



## St. Thomas' Collegiate School

### *Winner - Keble Memorial English Essay Prize for Seniors 1981*

#### **The Pleasures Of Reading**

An eight year old boy remarked to his teacher in all sincerity, "you have taught me the most wonderful thing in the world, the ability to read". Millions of men, women, boys and girls will agree unanimously with this statement. This is because reading has been universally acclaimed as the most enjoyable, interesting and pleasurable of exercise and pastimes by the young and old alike.

My own interest in reading dates back to time, when as a three year old tot, I brought a newspaper and enthusiastically proceeded to read a page, holding the newspaper upside down. Since then my parents and teachers have wisely enlightened me concerning the mysteries and magic of reading. I have since then derived more pleasure, enjoyment and knowledge from reading than from any other activity.

What is this magnificent process of reading which astonishes the illiterate and that cultured people everywhere hold in such high regard? It could be described as a mental process of interpreting print which is a specific form of learned behavior. But reading is simply a pleasure to me.

I, myself being a keen and voracious reader, has been astonished at the speed at which my eyes travel over printers' ink. This skill at reading is evident even in a ten year old immersed in the adventures of Dr. Doolittle or a teenager sailing through space via science fiction.

Of all this skills an average person learns in a lifetime, the ability to read easily heads the list because it is the most pleasurable and most universal. I have always regarded it s pleasure to English with its flexible sentences and rich vocabulary. This language has given me immense pleasure. Other languages may be spoken among a larger population but English is the best.

People all over the globe read for pleasure, recreation or to satisfy the curiosity; some read because they just can't be without doing it. Relaxing with any pursuit. Reading is an enjoyable activity as it has the power to lift the reader out of daily cares and tensions and also refresh his mind.

Reading can also have it's ill effects. To a person who has become addicted to reading. It is the ultimate satisfaction he can crave for. Such a person may read even the label of a bottle of medicine to satisfy his need. But if indulged in with certain limits no activity can rival reading.

To even an average reader like myself it is difficult to write down the pleasurable of reading, because the world of literature with its characters so diverse as they are colourful, can never be appreciated to the full. But when looked at from the point of view of a teenager, the task can be accomplished with a certain degree of success.

Reading during childhood year can be divided into two periods ie. The primary stage upto twelve years and the teens. For the younger children reading is a diversion not to be missed. Whether a folk- tale or a modern story, books stimulate the imagination of children. The world of fairies, giants, elves, gnomes and magic carpets, is exclusive for young boys and girls.

A good story is relived again and again by any little child who understands in his own way, what the world of books has in store for him. To deprive little children of these stories is unthinkable, because they derived a lot of pleasure form stories. This is because they need these healthy means of escape from the adult world.

For the modern teenager there is a vast amount of reading material to choose from. These can be classified as classics, fiction, plays, poetry, biographies and also magazines etc.

Literary classics are unquestionably regarded as what they are called; this is because their quality has never been in doubt through the ages. Masterpieces like "David Copperfield" "Silas Marner", "Treasure Island" "The Lady of the Lake" and "Prisoner of Zenda", have stimulated and inspired millions of young people. The geniuses of authors like Robert Louis Stevenson, Jules Verne, Sir Walter Scott Alexander Dumas and William Shakespeare is in these classics.

The three branches of fiction the novel, norella and short story all illustrate the fact that the story teller is the perennial delight of mankind. Writers like Maupassant, Shaw, and Voltaire have given the world a hast of great works designed to entertain as well as educate.

Teenagers always love adventures. They know that ingredients like suspense romance intrigue and plenty of action are the essential attributes of "smashing or super" adventures. Any adventure whether about pirates, heroes, cowboys or space, is quickly snapped up by young readers. A sure sign of having just read a good book is the face of a youngster flushed with excitement.

It is a well known fact in parental circles that children tend to lose track of time when they sink their teeth into a good tale. Luminaries in the world of crime detection fiction like Sherlock Holmes and Hercules Poirot would certainly gasp in disbelief if they have. Teenagers are equally at home with "whodunits" or tales of horror and the occult. Some prefer spine chilling tales of vampire bats and werewolves.

Humorous fiction has given a lot of pleasure to millions of readers who like their funny bone tickled all the time by such immortal characters like Jeeves and Billy Bunter.

Historical fiction is another branch of fiction (sometimes being seventy per cent yarns) which conjures up vivid pictures of gallant knights in shining armor, lovely princesses in distress, breathtaking chariot races and epic wars etc. Old epics like "Iliad and Odyssey" are books which need no introduction. These are still read and revered by millions. Recent novels like "War and Peace" by Tolstoy and "Ben Hur" by Gen. Lew Wallace are also read several times by people to savor the finer details in them.

There are some readers who are fascinated by work of science fiction by such writers as Arthur C. Clarke, where the supernatural blends with the technological advancement of 21<sup>st</sup> century man. Imaginative of the new generation with mind boggling tales of planets full of flesh eating vegetables and monsters with eight legs and six eyes.

"Live of great men all remind us. . . . . ." runs the lines of a famous poem. This is an apt description of what books on history and lives of great people contain. I have gained a lot of satisfaction by reading of the exploits, intellectual accomplishments and wisdom of my idols; it is also enlightening to read about Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi etc.

Reading makes life a pleasure to live because it banishes ignorance and superstition while making a person's mind creative. When something needs to be found out reading is the best way to do it, from manuals, treatises and other reference sources on any topic.

Reading plays is very enjoyable too. Those who are not fortunate these plays being performed can visualize the profound beauty of famous plays by reading them. The use of devices like imaginary, figures of speech, dialogue and blank verse makes the reader understand and enjoy plays of the caliber of "Romeo and Juliet" "Macbeth" and "Julius Caesar"

Reading good poetry gives a lot of pleasure for countless people. For example Shakespeare's poetry can be appreciated for its meanings and word music. Other great poets like Wordsworth, Milton, Byron, Shelley, Frost and Elliot are also favorites among many readers of poetry.

Mass reading is an integral part of reading matter today. But readers should try to select what one ought to read and what one ought not to. Newspapers keep us informed on what is going on in the spheres of world affairs, economics, politics, fashion and sports.

Sports literature has large following today. It is a pleasure to read about Sobers' cricketing exploits. Pele's dribbling wizardry or Jhon McEnroe's latest tantrum on a tennis court or off it. Magazines like "The Readers' Digest" "Time", "Life" and "Newsweek" have built up a large readership of people who prefer to read about many topics in a condensed form.

There has been a vast transformation in the sphere of communication during this century. Some people have been naïve as to predict that reading will die out because of the massive influx of radio, television, and give way to robot speakers and Dictaphones in furniture. But man can be confident that the written word will withstand the assault of other sophisticated methods of communication, reading will not be obsolete and continue to enlighten and entertain millions of people in the years to come.

Reading should be regarded as means of education and communication. Reading can be harmful if it goes to the extent of actual addiction. Reading matter should be selected very carefully; this will ensure that the noble art of reading will live as long as man.

Nothing else can surpass the richness of literary expression found in a glorious stanza of poetry or a passage of flowing prose.

Reading will be fostered by future generations as a treasure and flourish for ever as the immortal expression of an intelligent race- mankind

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