

Why I Love Book Clubs

I used to think that writing a book would be the hard part. That once I had spent interminable hours writing my masterpiece, gotten feedback from my critique groups, done lots of rewriting and polishing, and then proofread my manuscript about a zillion times, that I would be done. But I soon realized that writing the book is only the beginning. Marketing the book, getting it out into the public so that people know about it and will buy it, takes just as much work as writing it in the first place.

That's why I'm a big fan of book clubs. Instead of sitting by myself at a lone table in a library or bookstore, hoping someone will wander by who is interested in buying the book, I can sit in a comfortable chair in someone's living room, surrounded by people who have read the book and are eager to discuss it. It's incredibly thrilling to hear the group talk about your characters, these creations that you pulled out of your imagination, as real people living real lives.

Often the discussion will start with general questions, such as "why did you write the book?" or "what is your process for writing?" Then we move into more book-specific questions, talking about characters and their motivations, or actions that happened in the plot. When book club members mention incidents from their own lives that are similar to something that happened in the book, then I know that the book has touched them.

Book clubs are a terrific way to get feedback on your novel. Readers' comments let me know when I have done something well and or where I've fallen short. I like to write fast-paced murder mysteries that keep the reader guessing as to who committed the crime. When readers say, "I couldn't figure out who the murderer was until the very end" or "It was such a page-turner, I couldn't put it down," then I know I'm on the right path. But if someone says, "I couldn't understand why your character did that," or "I wasn't sure what your character looked like," then I know I need to focus on clarifying those issues in the next book of the series.

A bonus is that people often belong to more than one book club, which means they may invite me to speak at their other book clubs also. This expands my circle of readers and gives me access to potential new fans.

There are many ways to grow your audience. Social media, writing conferences and numerous other activities can all help you gain name recognition and build your brand. But don't overlook book clubs as a valuable and fun way to connect with your readers.