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Honors Thesis

The Sensation of Wind:
Breaking the Hierarchy in Reading, a Study in Affective Theory

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The reader became the book; and summer night
Was like the conscious being of the book.

- "The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm" Wallace Stevens

Introduction

To be roused, to be stirred—for one's body to be infiltrated in such a way that the mind must catch up to the sensation of the body, to realign itself, such is the consequence of affect. Affect is a state of being; not quite one reminiscent of a constant monotonic drone, rather, it is akin to a sharp and sudden pang or the clashing of two cymbals. The result of affect is a being before and a being after. The human condition is one that is highly prone to the shifts, that is, *to be affected by something*. Like a soft, constant

wind, affect winnows through our bodies, changing us, then leaving us behind.

To study the course of affect in such a poetic manner may be as futile an endeavor as sketching that wind. Perhaps, even to think of it abstractly or philosophically in such a manner so as to assert it is as a kind of being rather than state or feeling, may be an effort done in vain. However crude this portrait may be, the idea of affect or the states preceding and resulting in the experience of being affected by something must not be discarded as nonsensical. Affect exists as a broad term, like the word experience, as it holds no definite shape and elicits no certain image. While an experience can be imagined as something had, affect is the instance happening. There is a metaphysical disparity, experience residing in the space-time of the mind, parallel or intersecting with one's consciousness, whereas affect is a slice of time which is present, concurrent to one's consciousness and emerging from the very same singularity of ourselves. In affect there is no distinction between the feeling and "I", it is only "I". This comparison, at least, is how affect will be thought of in the proceeding exploration.

There are many frameworks that can effectively be applied to the study of affect. However, the one in question here will be affect's relationship to texts. In other words, the examination of affect as a result of reading a text. The word text, like affect, will take on an "umbrella" meaning. Used henceforth, it will not discriminate between genres, craft, or form. Text, here, means a poem, a book, and a story all at once. The study of the relationship

between affect and reading is a purposeful one as it does not discriminate against the factors that make up the text. Rather, affect is an indirect variable, ever shifting, while the text and reading remain direct and constant. If it is not a text's contents which change, then therefore it is instead the reader who varies and thus creates different versions of the text. The result being a sensation like a bead spun on a string with either ends then being pulled away from each other, a desperate whirring rings forth in an attempt to even itself out and settle down. The body has changed, it has experienced, and it is no longer the same. Reading, thus, can often spur the experience of being affected by a text. When we are done reading, we are not who we were when we began. To understand this assertion that affect plays an essential role in our experience of reading, this essay will attempt to view and analyze the existing history and current developments in affect theory, as well as explore why the relationship between affect and reading has been and continues to be of great importance.

To begin, the study of affect or Affect Theory, has, in recent years, gained quite a bit of traction. In other words, both in the field of psychology and literature, researchers and theorists look to affect as a means to better understand our interactions and relationships with the world around us. Though the focus of this thesis looks at affect within the realm of literature, the psychological presence must be noted as many studies regarding affect are either purely psychological or psychological with a flavoring of textual studies. Affect applied directly to literature is, on the other hand, a bit less

studied as it tends to bend towards the abstracted exploration of ontology without an overwhelming reliance on a cognitive or psychological framework. This is not to say that affect studied under a literary lens does not include these psychological references. Rather, the studying of affect spurred from the act of reading tends to appear more from the psychological perspective opposed to the literary. This statement is exemplified throughout the many sources referenced in this thesis.

A good example of the mix between observing affect in both the regard to literature and the psychoanalytic sense is presented within *The Palgrave Handbook of Affect Studies and Textual Criticism*. Within this anthology, published in December 2017 by Palgrave Macmillan and edited by Donald R. Wehrs and Thomas Blake, is a collection of studies that aim to explore the various means in which we are affected by reading. This recent production of this anthology of collected works exemplifies the rising interest in our relationship with texts as well as our desire to understand what exactly happens to us while we read. Several authors from this text will be included as a means to ground an understanding of the psychological and abstract perspective of our relationship to reading.

The *Palgrave Handbook* presents authors like Brooke Miller, who try to frame our understanding of affectual responses to literature in slightly less psychological terms, using, instead, terms like 'moments of intensity' to pinpoint the movement that occurs within us as we read. Other authors, like Dana LaCourse Munteanu, look instead for the psychological reasoning

within our brain that causes us to react while reading. These are but two examples of authors who are trying to understand and define how exactly we are affected by texts within the act of reading. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that affect studies should not be dismissed as a passé study or academic fad that has come and gone, it has remained critically present since its formal inception. Authors like Miller and Munteanu are but a few scholars, amongst many, whose perspectives on affect will serve to establish a foundation for understanding the emergence and concerns surrounding the rise of affect theory.

However, the question remains of why one should apply this psychological term to the study of reading? What does it reveal to us beyond simply understanding the bodily function of reading? One answer to this: it aids us in understanding not only *how* texts affect us, but *why* that changes our entire relationship to reading. One need simply to be moved, somehow, by a text or even simply by a moment in a text to be influenced by it. It is akin to any experience where our very being is altered, even slightly, by an instance that imprints itself upon us. As alluded to before, who we are before we read is not the same person as who we are when we finish reading. Again, this thesis claims that moments of affect are the central means by which texts can change us. This understanding of the importance placed upon affect within texts is revealed through a historical reflection on the matter.

