

Natural Disaster Film Festival

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Description and Purpose

As “teens connect with ideas and emotions in a variety of ways”, it is important for librarians to “encourage exploration” of various forms of learning and entertainment (Fry, 2008, p. 27). Hosting a film festival for teens will offer an entertaining and low-key way for them to explore film while interacting with each other and with library staff. This program is also a way to attract young adults who may not be interested in reading or craft-based programs and to highlight library collections.



Following a theme of “natural disaster movies” will ensure a high-suspense film selection that should hold viewers’ interest. In addition to watching a series of films throughout a single afternoon and evening, breaks between movies will allow time for discussion and a final vote and prize draw(s) at the end will encourage attendance. As another incentive for participation, be sure to provide some tasty snacks (Vieau, 2010, p. 22)!

Developmental Assets

Librarians can use this program as a means to contribute to the following developmental assets identified by the Search Institute (1997):

- **Community Values Youth** – By putting in the time and resources to plan a lengthier event, teens will see that their presence and enjoyment of life is valued by adults in their community.
- **Adult Role Models** – This program would be a great opportunity for staff to provide a model of positive behaviour in the ways that they interact with other staff and teens.
- **Youth Programs** – The film festival will offer a way for teens to get involved in community events and organizations and to participate in positive social interactions.

Target Audience

Keep in mind the age range you would like to target when selecting films. If you screen films from our “Movie Suggestions” list, we recommend a target audience of ages 13 to 18, as the

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films feature some frightening scenes and profanity. However, the film list can easily be tailored to suit a different age range as desired.

Timeframe

The length of the program will vary according to the number of films you decide to screen, but it will likely take several hours. We recommend scheduling it on a Saturday, starting in the afternoon, continuing into the evening, and incorporating a free pizza supper partway through. Attendance may be higher during the summer months, when most teens have fewer school and extra-curricular commitments.

Staffing

This program would only require one (movie buff and high-energy) librarian to host and facilitate the event.

Publicity

Posters and flyers should be printed and posted in branch libraries, community centers, and local schools. Your library should also promote the event through the library website, newsletter or programming guide, and various social media platforms. Community announcements can often be made for free on local independent radio stations, and advertising through local independent newspapers is typically low in cost. Library staff should also be instructed to spread the word to teenagers visiting the library.

Be sure to mention the film titles, snacks, and prize draw(s)! To respect parental concerns, also include film ratings in your advertisements (Lupa, 2007, p. 41).

Expenses

- **Public Performance License** – Check with your library Director to be sure that your library already has the license to show these films. If not, licenses are typically inexpensive and easy to acquire (Fry, 2008, p. 27).
- **Publicity** – Posters, flyers, and newspaper advertising. Print costs will also include feedback and prize draw forms.
- **Food** – Snacks (ex. popcorn, veggie and fruit tray, cookies) and a pizza and pop supper. Oftentimes, local independent pizza places will donate food for an event in exchange for

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gaining exposure as a sponsor (Fry, 2008, p. 27).

- **Prize draw** – Consider movie theatre gift cards and/or books and DVDs relating to the “natural disaster” theme.

(The total cost of this program will vary according to the size of your community and the level of attendance.)

Program setup and format

To host this event, you will need:

- A booking for a separate programming room;
- A DVD player and a large TV or projector and screen;
- Food and a surface on which to spread it out, as well as napkins, cups, plates, and cutlery;
- Prize(s), prize draw forms, pens, and a draw box;
- DVDs;
- Feedback forms;
- Comfortable seating;
- A display of books and other items relating to the movies, or the “natural disaster” theme more generally, to highlight your library’s collection. Encourage teens to pick up, read, or check out display items at any time (Fry, 2008, p. 27).

Also, check if your library’s policy manual dictates that parental or guardian permission is necessary in order to show films to minors at the library (Fry, 2008, p. 27).

The host librarian should greet and visit with teens as they arrive. To start the event, the librarian could present a brief overview of the films to be watched and the general schedule of the evening. Light snacks should be offered from the beginning. At the conclusion of each film, ask for a show of hands for who rates the film a four out of four, three out of four, and so forth (or whatever rating scale you prefer). Record the results and save it for the end of the last movie, when you will announce the top-rated film. This break would also be a good time to encourage discussion on the film, to promote your “natural disaster” book display, and for teens to stretch out and move around.

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Offering a free pizza and pop supper will encourage teens to stay, as they will not have to leave the library in search of food. Continue the evening by watching the remainder of the films, offering more snacks, and finishing off by announcing the top-rated film and doing the prize draw(s). Be sure to thank the teens for coming and let them know about upcoming programs before they leave for the evening.

Note: As this is a longer program, expect that there will be lots of coming-and-going throughout the event. Consider going for a quick wander through the library to invite more teens to join during breaks between movies or recruiting staff to extend the invitation to teens in the library while the event is happening.

Movie Suggestions

It would be useful to consult your Teen Advisory Group, as the teen members would likely be great resources for movie recommendations (Fry, 2008, p. 27). To give you some ideas, below is a selection of titles to consider. Although the years vary, these are all high-suspense movies in which storms and natural disasters are central to the plot:

- Bodle, J. & McAleese, P. (Producers) & Mitchell, T. (Director). (2007). *Flood* [Motion picture]. UK: Lionsgate.
- Bryce, I., Crichton, M. & Kennedy, K. (Producers) & de Bont, J. (Director). (1996). *Twister* [Motion picture]. United States: Amblin Entertainment.
- Emmerich, R. & Gordon, M. (Producers) & Emmerich, R. (Director). (2004). *The Day After Tomorrow* [Motion picture]. United States: 20th Century Fox.
- Gitlin, M.P. & Lang, R. (Producers) & Scott, R. (Director). (1996). *White Squall* [Motion picture]. United States: Scott Free Productions.
- Gordon, M. & Kloser, H. (Producers) & Emmerich, R. (Director). (2009). *2012* [Motion picture]. United States: Centropolis Entertainment.
- Katz, G., Petersen, W. & Weinstein, P. (Producers) & Petersen, W. (Director). (2000). *The Perfect Storm* [Motion picture]. United States: Warner Bros. Pictures.
- Petersen, W., Henderson, D., Fleiss, M. & Goldsman, A. (Producers) & Petersen, W. (Director). (2006). *Poseidon* [Motion picture]. United States: Virtual Studios.

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Program Evaluation

Record attendance at the start of the program and take note of when teens leave, when new teens arrive, and the attendance at the end. Write an assessment of how you perceived teen engagement and participation in discussion. Provide feedback forms at the event, reminding teens to fill them out during movie breaks. Assure them that they are not required to provide their name on the form and that you won't be reading them until after the event.

Later, compile and analyze the data to assess what was effective, what the teens enjoyed, and what needs to be improved. Also consider at what times attendance was at its highest, as this might speak to what type of scheduling is most effective for the next time you plan a similar event.

References

Fry, S. (2008). Books Films with bite: Teen Read Week™ movie night. *Young Adult Library Services*, 6(4), 27-28.

Lupa, R. (2007). LOL on screen. *Young Adult Library Services*, 5(4), 41-42.

The Search Institute (1997). *40 developmental assets for adolescents*. Retrieved from <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>

Vieau, J. (2010). The book versus the movie. *Young Adult Library Services*, 8(4), 22-23.