SARAH AMAZING

'Tis the Season for Passive Programs!

The winter months can be a difficult time to plan teen events, but it is the perfect time to create programs that can be completed in just a few minutes when teens run in for some holiday break reading. Those teens who can't attend your regularly scheduled programs will also have a chance to participate.

EPIC FANDOM BATTLES AT THE LIBRARY

If there's one thing passionate fans like to do, it is arguing about whose fandom is better. "*One Piece* is so much better than *Naruto!*" "How can you like *Supernatural* when *Shadowhunters* is so much better?!" "You just don't get it; *Black-Ops* will always be better than *Halo!*" and so on. Let your teens put their choices to the test.

Cage matches or March Madness-style tournaments pit one character or fandom against another, creating matches of the obvious and the not-so obvious. Battle Dystopia could be *The Hunger Games*' Katniss vs. *Divergent's* Tris, or you could pit Katniss and Dean Winchester from *Supernatural* against each other in a Hunter Battle and ask the teens to decide who would triumph.

I have looked to the popular **YouTube** channel *Epic Rap Battles of History* for inspiration, pitting fandoms against each other and enjoying the discussion among the teens over who would win. Epic Fandom Battles of the Holidays matched some of the fandoms most popular among my teens (discovered during a survey), while a similar version held this summer included video game franchises that caused many teens to gnash their teeth. How could I make them choose between Grand Theft Auto and Assassin's Creed?

Teens fill out entry forms with their votes, and I draw one form to win an advertised prize pack filled with teen books (from book sale donations), candy, and other small trinkets left over from summer reading and past events. The results are posted with a "Winner!" sign emblazoned across the winning fan display for a week.

If you'd like to re-create the famous Epic Rap Battles of History sign for your passive programs, you'll need the following fonts, all freely available online:

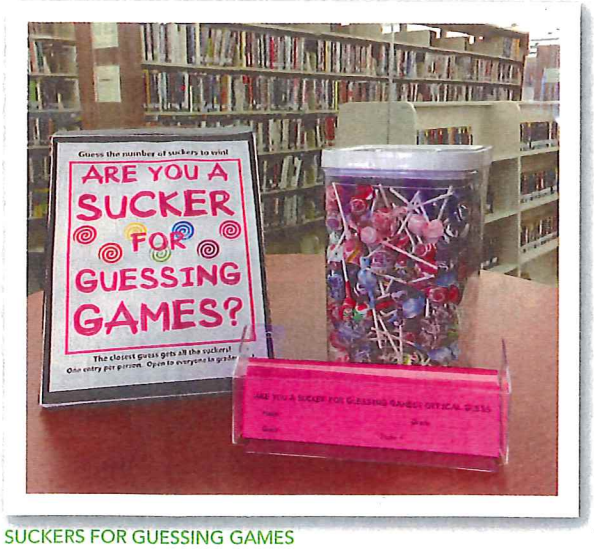
Budmo
Retro Party
Ascent 2 Stardom
NeoPrint M319

(Source: *http://www.dafont.com/forum/read/41114/epic-rap-battles-of-history*)

Sarah Deisler, teen librarian at the main library of the Akron-Summit County Public Library, created the Which Door Would You Choose? contest as a tie-in to a larger GeekFest event held at the library. She created doorways from fandoms (Platform 9 3/4, *Naruto*'s Leaf Village, the TARDIS, the Legend of Zelda, Minecraft, and Sherlock's 221B Baker Street apartment) to hang on the sides of bookshelves, assigning a specific colored gemstone (available at



CHILLY CELEBRITY



SUCKERS FOR GUESSING GAMES



FANDOM BATTLES HOLIDAYS



FANDOM DOORS

craft stores) to each door. Teens chose their doors by placing a colored gem into a jar so that it was obvious as time went by which fandoms were the most popular.

ARE YOU A SUCKER FOR GUESSING GAMES?

Guessing how many things are in a jar is the perennial favorite of all libraries. Candy, pennies, mini-erasers, golf pencils, rubber bands—anything small will work. The Are You a Sucker for Guessing Games? program has become an annual event at our library, with the prize of several hundred suckers enticing many participants. Teens love to study the jar (seal it well with a good bit of tape), devising formulas and theories about the number. I purchase suckers of various sizes, just to throw them off a bit more, and they beg me to tell them the correct answer.

Deisler created a hilarious Chilly Celebrities Guessing Game in which she invited teens to guess which current celebrities were hiding beneath construction paper-created winter gear. Use this as inspiration for similar guessing games—which characters or celebrities are in cosplay or Halloween costumes?—or perhaps they're dressed up for the latest blockbuster movie. Ask your teen volunteers for suggestions or invite them to create the entire game.

GOTTA FIND 'EM ALL!

A fun way to have teens explore your library is to have them hunt for things not usually in the library. The resurgence of the popularity of Pokemon makes this fandom an obvious choice, but you could use almost anything. Place images of your library's or local high school's mascot around your teen space, tuck photos of all thirteen doctors from *Doctor Who* in various corners of your library, or place photos of characters from popular manga series or video games throughout your teen collection.

Offer a piece of candy or small prize for finding them all, or an entry into a drawing for a larger prize, like a new book or DVD—or the pay-off for participating in the hunt is the fun they had while doing it.

OTHER IDEAS

We may think of crafts as a more traditional library program, and often complex projects are the entire program, but crafts can be passive programs as well. Deisler has found success with this idea and places necessary supplies into individual sandwich bags. When placed on a table next to glue, scissors, and other necessary tools, teens can either complete the craft while visiting the space or grab a bag to take home and complete on their own time. Keep a count of how many kits you created—you can subtract how many were taken and add that to your statistics.

Passive programs also offer a chance to learn more about the population you are serving. For instance, while *Hamilton* might seem to be universally popular, in my community, it is not. Surveys are a valuable tool that can be used to learn just about anything you'd like from your teens, such as favorite books and other media, who they watch on **YouTube**, their preferred social media, and what they want to change about the library. You can make surveys about one specific topic, like music, or you can ask about a variety of things. If you offer a prize for one lucky contributor, you'll get lots of participation.

One last idea is to incorporate passive programs into your marketing for upcoming events. If you're planning to throw a celebration for the newest series of *Doctor Who*, this would be a great time to host a Find the Doctors! passive program—just put the sign next to your event flyers. Invite teens to create black-out poetry in your teen space and then bring it along with them to read at your upcoming Open Mic Night. Ask teens to guess the number of candy corn in a jar next to your Halloween event flyers. Put trivia questions on the bottom of a flyer, and announce the winner at the event.

Passive programs can take time to create, but the fun your teens will have make them completely worthwhile. Have you created a passive program that's a favorite with your teens? Send your ideas to me at sarah.amazing1@yahoo.com, and it might be featured in a future column. ■

Sarah Amazing (yes, that is her real name) is the teen librarian at the Warren-Trumbull County Public Library. She blogs at http://zen-teen.com/ and can be contacted at sarah.amazing1@yahoo.com.



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