The studying of reading, as act, is often perceived in a historical chronology following the swells of a society's interest in reading. The question of what we are reading arose with as much importance as how much we are reading. From monastic to scholastic, aloud to silent, Karin Littau's book, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies and Bibliomania*, traces the pinpoints in which the recorded history of reading shifted—crashing upon itself and reforming like the ruckus of the ocean waves. Eventually, we come upon the shore of the novel and its birth into this history. Littau notes that it was the “object of widespread critique from the mid-eighteenth century onwards,” revealing to us that, indeed, what a person read was of great importance (20). The birth of the novel, therefore, was not an entirely celebrated occasion.

In fact, as Littau notes, our perception of the novel and the act of reading itself was under constant scrutiny, continuously changing upon the whims of humankind's next generation. By the twentieth century, when formal critical theories were further taking shape alongside our reception of texts, theorist C.S Lewis created a distinct binary model of the two most prominent types of readers—the few, and the many. The many are those who are considered to ‘use’ texts for, say, their own pleasure or means of entertainment. On the other hand, the few are those actively engaged with both the text itself and the intentionality of the author. Lewis states: “A work of art can be either ‘received’ or ‘used’. When we ‘receive’ it we exert our senses and imagination and various other powers according to a pattern

invented by the artist. When we ‘use’ it we treat it as assistance for our own activities” (Lewis 32). This idea of the level of the engagement by the part of the reader is explored further in his book *An Experiment in Criticism* published in 1961. Though he is not often included amongst the list of notable theorists who shaped what we now know as Reader-Response theory, his ideas on the interaction between reader and text do somewhat coincide with how the theory pays much attention to the idea of this interaction. Perhaps more notable, however, is that Lewis’ critique of readership is one that has persisted throughout history, as Littau points out, it exemplifies a critique that was beginning to fester and solidify.

It was within the twentieth century that the terms of highbrow, lowbrow, and even middlebrow were coined and began to circulate. It did not take long for C.S Lewis’ definition of the few and the many to become replaced by such terms as highbrow and lowbrow, and, even more recently, the capital and lowercase L of literature. In other words, the hierarchy of reading was not only beginning to spread amongst genres, like scholarly or fiction texts, but within them as well. Today, when one walks into a bookstore there is an assortment of texts catalogued under fiction, some considered Literature, and others merely literature. Thus, what someone reads can often be lumped in with how they read—molded together into a kind of Frankenstein’s Monster that serves to identify where one falls upon the hierarchy of readership.

Focusing on affect serves as a means to dispel this notion that has condemned readers to a hierarchy of reading. In other words, it lends itself as a means to challenge certain classifications of reading. Highbrow and lowbrow literature are terms that exist to segment texts and their genres based upon perceptions that ultimately culminate in the assumption or claim of a text's value. By juxtaposing affect into the classist hierarchy of both a reader and the text, the value of a text—all texts—shifts away from the defining of it by a certain, perhaps more academically elite, readership and focuses instead on the worth of a text being created through the individual interaction of text and reader. This idea places Affect Theory and Reader-Response Theory in conversation with each other to illuminate the act of reading as something worthwhile in all experiences of reading, not just with certain ones.

The ideas behind Reader-Response theory are as vital to understanding this claim as those posed by Affect Theory. Like Affect Theory, Reader-Response can be broken down into subsections that work to try to understand the different ways in which readers create texts. Theorist Stanley Fish is considered one of the most prominent contributors to the theory due to his extensive defining of Reader-Response. In his essay, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics", Fish posits the idea that "the reader is usually forgotten or ignored" when analyzing texts in a retrospective glance (Fish 1). He tries to alter this focus upon meaning to instead dwell upon the very act of reading, and how that engagement helps create the text. Fish's affective

stylistics is a core idea that will be further delved into as a means to support the claim of just how important this interaction is as a means to break the hierarchy of reading.

Another theorist who lends his thoughts to the ideas of Reader-Response theory is the German literary scholar Wolfgang Iser. In his essay, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach", Iser posits the claim that "The convergence of the text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader" (Iser 1). Iser's idea of convergence is echoed through Brooke Miller's idea of describing affect in terms of moments of intensity. This reveals how concepts of the reader and text coming together are prevalent and indeed merge between the two theories. In their similarity, both Reader-Response and Affect Theory work to identify the phantasmal elements of texts that allow them to inspire us and reveal to us just how powerful the act of reading is.

With this understanding in mind, this thesis will attempt to explore precisely how affect aids in the creation of a text, as well as how the affectual responses to a text derived from an individual reader are highly important factors to the regard of a text's worth. It will also argue that the beauty and power of texts come from the various ways in which texts can influence us through affect, regardless of how they may be judged by factors such as lowbrow or highbrow, worthwhile meaning, or the constitution of

craft, to name a few. It will not, however, rely solely on theoretical frameworks to posit this claim. Intertwined throughout the chapters of this thesis will be actual responses to a survey conducted in accordance with this study. The 'Reading Habits Questionnaire' was posted publicly online for a random sample of people to answer questions regarding their personal relationship to reading. These questions and answers will be explored in depth alongside the central ideas of each chapter¹. This survey was conducted in order to provide people's real experiences as a means to further illuminate ideas posited by the many theorists throughout this work.

I argue that the beauty and power of texts comes from the various ways in which texts can influence us through affect, regardless of how they may be judged. By regarding affect as the means by which texts are created, this claim can justify the notion that all texts, through affect, are equally worthwhile, while simultaneously breaking the class defined hierarchy of meaningful texts.

