

Appeal Terms for Teens (from Novelist¹)

Use these terms to help you describe stories. These are extracted from the Novelist database, so make them your own with your own phrasing. Look up any terms with which you are unfamiliar. Use a thesaurus and dictionary to help customize your own reviews and criticism of fiction. Consider using Novelist to provide some context (background) to the book or story and the writer.

Many of the appeal terms for teens are the same as those used for adults, but some were changed or added to better suit this age group's literature (e.g., Emotionally intense).

For information about appeal terms at other reading levels, see [About Appeal in NoveList Plus](#).

Storyline Appeal Terms (Teens)

The Storyline tag is a quick way to determine a book's focus -- is the plot what drives the story, or is character development where the real interest lies? Is the plot intricate and complex? This appeal factor will help readers find books with the overall structure they are looking for.

- **Action-packed:** Pulse-pounding, high-octane excitement is the rule in these books!
- **Character-driven:** The interior growth and development of the characters is an important element in these books.
- **Intricately plotted:** These books have intricate, complicated, or elaborate storylines, often involving multiple plots, large casts of characters, or numerous narrative twists and turns.
- **Issue-oriented:** Issue-oriented books explore controversial themes, which may cover a variety of emotional, ethical, or social problems.
- **Plot-driven:** In these books, a pivotal event or series of events move the story forward; characters often react to the events, rather than causing them.
- **Sweeping:** These sprawling stories span multiple decades or generations and frequently include multiple locations historical events.
- **World-building:** Almost exclusively found in works of fantasy and science fiction, these books immerse the reader in a vividly-created imaginary world that possesses such intricacies as invented histories, languages, geography, or cultures.

Pace Appeal Terms (Teens)

Pace is the rate at which a story unfolds for the reader. The NoveList vocabulary for this appeal factor is designed to identify books falling at either end of the pacing spectrum -- those titles that are clearly fast-paced, or those which are steady and measured. Books that fall in the middle will not receive a pace appeal tag.

- **Fast-paced:** Events in these exciting books unfold rapidly, moving the reader quickly through the story.
- **Leisurely paced:** Due to descriptive language, focus on detail, or careful development of character or setting, these books unfold slowly and gradually, allowing the reader to savor the narrative.

Tone Appeal Terms (Teens)

¹ http://support.ebsco.com/help/?int=novp&ver=live&lang=en&feature_id=TeenAppeal

Tone is the feeling that a book evokes in the reader. Is the mood of the story light and upbeat, or dark and menacing? Is it inspirational or bleak? Does the setting significantly add to the emotional content of the story? This subtle and challenging appeal factor is very important to readers.

- **Amusing:** While they may not make you laugh out loud, these entertaining stories have a light humor that sometimes accentuates more serious themes.
- **Angst-filled:** Characters in these books experience the problems associated with adolescence, such as changing relationships, parental pressure, and questions about sexuality, popularity, or social standing. Unsurprisingly, interpersonal or social conflict is often a major aspect of the story.
- **Atmospheric:** These books evoke the story's setting, whether it's a gothic mansion or a small Midwestern town. Although noteworthy, these settings are more generic than those in which "Strong sense of place" is used as an appeal term.
- **Bittersweet:** These books have a mixed emotional edge – both pleasant and painful – that is sustained through much of the story.
- **Bleak:** The general outlook of these books is dark, frequently offering little faith in human nature, and tending away from hope or optimism. While there may be some brighter elements, a sad or grim tone pervades the overall story.
- **Creepy:** Unsettling in a visceral, skin-crawling way, these books make the reader distinctly uneasy, and often feature supernatural elements and eerie settings.
- **Darkly humorous:** The humor found in these books is biting, and the tone and subject matter are often morbid.
- **Disturbing:** These books approach the darker side of human nature, and are unsettling in a sophisticated, psychological manner. They often feature socially marginal or dysfunctional individuals and families, and showcase the less pleasant sides of human interaction.
- **Emotionally intense:** Conveying great depth or complexity of emotion, these books explore the inner lives of characters in detail.
- **Feel-good:** These books have a gentle, comfortable, and hopeful feeling (not just a happy ending), and don't usually have edgy or potentially objectionable content.
- **Funny:** Laugh-out-loud humor and a light, playful tone characterize these books.
- **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.
- **High-drama:** These juicy books deal with the perilous teen social scene and its attendant backstabbing, gossip, and over-the-top theatrics.
- **Homespun:** Simplicity is key in these books, which often have a rural or small-town setting and feature characters that are unpretentious and cherish old-fashioned values.
- **Hopeful:** While addressing serious issues, these nonfiction books incorporate some optimistic elements, expressing belief in humanity's ability to strive for improvement and make things better. *Nonfiction use only.*
- **Impassioned:** 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. *Nonfiction use only.*
- **Inspirational:** These books have an inspiring, enlightening, or uplifting quality, which may or may not be religious in nature.
- **Melancholy:** While not grim or hopeless, these books have a sad, somber, or gloomy edge.
- **Menacing:** A sense of threat or menace pervades these stories, giving the reader a feeling of foreboding or dread.
- **Moving:** These touching books make readers feel emotionally invested in both the characters and the story.
- **Mystical:** Although not necessarily religious in nature, these books approach spiritual themes: sometimes by exploring archetypes and myths, sometimes by incorporating magical or metaphysical events, and sometimes by addressing aspects of the human experience from a spiritual perspective.

