



Tara Goldstein reads *A Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams

OPEN BOOK

What is Chappaqua reading for pleasure?

By Nancy A. Shenker

Clearly, you read for pleasure—at least occasionally. You have this copy of *Inside Chappaqua* in your hands.

But what else are you and your neighbors reading?

According to a study cited by Para Publishing, 80 percent of U.S. families did not buy or read a book last year and 42 percent of college graduates never read another book once they got their degrees.

Although book sales in the U.S. totaled close to \$27 billion in 2002, and magazine sales totaled \$21 billion last year, that compares to \$78 billion spent on alcohol, \$37 billion on cigarettes and \$6 billion on pet food, according to studies done by Veronis Suhler Stevenson, an independent merchant bank.

But here's the good news—Chappaqua appears to be a town of readers.

Whether they're getting their reading fix from independent bookstores or big chains, taking books out of the library, listening to audio books, perusing magazines and newspapers or downloading fact and fiction to their MP3 players, Chappaqua residents seem to still be fans of the written word.

According to Carolyn Reznick, research librarian at the Chappaqua Library, attendance at their varied book groups is booming and they continue to add groups. Recent best-sellers are always in demand. In fact, the waiting list for *The Da Vinci Code* was the longest in library history—at one point up to 1,000 people. (The library orders a new copy of a book for every five patrons on a waiting list, so don't despair if you're in a queue.)

Books by popular authors like mystery writer Patricia Cornwell are requested up to five months before publication.

"Chappaqua residents want to read what's new and hot," Maryanne Eaton, another Chappaqua librarian, said. "And their tastes are eclectic." For example, someone might take out *The World is Flat*, Thomas L. Friedman's 496-page exploration of globalization, and *Lipstick Jungle*, Candace Bushnell's racy tale of women behaving badly, during the same library visit.

The librarians support residents' reading habits and tastes. "Our policy is to get anything for customers, no matter how obscure," Reznick said.

Reading Trends: What's Hot? What's Not?

Joan Ripley, owner of the Second Story Book Shop on Greeley Avenue, has seen a shift over the years in the types of books readers look for. "Psychology, crafts and needlepoint used to be very big, as did cooking," she said. "Cooking is now on the downswing and historical fiction and fantasy are very popular."

Certain categories appear to be trend-proof: children's books, literary fiction and biography are always in demand at the store.

Borders in Mount Kisco has the honor of being the country's number-one seller of test-prep books, according to Peter Black, store man-

ager. And when they're not preparing for the SAT, achievement tests or other exams, area youth are escaping into fantasy.

"Our teenage customers are buying a lot of Manga these days," Black said. These Japanese illustrated books are read from back to front.

As readers' attention spans and available reading time shrinks, their literary habits change as well. Borders, Second Story and the library have seen an upswing in the demand for audio books (ideal for commutes and family trips).

Magazines and newspapers seem to also have a solid place on the shelves and nightstands of Westchester readers. Jennifer Billingsley, who is responsible for periodicals at Borders, said *The New York Post* sells out every day. *Westchester Magazine* is the most popular local publication we sell and our other hot categories are interior design, architecture, women's interest and any celebrity-focused magazines." She noted that Borders couldn't keep *Vanity Fair* on the shelves when Jennifer Aniston's interview was featured.

One Chappaqua resident admitted, "Of course I read *The Star*, *People* and *In Touch*—but only when I'm getting my hair done and I know that no one I know is watching."

Newspapers seem to be a mainstay of many commuters' reading repertoire. Mitchell Rosendorf is an avid newspaper reader, but has little time for books and non-business-related magazines. He reads the *New York Post*, the *Journal News*, and *The Wall Street Journal* regularly during his commute to and from Chappaqua.

Multiculturalism is in evidence in reading trends. For example, the Chappaqua Library has recently begun stocking Chinese language books and periodicals, meeting the

"Chappaqua residents want to read what's new and hot, and their tastes are eclectic."

*Maryanne Eaton,
Chappaqua librarian.*



needs of visiting family members who stay in town for extended periods.

The Great Escape

Residents lament the fact that most of their reading time is "have to" rather than "want to." Debra Brazee, client financial analyst at the Chappaqua Citibank branch, said most of her reading relates to continuing education or work requirements.

That sentiment was echoed by Andrea Newborn, a Chappaqua mother of two who works at Reader's Digest.

"I go through stages when I read a lot, but then I get too busy—physically or emotionally—and can't concentrate long enough to enjoy a good book," she said. "I can always tell what's going on in my life by whether or not I'm able to read. When I'm able to read, it means I'm more relaxed and then the great thing is that it also helps keep me there."

NANCY A. SHENKER is an avid reader, a regular contributor to *Inside Chappaqua* and the founder/principal of theONswitch, a business consultancy specializing in start-ups and transformations.