¹ The entirety of the questions and answers of the questionnaire will be provided in the appendix.

Chapter One: The Creation of a Text through Affect

I. How a text is able to change

The study of the act of reading under the parameters of affectual studies closely reveals to us the nuances that allow reading to have an influence over us. Generally, affect is the means by which one is emotionally moved. Affect and the study of affect, are, of course, not limited to the scope of literary texts, as they are inextricably bound to a state of being that constantly arises within us. Many scholars within *The Palgrave Handbook of Affect Studies and Textual Criticism* have taken it upon themselves to research how this state of being arises when we are engaged within the act of reading. Some rely on psychological determinants to define their observations, while others allow for a more abstract understanding of the concept. Both will be considered in this investigation of affect to clarify first how a text is able to change, and second what aspects within texts allow this change to happen.

Before diving into the various definitions of affect's influence offered by the authors within the *Palgrave Handbook*, it may be beneficial to first look at one of the earliest observations on the importance of affect's ability to shape a text and the reader's experience. For this, "Affective Stylistics", written by theorist Stanley Fish, should be turned to. This theory gained considerable traction in the 1960's, allowing for literary critics to better understand the act of reading and thus the development of a text as one akin to the convergence of multiple planes opposed to a singular plane consistent upon itself, thus being multifaceted and complex rather than a single surface. In other words, the reader became a vital factor in the overall creation of a text, which thus leads to the idea of a text as a malleable object to be interacted with, opposed to acted upon.

These ideas of the malleability of a text were greatly impelled by many of Stanley Fish's concepts of the role of the reader. In Fish's "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" he argues, through the breakdown of sentences from certain textual examples, the importance of the very act of sifting through each and every word of a sentence to constitute meaning. He states how these sentences, these texts, are "no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an event, something that happens to, and with the participation of, the reader" (Fish 4). Fish concludes his ideas with the declaration that this very act of developing meaning is the very meaning itself. It is not a conclusive derivation of a text, but rather the means by which we are actively creating and mulling over the text.

Fish's claim has influenced the field of Reader Response theory and literary criticism by spotlighting the vital importance of a reader's role in the creation of meaning and the text contrasting the previous hold of New Criticism. What will be focused on more minutely is his claim of the act of reading as an "event" created by the "participation," or as theorist Wolfgang Iser would say, the "convergence" between text and reader. Reading is an experience that does not result in the conclusion of a text or the excavation of a meaning, rather it is an experience in which the reader's thoughts are being projected into the text which simultaneously serves as an interlocutor back unto the reader. To further understand this claim posited by Stanley Fish, we now turn to the various authors of the *Palgrave Handbook* to further flesh out how it is a text is able to change.

The idea that affect is the means by which a text transforms from object to experience can be quite difficult to grasp. As stated, some authors rely on psychological terms to define this concept, while others turn to more abstract terms to create an understanding of the concept. Theorist Brooke Miller is one who defines affect as something almost indeterminable, coining these instances as "moments of intensity" (Miller 116). Miller notes, "The discursive body is credited with significance but not sensation. Affect either straddles or exists in the interstices of the material and the mental, of consciousness and world" (Miller 117). What she is exploring here in her article "Affect Studies and Cognitive Approaches to Literature", found in the

Palgrave Handbook, is the difficulty that arises when trying to pinpoint the exact occurrence of affect.

It is beneficial to take a look at Miller's particular understanding of affect, as her definition helps create a general perception of what affect is. She coins the term "moments of intensity" as a means to generalize the various emotions and moments that occur when we are affected by reading. Her expansion on what she means when she states "moments of intensity" is as follows:

Practitioners of Affect Studies routinely use a vocabulary that reflects a rejection of the scientism they find troubled by . . . That lexicon includes notions that derived from post-modern aesthetic and phenomenological discourses, such as bloom-spaces, shimmers, intensities, the virtual, flights, worldings, bodyings, stretchings, felt quality, refrains, schismogenetic, glistroid, territorialization, and pedagogic encounters. (Miller 116)

The various descriptions of these "moments of intensity" reveal how affect arises in a variety of forms. In other words, we, as readers, are not always affected in the same way or by the same thing within a text. Thus, what feels like a "shimmer" to one individual may be completely overturned by another. What Miller notes in this passage is how some theorists turn towards abstract definitions of being affected by a text in order to better capture, if only by circumscribing, the somewhat elusive affect in texts. The inability to exactly

pinpoint affect or “moments of intensity” helps to reinforce the idea posited by Fish concerning the malleability of the creation of a text. If he is stating that texts are created while we read, then Miller continues this claim by stating that it is the elusive arising of affect that spurs us to regard a text in a certain way.

The idea posited here that it is affect that influences our creation of a text is based on the concept that affect, or how we are moved by texts, is based heavily on the individual reader. Miller, Iser, and even Fish note how there is a meeting of the reader and text. This can be understood as the text awakening a particularity within the reader that thus produces a kind of reaction or affect. Thus, the text itself goes beyond the idea of it simply being a mere object, and instead is a consistently malleable entity that extends beyond the form it may be bound in. It can instead be regarded as an object that changes along with the reader. This concept of a text as an entity is further explored by theorist Victor Bell. In his exploration of the act of reading, *Lost in a Book*, Bell reaches this idea as explained here:

The book is perceived differently by every reader . . . when the book is being read *it is a subjective psychological phenomenon* based on impressions which the reader’s psychological organism to undergo some change (through illness, aging, etc.) the same book would seem very different to him. Therefore, the book in itself, as a phenomenon independent of the viewer, is an unknown entity. (Original emphasis, Bell 116)

A text is able to change because we are able to change. Reader Response theory does not wholly look at the text as an object in and of itself. Rather, most theorists understand the text as something whose creation is aided by the influence of the reader. And as Victor Bell states, the influence of the reader is as malleable as the text. Miller adheres to this understanding of the indefinable aspect of affect. It is not something definite, and instead is constantly changing. Therefore, a text can change between individuals as much as it can change within the individual.