- **Offbeat:** Frequently containing extreme plot twists, bizarre humor, and unique personalities, these quirky books recount unconventional, idiosyncratic, or unusual stories, often quite creatively.
- **Reflective:** These contemplative books feature characters who think seriously about their lives and their place in the world, which can inspire a similar mood in the reader.
- **Romantic:** These books are not genre romances, but do feature strong romantic elements – either between characters or in the nature of the story or setting itself. Happy endings are not guaranteed!
- **Sarcastic:** Sarcasm is frequently employed in these books, or can be attributed to one or more main characters. Despite sarcasm's association with humor, these books aren't always meant to be funny, and can be quite serious.
- **Sassy:** These books feature characters (usually female) with outsized personalities and a bottomless well of one-liners and comebacks.
- **Serious:** Marked by seriousness, gravity, or solemnity, these books often confront social issues such as war, poverty, environmental, gender, or racial concerns.
- **Steamy:** Whether they describe chemistry, sexual tension, mere innuendo, outright lust, or the act itself, these books have an unmistakably sexy aura.
- **Strong sense of place:** The powerfully depicted locales – real or imaginary – in these books come alive for readers, giving them a good sense of the buildings, people, and ways of life that make a place unique. This appeal term is often linked to a subject heading for the setting or location being described.
- **Suspenseful:** Ranging in intensity from subtle psychological unease to nail-biting suspense, these books keep readers on edge.
- **Thought-provoking:** More than just telling a story, these books take on big ideas – anything from philosophical quandaries to time paradoxes – and in doing so stimulate continued interest or thought in the reader.
- **Upbeat:** These fun books are lighthearted, hopeful, and optimistic.
- **Whimsical:** These fanciful and playful books will charm and enchant readers and often include fairy tales or other elements of fantasy.

Writing Style Appeal Terms (Teens)

In NoveList, writing style as an appeal factor includes the language used in the book and the level of detail in the background. How is the book written? Are care and attention placed on the words or language used to convey the story, or is this secondary to the plot? Does the author excel at including "extras" that enrich the reader's experience?

