

The 12 Whys of Book-Giving

1. Because books are good for any age, you can do all your shopping at one place. And while you're picking up those books for kids, don't forget the adults in your life - including yourself. How many of us say, "Oh, I love to read, I just don't find the time." Yet we so want the kids in our lives to read. You know how it goes - they'll do what you do, not necessarily what you say.

2. Books are a snap to wrap. All those straight lines and square corners are a wrapper's dream. No protruding knobs or plastic-enclosed peninsulas to try to wrestle wrapping paper around.

3. They're easy to pack and/or ship. Those nice square corners again.

4. If you forget where you hid them, they won't go bad. This was an issue in my family, where Easter Egg Hunts were high-stakes operations. Dad would hide the eggs, then forget where he'd hidden them. The year after one wasn't found until mid-summer, Mom instituted a few rules: a careful pre-hiding count was taken, under no circumstances did hunting cease until that count was reached. He also forgot books he'd purchased as presents, then hid. After Dad cleaned out a drawer, I received BLACK BEAUTY one May, nicely wrapped in red and green.

5. Size doesn't matter. (Age and taste do, but not size.)

6. No batteries required. At least the traditional paper ones don't. For the e-book versions, you're on your own.

7. The durability factor. Books are difficult to break (no matter how much they might be shaken before opening), and unlikely to lose pieces under the couch. (Immersion in water, however, can be a problem.)

8. Be a trend setter. You've heard of Black Friday and Cyber Monday? Let's start Book Tuesday. Join the vanguard!

9. Books are a gift that keeps on giving. Particularly good passages are made for reading out loud. The recipient can revisit the book many times over the years and enjoy it just as much as the first time.

10. Books are good for you AND taste good. For young and old and everyone in between, reading nourishes the brain at the same time it entertains. Now, that's a terrific buy-one-get-one-free deal.

11. Double-dipping. As long as you aren't eating peanut butter or chocolate at the time, no one need ever know that you read that book before you wrapped it up. If caught, you can always say you're making sure it's appropriate for the recipient. Much harder to do if you're caught wearing a to-be-gifted sweater out to lunch.

12. Books are memories. The Cat in the Hat, The Wizard of Oz, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, Treasure Island, Kidnapped, Misty of Chincoteague . . . I not only remember receiving them (and so many others), but I have them still. Their stories

live on in so many of us, and return to be given to the next generation. And it's not only childhood books. My niece has a collection of books I've given her over the years, exploring her interests and maturity through fiction.

So head out to the store or hop online and select books for your shopping list. Pick up books for Toys for Tots and other drives for kids - the whole gamut of ages and interests. Send some books to military members far from home this holiday season (check www.AnySolder.com).

Give the gift of sharable memories that entertain and enlighten, that won't spoil or be easily broken, and are easily wrapped and shipped.

Then give yourself the gift of time to read.