Unlike Miller, Victor Bell examines the more psychological aspect of the individual's relationship with the text. This does not mean, however, that there is only an either-or perspective when viewing how affect helps shape the text. In fact, both Miller and Bell's understanding of the phenomenological aspect of reading can be understood together. Bell creates the foundation by saying we, as individuals, are subject to change, while Miller further emphasizes this idea by stating that what makes us individuals is also what makes us react to certain parts of a text differently.

Ideas posited by both Miller and Bell reveal that the occurrence of affect is dependent on the reader and is spurred by an aspect of the text. This explanation can be further broken down to clarify the elusive affect. However, it is not something that exists in a kind of phantasmagoric existence. Simply stated, affect is indeed a sensation. Sensations, like emotions, are the immediate bodily reactions that occur due to the result of a stimulus. In the *Palgrave Handbook*, Jeff Pruchnic explores this kind of

indeterminacy of affect as it “must be viewed as independent of, and in an important sense prior to ideology—that is, prior to intentions, meanings, reasons, and beliefs—because they are a signifying, autonomic processes that take place below the threshold of conscious awareness and meaning” (Pruchnic 372). Thus, to be affected by something is for one’s body to be overcome by the immediacy of sensation.

This ability of affect, to enter and change us, is not an exclusive one. In the case of the act of reading, affect is a result of some kind of connection the reader makes with a text. Some theorists who study the convergence of affect and literature have researched certain aspects of texts that can cause us to react to, for example, a book in a similar manner that we do with people. Many of these explanations do rely heavily on the psychological study of how we engage with both people and objects. Thus, the *Palgrave Handbook* will be turned to once again in order to delve into the second idea of what aspects within texts allow a text to enter and thus change us.

II. The Aspects of a Text that Spur Affect

Many theorists share the idea that a text’s ability to construct a narrative plays on our cognitive reactions and thus allows us to understand a text as though it were a person. This idea is a central factor to author Dana LaCourse Munteanu in her study of affect and narrative in her piece “Empathy and Love: Types of Textuality and Degrees of Affectivity”, which has been included in the *Palgrave Handbook*, as she claims empathy to be a link between the fictional and real person. In her essay, she posits that our

ability to be affected by texts often occurs because the narrative aspects of texts create a kind of human experience. In her own words she states:

Studies in neuroscience and evolutionary psychology have shown that our brain consistently longs for coherent narratives, which connect certain situations to affective states...we tend to feel more empathetic concern for people whom we know well than we do for strangers, in part because we better reconstruct imaginatively the states of the familiar person . . . we feel for fictional characters not *in spite of* [them] not being real but *because* [they] could be real. (LaCourse Munteanu 327-330)

What is interesting to note from her exploration is the idea that fictional characters can be categorized on a spectrum of an individual's relations. In other words, an individual may hold more emotions for the character of a text they are reading than that of, say, a co-worker or even a stranger online whose existence is real yet diminished to less-than-real in the form of an online text. This last example can be compared to Munteanu's fictional character and can explain how a text is indeed a form of a person and only changes based on how much we know of that person. Because texts often reveal to us the character's narrative, their history, struggles, and thoughts, we can fashion them in a manner similar to ourselves and those we know in reality. Such narrative information may and is often missing from, say, anonymous commenters on an online thread. Thus, both are human in the form of text and not actual physicality, yet only one has a narrative, and the

other an actual body. It is the one with a narrative that Munteanu claims we would be more likely to empathize and react to. With information of a fictional character's life and thoughts, our minds are more fertile and welcoming to an onslaught of emotion. In other words, it is easier for us, then, to be affected by that which *seems* the more human through the narrative context.

Munteanu is not the only author who believes empathy is a bridge for the reader to enter the space of the text. While she states that our tendency to be affected by texts arises from a kind of understanding of the fictional character in the same sense of a real person, another author suggests that we can create an even greater connection by becoming the characters. In his essay included in the *Palgrave Handbook*, "Empathy's Neglected Cousin: How Narratives Shape our Sympathy", Howard Sklar makes the claim that "Empathy for a fictional character essentially places readers inside the experience—and particularly the emotional experience—of that character" (Sklar 459). Sklar then goes on to define the multitude of ways that the reader can inhabit the mind of the character, all of which rely on the relation of a shared emotion, or "seeing from the perspective of the character" beyond simply empathizing with their plights (459). Though Sklar and Munteanu both posit the idea that we can feel for a text through empathizing with the characters within, Sklar believes entering the character and sharing their plights creates a "*diminished distance* between reader and character—unlike narrative sympathy, which ultimately requires greater distance" (Sklar

459). Ultimately, empathy is a means by which we can enter a text and can become affected by the events that take place within. This relates back to the concepts asserted by Fish on how we create texts differently. If two readers read the same book, with one reader relating deeply to a character and the other is instead sympathizing with them, the context of the same work can be interpreted differently.

