

Some Thoughts about Books & Reading

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There is an anonymous quote about books and reading them that I recall from my English Literature class at the University of Kansas several centuries ago. It goes like this:

“Anyone who says they have only one life to live must not know how to read a book.”

The meaning is clear. Reading books allows us to experience the world through the eyes of others—whether those eyes are the author's or those of the characters the author creates. Stories well told allow us to live many lives.

Another unidentified sentiment about books says: “A good book on your shelf is a friend that turns its back on you and remains a friend.”

I agree.



Some of us had the good fortune to have parents who loved books and who took the time to introduce us to them. My mother did that for me, and every time I think of the gift of reading she gave me I am reminded of a poem I once read:

“You may have tangible wealth untold;

Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.

Richer than I you can never be -

I had a mother who read to me.--Strickland Gillilan

I find that reading a book is like life. You take it one page at a time.

Below I have compiled some quotes about books and reading that you may find enlightening, stimulating and witty.

Take a look.

“Never judge a book by its movie.” ~J.W. Eagan

“Books are the windows through which the soul looks out. A home without books is like a room without windows.”--Henry Ward Beecher

“To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life.”--W. Somerset Maugham

“My imagination doesn't require anything more of the book than to provide a framework within which it can wander.”--Alphonse Daudet

“A room without books is like a body without a soul.”--Cicero

“To gain glory by books you must not only possess them but know them; their lodgings must be in your brain and not on your book-shelf.”--Francesco Petrarch

“Never judge a cover by its book.”--Fran Lebowitz



“To read a book for the first time is to make an acquaintance with a new friend; to read it for a second time is to meet an old one.”--Chinese Saying

“The printing-press is either the greatest blessing or the greatest curse of modern times, one sometimes forgets which.”--James M. Barrie

“Do you want to get new ideas? Read old books. Do you want to find old ideas? Read new ones.”--Edward Bulwer-Lytton

“We become so used to having the famous books around, most of the time we look at them as though they were statues of generals in public parks.”--George P. Elliot

“There is a great deal of difference between an eager man who wants to read a book and a tired man who wants a book to read.” G.K. Chesterton

“Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.” Charles W. Eliot

“The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame.”--Oscar Wilde

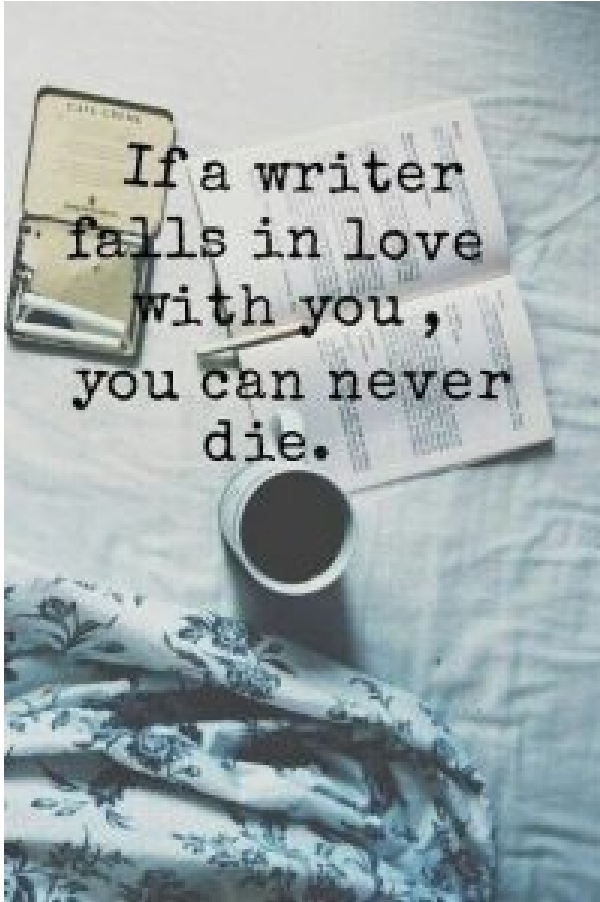
“When I get a little money, I buy books; and if any is left, I buy food and clothes.”--Desiderius Erasmus

“I divide all readers into two classes: those who read to remember and those who read to forget.”--William Lyon Phelps

“Always read something that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it.”--P.J. O'Rourke

“When you re-read a classic you do not see more in the book than you did before; you see more in you than there was before.”--Clifton Fadiman

“The book-lover needs most to be reminded that man's business here is to know for the sake of living, not to live for the sake of knowing.”--Frederic Harrison



"My test of a good novel is dreading to begin the last chapter." Thomas Helm

"No two people read the same book."--Edmund Wilson

"You know you've read a good book when you turn the last page and feel a little as if you have lost a friend." Paul Sweeney

"You can never be too thin, too rich, or have too many books."--Carter Burden

"Fiction reveals truths that reality obscures." Jessamyn West

"What refuge is there for the victim who is oppressed with the feeling that there are a thousand new books he ought to read, while life is only long enough for him to attempt to read a hundred?"--Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

"Books are lighthouses erected in the great sea of time." E.P. Whipple

"I would be most content if my children grew up to be the kind of people who think decorating consists mostly of building enough bookshelves."--Anna Quindlen

“A truly great book should be read in youth, again in maturity, and once more in old age, as a fine building should be seen by morning light, at noon, and by moonlight.”--Robertson Davies

“There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.”
Joseph Brodsky

“Any book that is important ought to be at once read through twice...because we are not in the same temper and disposition on both readings.”--Arthur Schopenhauer

“Some books are undeservedly forgotten; none are undeservedly remembered.” --
W.H. Auden

“Having your book turned into a movie is like seeing your oxen turned into bouillon cubes.” John LeCarre



“Books worth reading are worth re-reading.”--Holbrook Jackson

“The best service a book can render you is not to impart truth, but to make you think it out for yourself.”--Elbert Hubbard

“The sole substitute for an experience which we have not ourselves lived through is art and literature.”--Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“When we are collecting books, we are collecting happiness.”--Vincent Starrett

“The trouble with the publishing business is that too many people who have half a mind to write a book do so.”--William Targ

“Books may be burned and cities sacked, but truth, like the yearning for freedom, lives in the hearts of humble men.”--Franklin D. Roosevelt,

“People say that life is the thing, but I prefer reading.”--Logan Pearsall Smith

“The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.”--Mark Twain

“Books are the cosmography of man, a world in themselves.”

--Holbrook Jackson, *The Anatomy of Bibliomania*(1930)

“A good book should leave you... slightly exhausted at the end. You live several lives while reading it.”--William Styron