- **Browsable:** These books enable or encourage the reader to browse. The information is arranged in short sections and is often accompanied by illustrations or other graphics. *Nonfiction use only.*
- **Candid:** The narrative style of these books is frank and forthcoming, even when discussing potentially sensitive or discomfiting subjects.
- **Compelling:** Incorporating a variety of narrative techniques, from foreshadowing to frequent changes in perspective, these gripping books have a powerful effect on readers, drawing them irresistibly into the story.
- **Conversational:** Written in informal language, these books read as if a close friend were telling a story.
- **Descriptive:** Full of elaborate descriptions, these books use illustrative, expressive language.
- **Dialect-rich:** These books employ regional language, making the setting come alive.
- **Dialogue-rich:** These books contain well-crafted, notable, or remarkable dialogue.
- **Easy-to-understand:** These books explain an often complicated or technical issue in an approachable manner. *Nonfiction use only.*
- **Engaging:** These appealing books capture the attention and imagination of readers through narrative style, character, or use of detail.
- **Experimental:** These books employ language, narrative structure, or even setting in an unusual or unexpected manner.
- **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:** Often written about newsworthy issues, these books are well-researched but written in language that is relaxed and conversational, rather than academic or scholarly. *Nonfiction use only.*
- **Lush:** The descriptive language in these books is specifically geared toward evoking the senses. Touch, taste, smell, hearing or sight are strongly depicted, making readers feel as if they are actually experiencing what is being described.
- **Lyrical:** The language in these titles is elegant and beautiful, often with a rhythmic or poetic quality.
- **Persuasive:** Written by authors who are advocating a certain point of view, these books may present both sides of an issue, but this is frequently used to bolster the original opinion. *Nonfiction use only.*
- **Richly detailed:** In these books, a strong level of detail informs the story's backdrop. Sometimes a special body of knowledge (e.g., of forensics, music, history, etc.) adds to the storyline, and sometimes there are so many "extras" included that the reader's experience is greatly enriched.
- **Scholarly:** Thoroughly researched and often addressing complicated issues or topics, the language used in these books may be academic or technical. They frequently contain numerous footnotes or other supplemental material. *Nonfiction use only.*
- **Slang-heavy:** Characters in these books make frequent use of slang, which often aids in character development. Slang occurs chiefly in casual and playful speech and is typically made up of short-lived coinages and figures of speech that are deliberately used in place of standard terms for added raciness, humor, irreverence or other effect.
- **Spare:** The writing in these books is minimal and elegant. Words are seldom wasted, and great attention is paid to the use of language.
- **Stylistically complex:** The language in these books is constructed with care, and may skillfully combine several style elements. Due to sophisticated 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.
- **Witty:** Through clever use of language, these books express amusing insights or perceptions.

Illustration Appeal Terms (Teens)

Books featuring a lot of illustration – both picture books and graphic novels – have a unique set of qualities important to their readers. Novelist's illustration vocabulary is geared toward identifying these elements, and includes a range of terms that cover everything from color and drawing style to the mood evoked in the reader by the illustrations.

- **Abstract:** These illustrations deliberately distort perspective and proportion so that objects and people are removed from reality. In some cases this can heighten the emotional impact of the art, while at other times it simply adds visual interest.
- **Black-and-white:** The artwork in these books is in black and white only, and may range from pen and ink drawings to watercolor-like effects in shades of grey. Books that have predominantly black and white artwork accented by just one or two additional colors will be labeled "Minimally colored."
- **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 of illustration features characters that are drawn with exaggerated, simplified features. Often humorous, this style may also be used to lighten difficult or disturbing themes.
- **Charming:** The illustrations in these books are captivating and pleasing to the eye. They are often cute and playful, and 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.

- **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, these illustrations display intricate workmanship and quality. 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.
- **Inventive:** These creative books offer a non-standard use of various illustrative elements (including line, panels, or color), and challenge the reader's perceptions.
- **Lavish:** Whether through use of color, line, detail, or sheer over-the-top exuberance, these beautiful illustrations are elaborate, sumptuous, and striking.
- **Minimally colored:** These books feature a limited color palette; sometimes the art is two-toned in a color other than black, and sometimes the illustrations are predominantly black-and-white or grayscale with one or two brighter colors used as an accent or for artistic effect.
- **Muted:** The subtle color used in these images 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:** These illustrations are deliberately ugly, frightening or unpleasant. They will most likely accompany a storyline that is also unpleasant, with a creepy, disturbing or menacing tone.
- **Photographic:** These books use photographs as illustrations. This is frequently found in nonfiction books where photographs are the primary illustrations.
- **Realistic:** These illustrations utilize correct proportions and accurate use of perspective, and in appearance are very similar to the person or thing being represented. The content may not represent reality, but the drawing style does.
- **Rough-edged:** These illustrations are not sophisticated, polished, or elegant; instead, they present jagged lines and imperfect images, which can serve to convey and emphasize the strong emotions that are often being portrayed.
- **Sepia-toned:** Sepia-toned illustrations are reddish-brown in color, and are often used to indicate nostalgia, reminiscence, or events that took place in the past.
- **Simple:** Without much decoration or ornamentation, these uncomplicated illustrations are characterized by the use of basic or primary forms or structures. This stripped-down quality is sometimes in contrast with the emotional depth of the story.
- **Surreal:** These illustrations have a dreamlike or unreal quality, and attempt to express the workings of the subconscious. While they are typically painted in a realistic style, these illustrations employ unexpected juxtapositions and incongruities of people or objects.
- **Textured:** The visible texture of these illustrations adds a realistic depth and detail through the skillful use of the artistic medium.