An appeal to empathy and sympathy are not the only means by which we react to texts. What is important to note from them is the idea that as individuals, and humans as a whole, we are vulnerable to certain narratives. In other words, our emotional weak points are often triggered by certain “story structures,” as narratology theorist Claudia Breger points out. In her essay published in the *Palgrave Handbook, “Affect and Narratology”*, she identifies the “heroic, romantic, and sacrificial” as three story structures that have consistently appeared over time. She explains how they tug on our emotional senses as such, “the romantic plot is fueled by the “integration of sexual and attachment systems” and the “heroic structure” by the “basic emotion” of “pride”” (Breger 239). What needs to be understood from Breger’s analysis is the concept that stories have a kind of structure that appeals to a variety of our emotions. Though the individual’s life may not be rife with dramatic adventure or illustrious infatuation, the common human has a tendency to desire these narratives. It can perhaps be stated that through this desire that we are able to insert ourselves into a text’s characters or to simply root for their plight. If this is the case, then a reader

does not need to simply see themselves as the character or care for the character, their emotional attachment could very well lie in the desire for the character's way of life, or aesthetic.

It must be noted that all the examples herein rely on the basis of a character, or textual persona. These were the examples posited and analyzed by the several theorists pulled from the *Palgrave Handbook*. However, it should not be assumed that texts can only appeal to us in the form of characters. What should instead be noted is how certain instances in a text can appear as an independent variable, while the emotions emitted through connecting with a text are dependent variables. Again, the text alone does not change, however, when acted upon through the reader, the text begins to alter based upon the reader's individual emotions. Therefore, while Breger, Munteanu, and Sklar posit the idea of a character as the dependent variable, it may instead be something like setting or word choice. These "moments of intensity" appear as dependent variables because they occur on the intricate basis of the reader, often times quite unbeknownst to them. Thus, one should not assume the human reader only relates to the human or personified character. Rather, the human relates to an experience, and an experience can be represented in a text in a myriad of forms.

III. Intention, and the Text as an Abstract Space

One need not reach far to understand the ideas posed by those authors of the *Palgrave Handbook* who work to define affect by means of a psychological analysis of the human reader and the human within a text. The

text, however, can also be understood as a conduit for emotional appeal in a more abstract sense. In other words, a text is not only a surface reflecting affect unto the reader, as it has thus far been described, it can also work to pull the reader into the space of the text. In this understanding, the reader does not step into the shoes of a character through empathetic or sympathetic means, rather, the reader enters the space of a text as themselves.

What this means in regard to Affect and Reader Response theory is that the reader can relate the experience of reading not unto another experience, but remember and enter the experience of reading in and of itself. This may be best exemplified through a literary analysis of a few example texts examined by the parameters posited thus far. What is being claimed here is that the form of a text, as either a reflection or an entrance, can be created by the intention of the author. Thus far, the author of texts has been rather left out of the conversation. The reasoning of this stems from a core belief in Reader Response that focuses on the relation of text and reader opposed to text and author. This does not mean these relationships are mutually exclusive. The intention of the author is what helps create the original form of a text, but it is also one that is constantly shifting based upon the reader. Despite its malleability, the text's original flesh and blood stays the same. Readers don't necessarily rewrite texts, rather they reimagine or interpret them differently. This is important in and of itself, but when the author shapes the text to purposely try to extract a kind of affectual response from

the reader, then the text can take on a shape that allows readers to place themselves inside it. It is still affect, but it is a kind of affect that is based within intention and calls the reader to enter the space rather than watch from a dislocated state. Thus, the distance between text and reader is being further diminished. Texts like these are as important as any other, and they are exemplified here in an attempt to illustrate the variety of affect's appearance.

The first example text we can observe is *The Book of the City of Ladies* written by Christine de Pizan and published around 1405. To briefly summarize, the book serves as an argument against the claims by men at the time that women are creatures that exist simply to tempt men away from God. Pizan creates a semi-autobiographical stance when opening her book by retelling her mental battle of these claims against women which leaves her in a "stupor" (Pizan 394). The strictly autobiographical retelling begins to shift as she recreates her conscious battle against the claims by representing her thoughts as spiritual beings. Three women, namely Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, appear before her as rational entities and thus begin to enlighten her of her folly of even considering the claims made by men. The bulk of the book continues with descriptions of many famous women of the past, and how their actions and virtues disclaim the argument against women.

The end of the book returns to Pizan's perspective as she claims that now that the female reader has finally concluded the book, she has entered the City of Ladies.

My most honorable ladies, may God be praised, for now our City is entirely finished and completed, where all of you who love glory, virtue, and praise may be lodged in great honor, ladies from the past as well as from the present and the future, for it has been built and established for every honorable lady. (Pizan 396)

As a female reader, upon completion of the text, you, too, have entered this "refuge," free from the accusations of men that exist in the physical, non-textual world (396). The book, and all its teachings, exist not just as a physical object, but as an abstract place within the reader's memories. Thus, *The Book of the City of Ladies* becomes a textual refuge for female readers by reformulating the text's entity as the *City* through the women reader's personal experience with the text. This exemplifies the importance of affect as one of the most central aspects of texts as the *City* is a metaphysical space created not by meaning or historical retelling, but by the inclusion of the woman reader into this textual space. She reads *The Book of the City of Ladies* not simply to admire women of the past, but as Pizan states, the readers themselves, through the act of reading, become a part of the text. The text's ultimate goal is not to synthesize meaning, but to include the reader into the creation of the text through the

act of reading, and ultimately to be affected through influence and inspiration. Thus, these readers, and all the readers that engage and judge the text, have helped and continue to help create the text of *The Book of the City of Ladies*.²

