



We all judge a book by its cover

When we are looking at a book's cover, we know we will see basic information – the title and the author. If, say, John Grisham's name is in large letters (likely larger than the title for very popular authors), that might make us pick it up.

The information we get subconsciously, though, is more complex and affects what we choose to read. The purpose of a book cover isn't to create a great work of art. It's to get the likely reader to pick up the book, a broad sales pitch.

Let's take Louise Penny's Inspector Gamache / Three Pines series as an example of first attracting readers to a new series and then later simply making sure readers can find other books in the series. Penny's first book in the series, **Still Life**, is the only book in the series of seventeen where the title is bigger than the author's name. Why? Because after that, everyone just wants the next Louise Penny book whatever the title. Indeed, even *Still Life's* cover was redesigned to make Penny's name bigger when this series became a sensation.

Penny's Gamache book covers also demonstrate the genre, detective stories or mysteries. All of her book covers are dark (with the exception of a couple snowy ones) and use cold colors with outdoor images often featuring pine trees for the town of Three Pines where Penny's books are set. Cover designers don't reinvent the wheel for every new Penny book. They simply tweak a familiar cover formula to help get the reader to the book.

Derek Murphy is an indie book cover designer. His advice is "go for the obvious. If your reader is looking for a Western Romance and your book doesn't look like a Western Romance, they will probably never click on your cover and read the description because you didn't get them past the first phase. Better to be a cliché than to be a failure."

Think about cook books. Diana Cao of Book Bub says, "vivid, enticing food photography" is what readers want. Who would buy a cook book that didn't show food on the cover? For local style on that, **Simple Dessert Trifles** and **Simple Appetizers** by Ethel Richards and Valerie Walderzak are great examples. Dorothy Zehnder's **Come Cook with Me**, featuring Dorothy on the cover who is a celebrity in her own right, shows her holding a gorgeous pie that you know you want to serve your guests.

What about thrillers? Bold print using plain fonts are the order of the day – see David Baldacci's **The Fallen**. His name at the top is huge and the title at the bottom is huge leaving

room for a vague location photo. All of this is a combination that says thriller or dark mystery, and readers may not analyze it, but they know it when they see it.

Horror novels are dark and atmospheric, romance novels show couples looking passionate, cozy mysteries use brighter colors than noir detective stories, and historical fiction covers hint at the time period and often depict women.

J.K. Rowling's **Harry Potter** series usually depicts mythical creatures in atmospheric places, often including large splashes of bright colors, appealing to her youthful audience. However, her books under the name Robert Galbraith in the **Cormoran Strike** detective series use the typical noir detective covers.

Readers looking for their "type" of book automatically look for their type of book cover, probably unconsciously. And that is why publishers don't want book covers to be different, but simply to appeal to the intended reader.

Stop in and see which covers appeal to you. We get new ones all the time.

See you at the Library!

Upcoming Events: Fri. March 1 adult movie night showing **The Old Man and the Gun** at 6:30; Mon. March 4 Family Literacy Night with author Laurie Keller; Wed. March 6 Part 3 of The Nature Series **Hummingbirds – Nature's Jewels** at 6:30; Tues. March 12 at 12:30 **Books for Lunch**; Wed. March 13 **Songs and Stories of the Irish Tradition** at 6:30. Over 21 event only (beer will be served); Fri. March 15 **Tween March Madness** at 6:30. Follow our website calendar so you don't miss anything.