

MPIBA Bookseller Summer Camp Workshop: Crafting Better Book Blurbs

What Makes a Good Book Blurb?

- Short and sweet.
- Informative.
- Offers comparisons.
 - Is it similar to a bestselling book?
 - Does it fit in a specific sub-genre?
- Conveys your enthusiasm.
- Makes a customer want to pick up that book!
- You do not need to be a good writer to be a bookseller.
 - Book blurbs are not book reports or book reviews. (Though if you write a positive book review, your blurb can come from that!)
- Think of blurbs as handselling without the “hand”.

Basics for Writing a Good Book Blurb:

- Start with a couple of sentences describing what the book is about.
 - Be brief, don't recount the whole book, no spoilers.
- Discuss what you particularly liked about the book.
 - Who was your favourite character, and why?
 - Did the characters feel real to you?
 - Did the story keep you guessing?
 - What was your favourite part of the book, and why?
- Were certain types of scenes written particularly well?
 - sad scenes, tense scenes, mysterious ones, romantic scenes
- Did the book elicit specific emotions (make you laugh or cry, or angry, or excited, or)?
- Did the story grip you and keep you turning the pages?
- Suggest the type of reader you'd recommend the book to. For example:
 - A demographic
 - An age group
 - Fans of a certain genre
 - Fans of specific books or authors. Think, “If you liked, then you'll like”
 - People who like reading translations.
 - Those who like to discover new authors (debut author!)
- Give the book a rating based on your own scale.
- Consider your audience:
 - Industry blurbs can offer more critique.
 - But as a representative of a bookstore, there is never a need for a negative review of a book. (If you don't have something nice to say...)
 - Consumer facing blurbs are intended to sell books!
- Remember your grammar!
 - Keep a copy of a good grammar “cheat sheet” handy:
 - [Grammar cheat sheet for clean, clear, and compelling writing.](#)

- [English Gramma for Dummies Cheat Sheet](#)
- [The Ultimate Grammar Cheat Sheet \(for Writers\)](#)

THESE BLURBS WORK:

1. **A Marvellous Light, Marske, Freya (Tordotcom)** -- *Robin (Sir Robert) Blythe begins his new civil service job with no idea what it will entail, that his predecessor was murdered, or that magic is real. Then he meets his counterpart from the magical world, Edwin Courcey, and sparks fly. Deliciously sexy and engrossingly magical. Clearly the first of a trilogy but with a satisfying ending. I can't wait for the next in the series. Loved it!*
2. **The Tempered Steel of Antiquity Grey, Speakman, Shawn, (Grim Oak Press)** -- *Part Star Wars, part Pacific Rim (with both mechs AND dragons), this post-apocalyptic adventure will catch your attention. In the far future Erth is under the oppressive power of the Imperium. Antiquity is a young woman from a disgraced family. When she finds an illegal, still working mech, it sparks off a sequence of events that will change her life, her friends lives, and possibly all of Erth. This book is driven by both action and the relationships between characters, which are wonderfully written. This book is fantastic for both fantasy and science fiction fans and I can't wait for the next book!*
3. **Morte, By Repino, Robert, Soho Press (7/13/2021)** -- *We have sold over 100 copies of this awesome book in combined formats. It's been a favorite for YEARS! The new one in the series comes out at the end of August 2021 and they've released this one in a \$9.99 trade paperback to introduce newcomers to the series! We have discovered there is another sentient species on the planet and it's ants. And they don't like what we've done to the planet. So they weaponize our housepets and it doesn't end so well for the humans. But there are a few of us left. The main action in this first book focuses on Morte, a soldier cat in the ant army who used to be a housecat named Sebastian. These are not cute books. Think Animal Farm meets World War Z. Cats have automatic weapons and they use them.*

KEEP THESE TO YOURSELF:

1. *I thought this was genuinely awful. Just a really weird, bad cast of characters with no real heart to the story. It really read like bad fan fiction.*
2. *The main character Paloma sounds like an annoying person from the get go—foul-mouthed and I'll-tempered. I wish her simmering anger/turmoil manifested in other ways. Not sure what to feel when the twist is revealed because there's no-one to root for. The alternating time frame between present day San Francisco and the orphanage in Sri Lanka was interesting.*
3. *I am a big fan of this author but I'm not sure about the book. Daisy and Sage met as children when their parents married. Daisy was so excited to have a big sister but Sage was not happy. As the years progressed they had a younger sister, Cassidy. When Cassidy needs help after an accident, Daisy and Sage both come home to help her. The 3 begin building a good friendship until Sage sleeps with Daisy's husband. This is where I start to have trouble with the ladies' relationship. I find the outcome of the story a little hard to believe. I found the sisters hard to like and didn't connect with them.*

Using Book Blurbs to Increase Sales:

- Use blurbs from staff on forthcoming books to inform buying.
- Put them on Shelf-talkers and Book-talkers.
 - Create a system for tracking and managing your use of shelf-talkers!
 - Filing system, spreadsheet, staff member in charge -- whatever works for your store.
- Social media posts.
- Create in-store displays.
 - "If you liked, then you'll like"
 - Staff Picks
 - Great holiday gifts
- Content for your website.
- E-newsletters.
- Create collections on Libro.fm of recommended audio titles.

ARC Etiquette:

- Bookstores that get lots of ARCs:
 - Spread them around the staff.
 - Require and/or incentivize staff to read and submit blurbs.
 - Make sure you're promoting the books when they come out (when appropriate).
- Only request ARCs that you plan to read.
- Send your POSITIVE blurbs to the person who sent you the ARC.
- NO negative comments or blurbs (you are not a book critic, you are a bookSELLER).
- Let publishers and sales reps know what genres you like to read.
- When posting on social media, tag the author and publisher.
 - A great way for smaller stores to get on publishers' radar.
- Post blurbs in Edelweiss, tag your rep.
- Submit to Indie Next.
- If you get free audiobooks from Libro.fm, submit blurbs about the audio version to them.