The metaphysical existence of textual spaces like the *City* come into fruition through an affectual response to the text. In other words, affect is the bridge in which the meaning of the text is created, as well as the binding of the interaction between reader and text. An affectual theorist by the name of Richard C. Sha comments on this concept of the creation of a space through affect originally posited by theorist Brian Massumi, “But what is bodily affective autonomy, and why should we want it? Massumi writes: ‘Actually existing, structured things live in and through that which escapes them. Their autonomy is the autonomy of affect’. In this view, autonomy is associated with what escapes bodies” (Sha 261). Affectual autonomy is defined here as an idea in which much of what creates our own existence comes from what affects us, how we react or are moved by various things. This statement highlights the importance of affect, as both Massumi and Sha attempt to define affect as a determinant of what shapes our individual experience.

² This examination of *The Book of the City of Ladies* also reveals the historical presence of affect. Regardless of the framework of the theory, Pizan intended this work to emotionally affect her female audience by easing their doubts and concerns regarding the accusations against them. Thus, the book was deemed of value and successful in nature on the basis of the affectual responses garnered by women. With this understanding, we can see how the regard of affect has remained present throughout our history of our relationship with texts. What has changed through history is instead our own regard of affectual response, not the presence of affect.

Injecting this value of affect into texts thereby allows us to better understand how texts are created by the individual. If indeed affect creates us, it also, then, creates the text. The creation of a text begins to stir by simply being read, in which the feelings that arise from the interaction with a text that determine how the existence of that text is created. Again, as an example, a reader may read *The Book of the City of Ladies* and be utterly moved by Pizan's writing, thus truly entering the *City*. Another reader, however, may read it and be utterly disgusted with the text, thereby possibly regarding it as worthless, which, too, creates the *City* in a different manner than the former reader. Dependent on how a text affects a reader, it alters and exists in a particular manner according to the reader. It is thus created partially, in this way, by the reader. Therefore, the existence of a text is created simultaneously through our interaction with it. Both the individual experience of the text and reader is being created or "lived in and through," instantaneously, by this interaction.

The second text that will be examined is Søren Kierkegaard's *Either-Or*. Kierkegaard was a Danish philosopher living in the nineteenth century and writing prolifically in what is contemporarily categorized as the philosophical branch of existentialism. Whether writing under his own name or that of an alias, which he often did, Kierkegaard's writing worked to push the reader to reflect upon themselves.

The structure and intention of *Either-Or* is an excellent example of a text placing emotional potholes for its readers to fall into. *Either-Or* has,

essentially, four different authors. The two main segments of the book are a collection of pieces written by unknown author “A,” and Judge Vilhelm, “B.” A’s work explores the indulgence of pleasures, which includes segments from “The Seducer’s Diary” which is noted as possibly being from a separate author. B’s work is a collection of letters that respond directly to A, commenting on how his perception of things like love and marriage are immoral. A represents the aesthete (the author of the diary being a part of the aesthete’s classification), B the moral, and the entirety of these works are introduced by Victor Eremita who stumbles upon A and B’s writings. Indeed all of these “authors” are Kierkegaard’s aliases, but Victor Eremita works as a character who tries to trick the reader by claiming he found the letters, and tries to place the idea in the reader that there may be a possibility that both writings were done by the same person. “I am quite aware of all that can be objected to in this view, that it is unhistorical, improbably, preposterous that one person should be the author of both parts, notwithstanding the reader might well fall for the conceit that once you have said A you must also say B” (Kierkegaard 36). As we now know, this was the hurdle the reader was to overcome. Through reading the various writings, they were to reflect upon the idea introduced by Eremita that one person can have these dual and even conflicting ideologies within them. This was the intention the author had wanted.

The reader can read the experiences of the aesthete and the judge and indeed “walk in their shoes.” However, Kierkegaard intended the reader to

learn from the experience of reading and determine if the writings were contained within a singular individual, and then to apply that same observation unto themselves. If the reader is affected by the experiences of the text, whether that be through the perceptions of A or B, or even from some other aspect within the text, then that affect results in what is called introspection. An author's intention can work to create certain affectual responses in the reader that result in introspection. The ideas presented by Brooke and other theorists within the *Palgrave Handbook* look to understand how affect can happen at *random*. Texts like Kierkegaard's *Either-Or* reveal to us how affect can also be purposely placed for the reader to trip upon. This does not mean the kind of affectual response is different. Indeed, a reader may find themselves connecting with the events of "The Seducer's Diary" through an empathetic or sympathetic mean, for example.

Intention can also be understood as the "meaning" of a text. Traditionally, literary studies often call for the reader to search for a "meaning," or message entwined within the piece for the reader to decode. When this form of literary analysis is taught, it often asks the reader to find the meaning or moral of a story and then apply it to themselves—to introspect. This form of literary analysis is based upon the idea that a text is equal to the message it is trying to exhibit. However, if an author does not intend a meaning to be extracted, but rather an experience to be had through reading, then a reader is able to, again, enter the text through the emotional bridge of affect, rather than distantly seek only to extract a meaning. When we observe a text by

the possibility of its being able to affect the reader as opposed to it being able to teach the reader, then a different and deeper understanding of our relationships with texts can be understood and, even, appreciated. This will be further explored in the next chapter.

