

"Harry Potter" Hasn't Increased Youth Readership

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General Information

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Description

There are 325 million copies of the "Harry Potter" books in the hands of avid young readers worldwide -- but the books' popularity hasn't changed the low numbers of children and pre-teens who read for fun.

Keywords

Harry Potter, Reading, Reading for Fun, Books, Young Readers, Children, Video Games, Game Boy, Television, Internet, Cellphones, Entertainment, School, Summer Reading, Fourth Grade, Eighth Grade, Book Sales, Publishers, Children's Books, National Endowment for the Arts

Transcript

Even "Harry Potter" Books Haven't Increased Number of Teen Readers

DAVID GREGORY, anchor:

NBC News IN DEPTH tonight, Harry Potter and the lessons learned. It's a publishing phenomenon. The first six books about the boy wizard have sold 325 million copies worldwide with 121 million in circulation in the US alone. A record 12 million copies of the final book have been ordered by stores in this country as booksellers prepare for its release this week. But despite these amazing numbers, Harry Potter has not been able to use his magic to turn kids into lifelong readers. Here's NBC's Rehema Ellis

tonight, IN DEPTH.

REHEMA ELLIS reporting:

Twelve-year-old Aaron Ford used to be wild about Harry Potter books but not anymore.

Mr. AARON FORD: Yes.

ELLIS: In fact, Aaron has no interest in any books at all.

Mr. FORD: It wouldn't be cool if I was in the library reading instead of outside playing sports and everything.

Ms. CAROL OSTIGUY: Oh, strike again.

ELLIS: His mother, a teacher, didn't expect Aaron's joy of reading would end like this.

Ms. OSTIGUY: He was the kid that would pick a book up and curl up with it, instead of a Game Boy.

ELLIS: So what happened?

Crowd: Three, two, one.

ELLIS: The frenzy over Harry Potter had many speculating that this boy wizard would inspire a new generation of avid readers.

ELLIS: However, a recent study shows 43 percent of fourth graders say they read for fun every day, but that number drops to only 19 percent for eighth graders, the exact same percentage as in 1998 when the first "Harry Potter" book was published.

Mr. DANA GIOIA (National Endowment for the Arts): The reasons that teenagers read less will come as no surprise to any parent. There's television, video games, Internet, iPods, cell phones. All of these forms of electronic entertainment compete for a kid's time and attention.

ELLIS: And with Americans of all ages reading less than they did a decade ago, educators say it was never fair to expect Harry Potter, even with all his magic, to reverse the trend alone. But experts say it may be up to parents.

Mr. MICHAEL SANTANGELO (Brooklyn Public Library): You have to think, were there adults in their life ready with the next book?

ELLIS: Daughters of a librarian, the next book was always there for Brooklyn teenagers Glory and Simone Paris.

Unidentified Woman #1: I feel like I'm older now, so I can try something a lot more challenging and different.

Unidentified Woman #2: I love to read. It's like a journey of the mind.

Ms. OSTIGUY: "Feel free to use some reading list provided by your local library."

ELLIS: For Aaron and his mother poring over his summer reading list,

Ms. OSTIGUY: I actually haven't read Scorpions or Monster yet, but I'd be willing to.

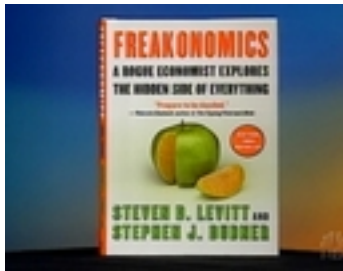
ELLIS: It's a journey they'll take together. Rehema Ellis, NBC News, New York.

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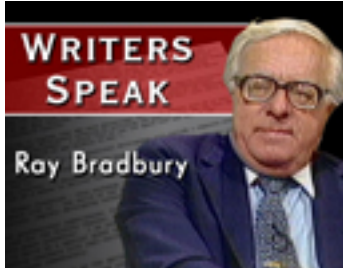
The authors of the book "Freakonomics" reveal some interesting correlations for parents. Ex: Kids who come from homes full of books do better in school than kids who come from bookless homes -- even if the kids don't read the books.



Bradbury on Writing

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Charles Lamb: Thoughts On Books and Reading

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Sen. Barack Obama on "The Audacity of Hope"

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In discussing his book, "The Audacity of Hope," Sen. Barack Obama stresses the "core decency" of Americans; he says many elected representatives switch focus from doing good to getting re-elected when they get to Washington.

