

## **Dora the Explorer vs Stella Queen of the Snow: selecting children's books in the face of mass media**

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### ***What are some of the Literary Quality criteria for evaluating children's fiction books?***

- Evocative narration:
  - a “voice” that seems alive
  - language that “sparkles”
  - narrative techniques that complement the point of the story
- Well-developed themes:
  - subtle and/or sensitive portrayal/treatment of a personal, social, or other issue
  - subtle and satisfying message or “moral”
  - effectively and suitably satirical, ironic, humorous, or nonsensical
- Effective plot:
  - realistic and/or plausible
  - maintained suspense
  - effective turning point/climax
  - satisfying dénouement and/or conclusion
- Realistic characterization:
  - believable characters who seem real
  - characters that charm, evoke a reaction, and/or fascinate
  - sparkling and/or realistic dialogue
- Effective read-aloud qualities:
  - Opportunities for participation by the audience, either in the text or potential: questions & answers, a refrain, guessing, riddles, noises, actions, deliberate errors, wry irony, crazy concepts that elicit audience reaction
  - Rhythm / rhyme
  - Repetition, e.g. cumulative

### ***What are some of the things that give a book Popular Appeal?***

- Marketed through other media: TV, film, games, toys
- Series - publisher’s series or reader’s series
- Familiar characters (often from one of the above)
- Format that appears to be the opposite of “serious” literature, e.g. short, segmented, “snappy” text
- Format that resembles a popular media, e.g. graphic novel, comics, TV/movie stills
- Obvious humour, crudeness, satire, irreverence
- A “kids know best” or “kids in charge” orientation
- Obvious connection to popular concerns, e.g. school, siblings, dating, etc.
- Depicted characters that kids identify with: modern, their age, contemporary language and slang, contemporary interests, “cool”
- Popular genres: fantasy, science fiction, adventure, mystery, horror/scary
- ALL OF THE “LITERARY QUALITY” FACTORS, especially when either combined with the above or when presented and shared with children by an enthusiastic and empathetic adult in an appealing way!

### ***What is the paramount criterion for choosing books?***

- Not children’s *wants*, not even their *needs*, but their *response*