

Mini Guide to Book Cover Design

Caroline Webber

Before giving a designer the brief for your book cover, there are three important areas you need to consider. These are:

1. How you want it to look
2. Its emotional appeal, and
3. The choice of colours.

While you may think this is stating the obvious, you would be surprised to know that many people struggle to accurately describe how they want their cover to look and end up being frustrated with the efforts of the designer.

How you want it to look

Here are ten tips to help you decide how you want your cover to look:

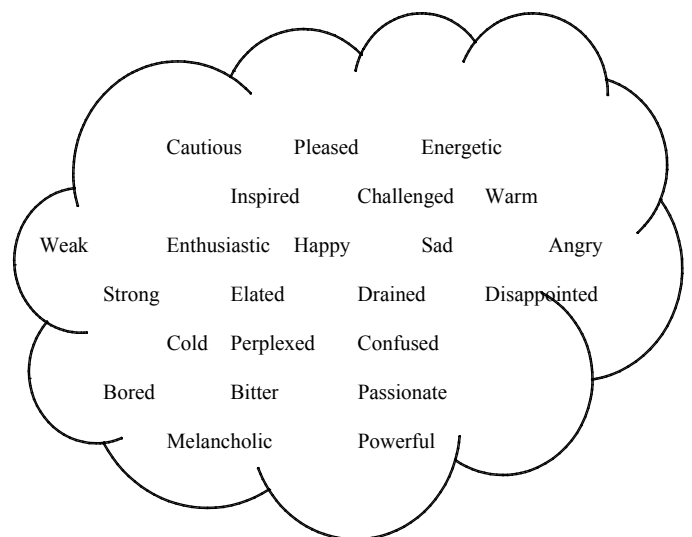
1. Spend time browsing in your local bookshop or library looking at book covers. Make a list of those titles that appeal to you
2. Make a list of book cover designs that match your genre
3. Make a list of book cover designs that you don't like
4. Try sketching a draft design
5. Create a scrapbook of images, patterns and colours you like
6. Decide on whether you would like a traditional looking book cover, or something modern and innovative
7. Choose between photographs, illustrations or text-based designs
8. Choose special features – such as spot gloss or embossing – to make your book stand out (see Mini Guide to Design)

9. Ask to see examples of your designer's work
10. Don't be afraid to ask your designer for their advice.

Its emotional appeal

Good book cover designs should appeal to a reader and cause them to have an emotional response. Different genres of books are associated with different emotions – crime fiction covers should provoke fear and suspense whereas self-development book covers should be enlightening and inspiring.

Have a look at the 'Emotion Cloud' below. Think about the emotional responses you would like your cover to create, and which ones you would like to avoid.



The choice of colours

Colours can also create an emotional response. Some colours provoke feelings of warmth; others are cold and hostile. There are certain colours that work well for different genres of books, for example, horror books are often dark and gloomy, whereas children's book covers are lively, colourful and fun.

When briefing your designer you should let them know if there are any colours you would particularly like to see on your cover, and whether there are any you would to avoid.



The different seasons and weather types also conjure up a variety of responses. Think of how the following words make you feel:

Summer Autumn Winter Spring
Air Water Sun Rain Fire
Storm Hail Mist Snow Fog Chill Warmth

How do the following pictures make you feel?



How to brief your designer

When briefing your designer, you will need to provide them with:

- A synopsis of your book
- Details of its genre
- Any images you have in mind
- An indication of your preferred style, i.e. contemporary or classical
- The intended emotional appeal and
- Details of what you would like the cover to include/exclude.

Ask your designer to prepare two or three contrasting draft designs from which you can choose your preferred cover design.

Caroline Webber is the publishing manager at Longueville Media. She has over ten years experience of working in the public and private sector in research, analysis and writing. She has a doctorate in English Literature and is currently writing the introduction to a critical edition of *The Romance of the Forest* for Valancourt Books.

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