Before that, however, it would be beneficial to turn to the results of the Reading Habits Questionnaire mentioned earlier. The questions and answers presented reflect how contemporary readers ruminate on their own reading experiences. Their responses provide an interesting glimpse into how affect can be identified from an individual's experience without some aspect of intention on the reader's part. In other words, affectual responses to reading are natural and can be examined through the means explored in this chapter.

IV. Reading Habits Questionnaire

Answers to questions 13 and 15 were chosen as they pertain to readers reflecting on how and why certain experiences with reading impacted them. Some texts affect us more than others, obviously, and for the sake of this study these questions were formulated for readers to try and recall what about reading resonated with them. Not all answers to these questions are exemplified below. Answers to all the questions will be available to view in the appendix. These answers were chosen because of the depth and complexity by which they were described. A brief analysis will be provided after the answers to the questions, though not all answers will be subject to

analysis. Each number is a different reader, which includes the numbers for Q15 as well. For example, number one of Q13 is not the same reader a number one of Q15. There is also no particular order to the readers presented.

Question #13: What is your most memorable experience with reading?

- 1. I like reading in the summer, because it gives me a good feeling about the life I'm living. In a lot of coming-of-age novels such as "Catcher in the Rye," I found that I could relate to the main character and I stopped feeling like I was the only one who was experiencing the wildest emotions. Sometimes, when I'm sad, it's reassuring to read a book where the main character is feeling a lot of emotional pressure as well. I don't really know my identity or what I'm doing half of the time, and reading helps me realize that I'm not alone in my path to self-discovery.**

This reader's experience with *Catcher in the Rye* relates specifically to a text's appeal to sympathy or empathy. Whether the reader sympathizes with the main character, or sees the main character as themselves, affect reveals itself as a connection between reader and character. Because the reader is unsure of their identity, we can also see how reading leads to introspection. The reader relates to the character, and from that relation they can learn something about their own identity. Thus, the reader is affected by the text which ultimately reveals the reader to themselves, perhaps even altering their perception of their own identity.

- 2. I grew up reading Dr. Seuss a lot, and when I was in high school, I did a project where I researched his perspective and strategies as a great American author (I first had to present my teacher with an argument that he in fact qualified as a**

great American author). As I started researching, I realized that so many of the books I loved from when I was a child were rich with social commentary, and that he had started in political cartoon making, which explains why he has messages that are anti-fascist, pro-environment, anti-war, etc. I remember re-reading the book I loved from when I was little and being completely blown away to have a new layer of understanding to what I was reading. That really made me rethink the way I thought about messaging and context, and how they connect to reading/writing. It blew me away- and when I presented it to my classmates, it kind of blew them away, too, which is a great vivid memory in my life.

While Kierkegaard, for example, wanted his readers to take the experience of the text and use it to reflect upon themselves, this reader notes how Dr. Seuss intended to influence his readers to think about the world around them. Both examples showcase how an author's intended experience of the text is to ultimately impact the reader's relationship and understanding of the world around them.

3. I remember finishing, in the fourth grade, the last Harry Potter book at my grandmother's house. I'd read the previous six the year before, so entranced the world around me faded away (which never happened before, and hasn't since.) In those days, I tended to read ahead if a certain section of a book was boring, so I'd already read said ending a couple of times. Still, there was a certain amount I was required to read each week, and I felt compelled to give the ending a "proper reading." This one had been...tedious, to say the least. Too long, with protagonists too old and complex to be relatable to me anymore. Thus, by the time I finished this last book, there wasn't much more to feel than relief that I could do something more interesting now.

Many readers who responded to the questionnaire reflect on how J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series was memorable to them in some manner or other. Unlike many of the other responses, this reader notes how they couldn't relate to the text, therefore the reading experience was

unenjoyable. This instance highlights how “moments of intensity” reveal themselves in many forms. Some readers rely on their relation to characters to decide their enjoyment of a text. Other readers, like the one who read to enter the space of the text, exemplify a need to forget themselves and be in an unfamiliar space, rather than see themselves in a familiar manner.

- 4. My most memorable experience with reading was when I was around 8 years old. My parents were still going through a brutal divorce and it was beginning to take a toll on me. At one point it got so bad I had to start going to therapy in order to make sure I was coping with the stressful situation. This continued for many years and the only thing that would make me feel better is reading. I was able to take myself out of my terrible world that was slowly falling apart and go into one full of magic and wonder and happiness. In having that it helped me get through one of the most difficult times in my life and allowed me to find a glimmer of happiness in a very dark time.**
- 5. Being in 4th grade and my teacher Mr. Lopez doing out loud reading and he was reading Number the Stars by Lois Lowry. I remember him being so into the story and so much excitement or drama to the book, bringing it to life. I was so interested I asked to borrow the book, because I wanted to finish it on my own which I did. I loved the book so much still to this day as I am a sophomore in college its still my favorite book and still have the copy I bought in fourth grade.**

For this reader, the experience of the text came from the manner of an oral reading. Examples like these must also be noted as having affectual responses as the reader is moved by the way in which their teacher brings the text “to life.” For some readers, they are affected by a text in a means that allows them to enter it. For others, the experience of entering a text may come from the text moving out of its object form and

surrounding the reader. Either instance relates to the idea of a text being more than an object, and instead is an experience.

Question #15: Have you ever had an experience with reading that affected you emotionally?

