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**CONNECT** *Dream* DISCOVER  
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## Musings on what tweens read

My grandkids are in town, so this is my extended time to see what they are reading. The younger two are what we now call tweens. As I know you've heard before, fiction and books in series are the most popular books checked out at the library. This interest starts young.

My grandson at eight and granddaughter at ten are both engrossed in a series. The three of us read together at the coffee shop today and were in the right place in all of our books to all finish up in the hour spent there. We had a book discussion – our own little book club.

Zane (granddaughter) is reading the **Shadow Children** series by Margaret Peterson Haddix. The seven books are set in a country where there is a two child only policy. Yet, some people have a third child. Because this child must be hidden to survive, he is known as a Shadow Child. The protagonist Luke, "has never had a birthday party, or gone to a friend's house for an overnight. In fact, Luke has never had a friend." Then one day he discovers another Shadow Child.

This is a grim premise with its roots in the reality of the Chinese law although the location is non-specific. But in terms of tween and teen reading, dystopia is where it's at (remember **The Hunger Games** and even **Harry Potter**) – the world extrapolated to the worst that can happen but with emphasis on coping mechanisms and overcoming adverse circumstances. NPR did a segment on this topic and found that some of the appeal to young readers is thinking about how messed up adults can be, but a lot of the appeal has to do with grappling with ethical questions.

Ski (grandson) is reading the **Diary of a Minecraft Zombie** series. Despite zombies being pretty scary, this is a cute series put out by Scholastic publishers and thus "available only through the school systems." It turns out that zombies aren't so different from you and me, another theme that appeals to probably all of us. Ski told me that, although it took a few pages to get into, once he did, "It is hard to stop."

As I was thinking that kids are reading some serious stuff, I recalled that when I was nine, a woman named Marjory Stoneman Douglas (yes, the one the Florida high school honors with her name) sent me a new book she wrote in 1959 called **Alligator Crossing**. Stoneman Douglas was an environmental activist before there was a term for it (as well as a great friend of my great aunt). It was a serious book aimed at a tween audience even back then concerning the endangered alligator and swamplands in Florida. Graphically rife with horrible poachers and

dead alligators, I found it haunting. Stoneman Douglas heavily influenced the Everglades being made a national park, and the alligators made a comeback. (When she died, she rated a whole page in Time Magazine.) Thematically – how messed up adults can be and grappling with ethical issues – it was consistent with what appeals today.

While the grandkids were beginning their book series, I began one, too – an older one by Richard Castle, the **Nicki Heat series** which led to the television series Castle. I picked this up to check off the square on my Adult Bingo Card for Summer Reading, “a book that has been made into a movie or tv show.” It was delightful, witty with charming protagonists, just like the tv show. I’m happy there are nine more. It is much fluffier than what the kids are reading.

Book series make room for narrative development beyond the confines of a single book and give the reader a reassuring familiar feel even if the problems are all too real. Whether we are eight or a whole lot older, when we dive into the right series, as Ski said, it is hard to stop.

The library, always looking to make our lives better, keeps books in a series numbered for convenience (such as book 3 of 10, etc.), and if you are reading the library’s books, we keep track of which ones you’ve already read for you.

See you at the Library!

**Upcoming Events:** Summer Reading is what’s happening. Follow our schedule of events on FB and on our website Calendar. In addition, the Living Constitution series continues as well as Thursday Mah Jongg (come to learn, observe, or just play).