Figure 5.9   Speed-Reading Books; or, How to Read a Novel in Ten Minutes

Basics of Speed-Reading

Select a book to "read."

On a card, sheet of paper, or form: Record the Author, Title, Genre, Series Info, Call Number. As you "read," jot down notes about items listed below that seem pertinent.

Hold the book and look at its basic features. Is it heavy? When you open it, do the pages lie flat?

Look at the typeface, the space between the lines, the general layout. How easy to read is it? Is there much white space? Is it densely printed?

Look at the cover. What does it tell you about the book (or what the publisher wants you to think about the book)?

Read the blurb. Does it give you an idea of the story line? Does it tell "everything" (or maybe it doesn't tell you anything)? Is it inviting, teasing, ominous?

Read the first chapter. Does it pull you right into the story, or is there a slow buildup? If it's a series title, how smoothly does it deliver background info?

Skim and read bits and pieces here and there throughout the book. Does it seem to flow? What's your general impression of the book?

Read the end (sorry, but this is important!). If it has an epilogue, read a couple of sections before the epilogue. Is there a conclusion or is it open-ended? Does the ending read like a checklist, wrapping up all loose ends?

What can you tell about the following?

Style:	humorous; serious; length of sentences, sections, or chapters; dialogue
Pacing:	leisurely or action oriented
Format:	straight-line narrative, flashback, single or multiple points of view (How smooth are transitions?)
Characters:	Many or few? Are they a recognizable "type"? Does it seem character or action oriented?
Setting:	time; place; integral or wallpaper
Story line:	character or plot driven
Genre:	Does it follow genre conventions? Subgenre?

From the Readers' Advisor's Viewpoint

Does this bring to mind any other authors or titles as possible readalikes?

Which readers could enjoy this? Why would they?

Think about how you would phrase a recommendation based on speed-reading versus cover-to-cover reading versus what you might have learned from reviews or other readers.

Becoming Proficient at Speed-Reading (and Learning Its Value and Limitations)

Practice. Set a goal (five books an hour; thirty books a week, etc.).

Speed-read five books you read and enjoyed a long time ago (at least several years). How much comes back to you? How much of what you are "speed-reading" reminds you of what you so enjoyed the last time you read the book? Are you getting a "feel" for the book? Does it seem like the same book you read before, or does it seem different?

Speed-read five books that you haven't read but would be at the top of your "I want to read" list. Then read the books from cover to cover as you normally would. How different are your impressions of the book speed-reading versus "regular" reading?

Find people (preferably with some knowledge of readers' advisory) who read in a genre you do not read. Ask them to select five newish books in the genre that they have read and enjoyed. Speed-read the five books and discuss each with the person recommending the title. How well have you "read" these?

Get together with several others and speed-read the same book. Have a mini book discussion to compare your impressions and notes. What is similar and different in the various readings of the book? How does this compare with the usual book discussion experience?

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Following these suggestions can make a real difference in a readers' advisor's ability to gain familiarity with the ever-growing list of "must reads." It is not a substitute for reading a book from cover to cover, yet it is a sensible plan for delving into books and drawing conclusions, discussing them, and recording impressions that make it easier to share books with other readers, particularly when you have some familiarity with the genre and are simply searching for additional authors and titles.