**BOOKS AND READING**

**TOPICAL VOCABULARY**

**1. Categorization:** Children's and adult's books; travel books and biography; romantic and historical novels; westerns; thrillers; horror books and gothic literature; detective stories or crime fiction; war and adventure novels; dystopian novels, science fiction and fantasy; liter­ary fiction and genre fiction; non-fiction; pulp fiction.

**2. Adjectives to describe a book:** Absorbing; adult; amusing; captivating; controversial; depressing; delightful; dirty; disturbing; dull; enchanting; exhilarating; fascinating; hilarious; gripping; inspiring; moral­istic; nasty; obscene; outrageous; poignant; profound; provocative; riveting; run-of-the-mill; spellbinding; tawdry; triggering; whimsical; unputdownable. .

**3. Books and their parts:** paperback and hardback; binding; cover; spine; jacket; title; epigraph; preface; the contents list; fly leaf; bookplate; blurb; a beautifully printed book; a tome bound in leather / with gilt edges; a volume with a broken bind­ing; a book with dense print / with loose pages; a well-thumbed book.

**4. Reading habits:** to form a reading habit early in life; to read silently / incessantly / greedily / laboriously; to read curled up in a chair; to read a child / oneself to sleep; to make good bed-time reading; to be lost / absorbed in a book; to devour books; to dip into / glance over / pore over / thumb through a book; to browse through newspapers and periodicals; to scan / skim a magazine; a bookworm; an avid / alert / keen reader.

**5. Library facilities:** reading rooms and reference sections; the subject/author/title/on-line catalogue; the enquiry desk; computer assisted reference service; to borrow / renew / loan books; rare books; to keep books that are overdue; books vulnerable to theft; to suspend one's member­ship; to be banned from the library.

I. Questions for discussion:

1. Did you form the reading habit early in life? Can you remember at all the first books you had?

2. What English and American children's books can you name? Have you got any favourites?

3. Why is it good for children to read fanciful stories?

4. What categories of books do you know? What books do you prefer to read?

5. How do you select books to read for pleasure? Do you listen to advice? Do the physical characteristics matter?

6. Do you pay attention to top lists of best books?

7. Do you agree with the view that television and internet are grad­ually replacing reading?

8. Is it possible for television watching not only to discourage but actually to inspire reading?

9. Some teachers say it is possible to discern among the young an insensitivity to nuances of language and an inability to perceive more than just a story? Do you think it's a great loss?

10. How is it possible to develop reading habits? What can be done to motivate those who are not keen readers yet?

II.Comment on the following quotations:

"A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good."

(Samuel Johnson)

"A classic is something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read." (Mark Twain)

"No furniture is so charming as books, even if you never open them and read a single word."

(Sydney Smith)

"Books and friends should be few but good." (a proverb)

"A book is not only a friend, it makes friends for you. When you have possessed a book with mind and spirit, you are enriched. But when you pass it on you are enriched threefold."  (Henry Miller)

"Each time we come to a book we give it a different reading because we bring a different person to it." (Jack Lasenby)

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one." (George R.R. Martin)

III. Imagine that you have been asked to compile your own top list of the most interesting books. Speak about a book that will occupy the first position in your list. Pay attention to the following aspects.

* Who is the author of the book?
* What message does the author want to impose on his readers?
* What is the general effect achieved? What emotions did you experience?
* What is particularly remarkable or memorable about the story?
* Why do you recommend it to other people?

IV. Prepare a presentation about one of your favourite writers.

V. Read the text, be ready to discuss it.

**The Importance of Reading (by Neil Gaiman)**

If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.”

Albert Einstein

I was once in New York, and I listened to a talk about the building of private prisons – a huge growth industry in America. The prison industry needs to plan its future growth – how many cells are they going to need? How many prisoners are there going to be, 15 years from now? And**they found they could predict it very easily, using a pretty simple algorithm, based on asking what percentage of 10 and 11-year-olds couldn’t read.** And certainly couldn’t read for pleasure. It’s not one to one: you can’t say that a literate society has no criminality. But there are very real correlations.

Literacy is more important than ever it was, in this world of text and email, a world of written information. We need to read and write, we need global citizens who can read comfortably, comprehend what they are reading, understand nuance, and make themselves understood.

Fiction has two uses. Firstly, it’s a gateway drug to reading. The drive to know what happens next, to want to turn the page, the need to keep going, even if it’s hard, because someone’s in trouble and you have to know how it’s all going to end. That’s a very real drive. And it forces you to learn new words, to think new thoughts, to keep going. To discover that reading is pleasurable. Once you learn that, you’re on the road to reading everything. And reading is a key.

Words are more important than they ever were: we navigate the world with words, and as the world slips onto the web, we need to follow, to communicate and to comprehend what we are reading. People who cannot understand each other cannot exchange ideas, cannot communicate, and translation programs only go so far.

The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to teach them to read, and to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity. And that means, at its simplest, finding books that they enjoy, giving them access to those books, and letting them read them.

And the second thing fiction does is to build empathy. Empathy is a tool for building people into groups, for allowing us to function as more than self-obsessed individuals.

This reminds me of Keith Oatley, who [when explaining the role of fiction in our lives](https://fs.blog/2011/09/is-reading-fiction-good-for-you/) employed the metaphor of a flight simulator. A flight simulator allows pilots-in-training to safely and quickly learn how to deal with all sorts of problems that might happen in the air. Fiction, Oatley argues, “allows us to experience emotions in a safe place, training us to understand ourselves and others”.

Well-meaning adults can easily destroy a child’s love of reading: stop them reading what they enjoy, or give them worthy-but-dull books that you like, the 21st-century equivalents of Victorian “improving” literature. You’ll wind up with a generation convinced that reading is uncool and worse, unpleasant. Another way to destroy a child’s love of reading, of course, is to make sure there are no books of any kind around.

I was in China in 2007, at the first party-approved science fiction and fantasy convention in Chinese history. And at one point I took a top official aside and asked him Why? SF had been disapproved of for a long time. What had changed?

It’s simple, he told me. The Chinese were brilliant at making things if other people brought them the plans. But they did not innovate and they did not invent. They did not imagine. So they sent a delegation to the US, to Apple, to Microsoft, to Google, and they asked the people there who were inventing the future about themselves. And they found that all of them had read science fiction when they were boys or girls.

Libraries are about freedom. Freedom to read, freedom of ideas, freedom of communication. They are about education (which is not a process that finishes the day we leave school or university), about entertainment, about making safe spaces, and about access to information.

**Information has value, and the right information has enormous value.** For all of human history, we have lived in a time of information scarcity, and having the needed information was always important, and always worth something: when to plant crops, where to find things, maps and histories and stories – they were always good for a meal and company. Information was a valuable thing, and those who had it or could obtain it could charge for that service. In the last few years, we’ve moved from an information-scarce economy to one driven by an information glut.

Books are the way that we communicate with the dead. The way that we learn lessons from those who are no longer with us, that humanity has built on itself, progressed, made knowledge incremental rather than something that has to be relearned, over and over. There are tales that are older than most countries, tales that have long outlasted the cultures and the buildings in which they were first told.

We all – adults and children, writers and readers – have an obligation to daydream. We have an obligation to imagine. It is easy to pretend that nobody can change anything, that we are in a world in which society is huge and the individual is less than nothing: an atom in a wall, a grain of rice in a rice field. But the truth is, individuals change their world over and over, individuals make the future, and they do it by imagining that things can be different.