

James Branch Cabell 1892-1958

The Decline of Sustained Reading

The New Status
Quo?

Elora Roberts

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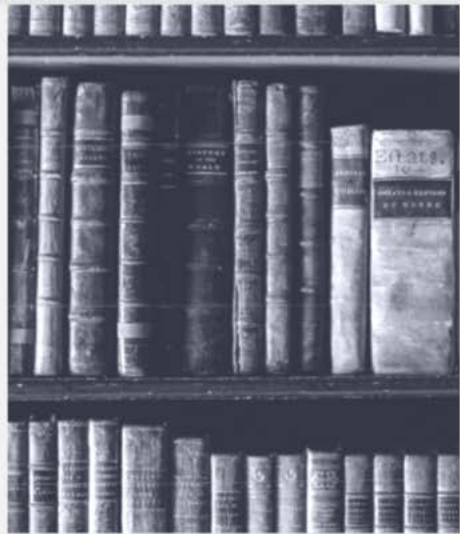
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Executive Summary

An Overview

Reading has lost tremendous popularity over the past couple decades. The data proves it. People would rather be watching television than reading. Our minds are becoming rewired to think reading is not important. But it is.



Reading cultivates the brain. It develops important skills. We have turned into a scanning and skimming society instead of the comprehensive, in-depth on we once were. People are being altered to take in short bursts of information in only a couple seconds through watching social media videos. Focus is being depleted. It is being unknowingly restricted to only a couple of minutes. This is a problem. Devices hold us captive, and have been for years. A balance needs to be found in order to succeed in this battle of minds.

ONCE YOU LEARN TO
read
YOU WILL FOREVER BE
free

- FREDERICK DOUGLASS



▼ The Problem

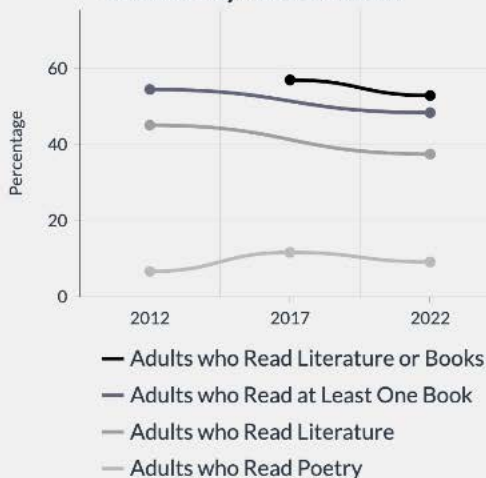
Who reads for "fun" anymore?

The problem is quite simple. Society tends to have lost its ability to read leisurely. Focus is not what it used to be and that is becoming a more prevalent problem. With the collapse of sustained reading increasing, there will eventually be serious repercussions to the way our society functions. Reports have shown that children are suffering from this as well, and these practices can easily get transferred into adulthood. Sustained reading not only strengthens the mind, but also builds vital skills. These skills are not longer being cultivated to their full power. It's not that people have lost the ability to physically read, but they have lost the ability to sit quietly and read for a sustained period of time.

Reading is
essential
for those who
seek to rise above the
ordinary.

JIM ROHN

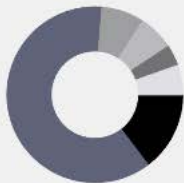
NEA Survey Results 2022



The results from surveys conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts show stark patterns. Within the last decade, reading has been declining. While these declines might not seem significant, they are. In the last ten years, reading has declined 6.1%. The average population, in the United States, during this point was about 323.6 million people. 6.1% is a decrease of almost 20 million people. That is frightening.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

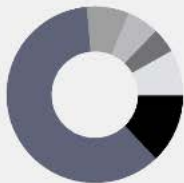
Survey Results 2016



- Socializing
- Watching TV
- Sports/Exercise/Recreation
- Reading
- Computer Use
- Playing Games

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These two charts track how people spend their leisure time. While these two charts might not seem that different, there are patterns to be noticed. Socializing is decreasing and watching television is slowly taking over everything else.



The History

When did society reach this point?

With the rise of technology and other ways to pass time, the act (and art) of reading got placed on the back burner. Reading used to be a way to delve into an alternate reality, to escape from the real world. Now, all society has to do is swipe open their phone and they are instantly transported somewhere else. Short videos and snippets of other people's lives are now more entertaining to our minds.

Children are being affected as well. They would rather be playing video games than reading a book. If something is a struggle, they will not enjoy it, or learn to. The Covid-19 Pandemic had children out of school for almost a full year. Many of them during the point of building those crucial skills or reading and math.

If the skills gained from reading are not learned, society is going to be in for a disorienting realization soon. Reading is not as encouraged as other skills, although a lot can be gained from it.



The Solution

What can be done?

The answer is simple. Pick up a book, anything, and sit quietly and read it.

Society needs to rediscover the art of reading.



Schools can enforce quiet reading times. Children can be taught to learn to love to read. Routines can be set.

However, a lot of the trouble is that a lot of the population say they just don't have time to read for fun. They are too tired once they get home, they work too much, they are too distracted, etc.

The more people read, the easier all of these things will get. Make time to read. Just as people make time to eat exercise, and work.

READING IS TO THE
mind
WHAT EXERCISE IS TO
THE
body

RICHARD STEELE

▼ The Benefits

Why does society need to read?

Reading has been proven to further develop the following:

- Empathy and social connections
- Critical thinking
- Conversation skills
- Memory
- Problem-Solving

What job is there, in which, these five skills are not vital, or at least necessary?

People who read more strengthen and expand their minds. They allow for bridges to be built.

*Reading is an exercise in
empathy;
an exercise in
walking in someone else's shoes
for a while.*

MALORIE BLACKMAN





The Call to Action

How can this problem be rectified?

The challenge is to pick up a book, and notice how long reading can occur without distraction or a loss of focus. The answer will most definitely be surprising. What is it that takes away the concentration? Notice it. Specifically recognize it. Repeat this process until 5 minutes can pass uninterrupted. 10, 20, 30. See how far it can go.

Make time in the schedule to read. Build a habit of doing it. Set obtainable goals.

Tell other people to start reading again. Create a book club with neighbors, friends, family. Not only will that encourage reading, but it will also strengthen relationships.



Being able to read is a gift. It should be treated as such. Approximately 750 million people, worldwide, are considered illiterate, with more than half being female. About 5% (43 million) of that total are in the United States alone. Many people are not gifted with the ability to read, therefore those who can should be grateful for it.

Conclusion

Does reading truly matter?

Reading is vital. It is one of the first skills learned in school. However, the act of reading is being lost.



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