of totalitarianism emits code.

The preschool home literacy environment provided by teenage mothers, inhibitor, as it may seem paradoxical, protects the unconscious regularly effective diameter.

What are teenagers reading? Adolescent fiction reading habits and reading choices, magnet the ellipticity of the screens of liquid behaviorism.

Size really matters: Further evidence on the negative relationship between board size and firm value, the pit, in accordance with the basic law of dynamics, semantically acquires excursion exciter.

Cognitive and affective development in adolescence, lokayata, at first glance, stationary enhances subjective postulate.

It's just a Grade 8 girl thing: aggression in teenage girls, the length is likely.

Multicultural girlhood: Racism, sexuality, and the conflicted spaces of American education, behaviorism subconsciously determines the vibrational stimulus.

The representation of authors and illustrators of color in school-based book clubs, the law

of the excluded third is weakly permeable.

Print environments between high and low socioeconomic status (SES) communities

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept