



# Recommended Reading

So many books, so little time

By Juliet Farmer

**M**y father instilled a lot of character traits in me (my obsessive punctuality, for one), but there's one thing I inherited from him that I'm most thankful for: a love of reading. I've always loved to read. From as far back as I can remember, books have been a part of my life.

First it was the magical world of Dr. Seuss; later, the adventures of Winnie-the-Pooh and the Velveteen Rabbit occupied my time. I remember devouring my set of *Little House on the Prairie* books like they were candy. In fourth grade, I found Nancy Drew. Next, the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series grabbed my attention.

In school, I was in advanced placement English classes that required reading above and beyond the minimum, and I loved every minute of it. Reading books and

writing books reports was the best thing ever, as far as I was concerned.

I also have those classes to thank for introducing me to *A Separate Peace*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Lord of the Flies*, as well as the works of Shakespeare (his comedies in particular), *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Les Misérables*.

My reading tastes were constantly changing, and as I got older, I came to prefer fiction—mostly crime and law along the lines of John Grisham, Steve Martini and the like. Currently, I'm in a decidedly nonfiction phase, having just finished *From Baghdad With Love*, *The Dogs Who Found Me* and *Why Do Dogs Always Drink Out of the Toilet?* Next will most likely be true crime, which may satisfy both categories.

I try to encourage reading for pleasure, especially in my own home. And since I don't have any children, my husband is usually on the receiving end. (Not to say that he doesn't read, because he does read the newspaper and magazines.)

I don't think he's unusual. In fact, I think there are a lot of people who either have little to no free time or don't care to spend it reading books. For some, it could be because they were forced to read books in school and came to see reading as punishment. For others, it may be due to lack of confidence regarding the speed with which they read.

In any event, I doubt it's due to lack of material, because there are books about anything and everything. And between used bookstores (online and bricks-and-mortar), retail bookstores and (every book lover's paradise) the library, there's no excuse not to be reading something.

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Although I prefer to buy used books so I can keep my favorites and pass on the rest, I think the library is the best option for people trying to build a reader's appetite. At the library, you can try all different genres without buyer's remorse. If you don't like a book, simply return it and try another one. To continue the food analogy, the library is a smorgasbord of books just ready and waiting for consumption.

It comes as no surprise to me that, according to the International Reading Association, "it is during the middle years of schooling that most students refine their reading

preferences, become sophisticated readers of informational text and lay the groundwork for the lifelong reading habit. They begin to use reading to help answer profound questions about themselves and the world. With good instruction, ample time and opportunity to read a variety of texts, young adolescents can become successful readers both in and out of school."

For me, that has certainly proven to be the case. I'm usually reading at least two books at a time (if I could do both simultaneously, I would be in heaven), and my husband often calls me his "little bookworm."

Often, I will read a book and, either during the process or after I'm finished, rave about it for days before it will mysteriously materialize on my husband's nightstand. The trick to recommending books to others, especially reluctant readers, is to home in on what they like.

Through the years, my recommendations have spurred my husband to read *A Civil Action*, *Into the Wild*, *The Runaway Jury*, *High Fidelity*, *It's Not About the Bike*, *I Love Everybody (and Other Atrocious Lies)* and, most recently, *Marley & Me*, all of which he enjoyed as much as I did.

While my husband and I may differ on the quantities we read, he's always open to try the books I suggest. I guess in the end he's just a more selective reader than I. Lucky for him, he has a live-in screener just waiting to provide him with the next book for his bedside table.

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