

New site is ‘more than a review’

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[Donna Feyen launched website that gives avid readers warnings on offensive content within a book.](#)



A few years ago, Donna Feyen read a book that had a decent plot, but there was so much offensive material woven throughout the text that she had a hard time enjoying the book to its fullest.

“I’m one of those people who has a hard time putting a book down after I get started (so I continued reading the book),” she said.

Feyen said she wish she had known what was in the book before getting started so she could have made a better-informed decision about whether or not to read it. She searched for a book review site that would let her search for books based both on quality and based on the amount of potentially offensive material that might be in the text. Feyen found sites that were close to what she wanted, but not exactly.

That's when she decided to create such a website and the idea for MoreThanAReview.com was born. The website, originally designed by [Jeromy Price](#) and developed by [Blue Zoo Creative](#), launched in June and already has more than 500 reviews.

SITE CONTENT

The site's unique feature is the content rating system. Users can rate books or search for books based on four content areas: violence, language, sexual content and drugs or alcohol.

Site membership is free and lets the subscriber perform several actions including: review books by overall content and by the four specific content categories; search for books based on specific content levels and by genre; and find recommended books based on the member's pre-set preferred content levels.

The content levels are rated based on a five-star system using guidelines that offer an explanation for what each rating represents, ensuring that the content ratings mean the same for all users. The more stars a book receives in a given content area indicate readers can expect a higher level of that kind of content to be in the book.

"Everyone loves the idea. What people have said to me is that it's really needed," Feyen said.

More Than A Review also asks reviewers to give an overall rating for the book's quality that is similar to other rating systems in that the more stars a book receives, the more highly recommended it comes from that reviewer.

All of the reviews are from users and there is no limit to the number of reviewers who can review a given book. That means that searchers have the potential to get more than one opinion on the book before choosing to read it.

"The crowd-sourcing feature gives more reviews and variety," Feyen agreed.

The website also features a blog with author interviews. The blog will soon have featured book reviews that are more in-depth, and will potentially have guest bloggers. More Than A Review is also utilizing social platforms to spread the word on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

USERS SAY

MoreThanAReview.com is already attracting attention in Arkansas and across the United States.

Trisha Bell of Pea Ridge has submitted a couple dozen reviews in genres ranging from fantasy to romance and a self-help book. An avid reader, Bell likes the site's concept both as a user and a parent.

"I like being able to look for my 15 year-old daughter," she said. "I like being able to look and see if a book she's wanting to read has sexual content or language (or another potentially offensive content area). I can look at a book and say, 'well, it has this kind of language so let's not read that.'"

The site also lets reviewers provide additional information about the book that others would find useful. For example, Bell said there is a short story book that has a similar name to a longer book from the same author. If people buy the short story book expecting the longer novel, they will only be disappointed. This also comes in useful for noting if a book is part of a series, Bell said.

“You can also let people know if it starts slow and gets better,” Bell said.

Bell said she likes the idea of reading reviews from the average person compared to paid critics.

“A real reader writes reviews differently,” she said. “It’s more about feelings than (literary) critique.”

Leah Sanders lives near Boise, Idaho and is an author who is also a member of More Than A Review. Her five books range from science fiction to historical romance.

“I’ve written a couple of reviews from books I’ve already read and checked on other books I was interested in to see what kind of ratings they had,” Sanders said.

The site is valuable for authors because it lets potential readers make a better-informed decision before choosing their book.

“A lot of times people see the blurb about a book and the cover and they get a preconceived idea of what it’s about,” Sanders said. “Sometimes they are disappointed because it’s not what they expected.”

The content level ratings are helpful because readers will often give a negative review of a book simply because it either had more of a specific type of content than they expected, or not enough.

“Some people might read a book and not expect it to have so much steam or they might expect it to have more steam than it has and they are disappointed,” she said. “If someone can read the review (on MTAR) then there won’t be anything that jumps out unexpectedly and offends them or is not what they wanted. They are going to be happier with what they’ve read.”

Sanders, who is also a teacher, also plans to use the site for helping her middle school students and their parents choose appropriate books.

“I can ask them to check the site,” she said. “As a teacher I can give parents a tool to use to find books that are appropriate for their kids.

“I’ve thought we needed a site like this for books,” Sanders concluded. “We have one like it for movies, but not for books. When (Donna) came out with this, I was pretty excited.”