- 1. Yes, it happens a lot more than I care to admit. For example, one book that resonates with me to this day is "Perks of Being a Wallflower" because like the main character, I have trouble fitting in and making friends. I'm usually a bystander in almost everything, and I usually hear things that go on but never really know what's going on. I think if the book is written well, it will stay with me for a long time.**

Many readers responded to memorable experiences of reading that have to do with their relation to a text in some manner. Again, for this reader, that comes from better understanding themselves by seeing themselves in the text.

- 2. Nothing quite of an outburst. I think it's because of the way in which schools "forced" reading upon you and made the process uninteresting. That being said, a few plot twists in novels have left me very surprised.**

This experience is similar to the reader who reflected on their teacher's reading of *Number the Stars* as it is also one in a school setting. Mentioned earlier in this chapter, texts are often introduced to readers as objects to be dissected. This manner of "reading" broke any instance of possible affect for the reader. It is not wrong for a reader to search for meaning or experience that may have been the author's intention, however, it is the manner by how that intention is found that disrupts that intention being met. The reader who

analyzed Dr. Seuss found intention on their own instead of it being forced upon them like this reader. The discovery of intention is often based in our link to a text through a means like affect. However, a reader may not be able to be affected by a text if they are not given the chance to experience it.

- 3. Yes, there have been a few books regarding certain human experiences that have made me cry and feel like I could almost see and feel the emotion the character was feeling**
- 4. The characters in the Thomas Harris novels felt so real to me. I really ended up connecting with them throughout the series. Even Hannibal Lecter, oddly enough**
- 5. I read certain books when I want a good cry. I was not able to finish “milk and honey” because it resonated with me and I was not ready to open that part of my life back up.**

These last three experiences presented here explore how the readers experience a text through empathy or sympathy. This is a common means by how we can be affected by a text, revealing how affect can lead to introspection. By asking ourselves why we resonate with characters in texts, we can thus learn something about ourselves. We know that texts have the ability to move us, we only need ask ourselves why. By performing this act of introspection, our perception of ourselves and even the world around us can shift momentarily.

Chapter Two: The Rise and Shift of our Regard of Affect

I. A Brief History: From Quantity to Quality

As was derived from the explorations in the last chapter, our affectual responses to reading occur from a variety of possibilities that allow texts to ultimately enter and influence us. Whether our responses arise from, but are not limited to, places of empathy or lack thereof, psychologists and literary theorists alike have both come to similar assumptions that fictional narratives move us in ways similar to if we had experienced them for ourselves. In this investigation of the relationship between affect and reading, what must be noted next is how we, as readers and observers of readers, deem or regard this affect. Before researchers began to investigate how and where affect comes from, it has always been understood that, obviously, reading oftentimes urges an emotional response. Simply put, reading can be a mental and physical stimulus. This observation is by no means new or revolutionary, as it was enough to even spur the sixteenth century writer Miguel de Cervantes to explore the overwhelming influence of reading through his famous character Don Quixote. Exaggerated as the story

may be, some of the earliest critics of the affect of reading, its sentimental attributes, were not too far off from diagnosing readers as suffering from a similar overconsumption that plagued the hopeful hero.

Theorist Karin Littau has traced critical commentary of reading in her book *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies and Bibliomania*. In it she presents how, as reading materials grew in accessibility through the ages, people start to judge others by their reading habits. Littau notes that even thinkers like Immanuel Kant regarded certain people as “parchment headed” because they lost “the capacity to think for themselves” (Littau 4). From very early in the recordings of our judgments toward reading there seems to have been a negative stigma that revolved around people who read *too much*. Thus, the quantity by which we read was a variable that was used to judge people’s intelligence. Karin Littau notes how such an overindulgence in reading was considered on par to a kind of reading fever or epidemic,

The many diagnoses of the ‘epidemic rage for reading’ (J. H. Campe 1785, qtd. König 1977: 93) that swept across Europe . . . must be understood as responses to the increase in book production that occurred during this period. It is not just that more readers could read; in addition, readers read more, that is, they read more extensively, particularly with regard to secular literature, but they also read more intensively, in the sense that they read with unbridled passions (Littau 39)

This historical influx in the quantity in which people read was often regarded in a fashion similar to what Immanuel Kant suggested, that being the idea that the overconsumption of reading clogged one's mental facilities, thus debilitating them. What we read, and later, how that affected us, came after the initial parameters of quantity. As Littau touches upon here, how and what we read became the next factors of judgment that arose. In the timeline of understanding the relationship between our regard of affect, we can see how quantity was the variable that played a major role in people's judgments of the act of reading. However, it did not take long for the quality of what we read to become the defining factor of judgement towards one's act of reading, judgement that continues to persist today.

II. The Judgment of Quality: The Parameters of High-brow and Low-brow Reading

Today, there is a very prominent distinction regarding what people read and the 'quality' of it that constitutes its worth. The judgement of quality is derived from factors like craft or genre, to name a few, but ultimately is defined, as theorist Cecilia Farr states, by a "discriminating few" (Farr 82). Essentially, she suggests that qualities of texts are deemed good/bad or worthwhile/not worthwhile by a select few. These "few" who set the parameters will be expanded upon later. What is important to note here is how the judgment of quality expanded into the classification of high-brow and low-brow reading. This binary classification finds similarities with what C.S Lewis would define as "the few and the many" and how Roland Barthes

would categorize texts as “readerly or writerly.” Essentially, the split can be found between the affectual responses of pleasure/sensation and intellect and taking these two to be poles, incongruous with one another—rather than on a continuum.

If we return to Littau’s research, what she reveals is how the history of our relationship with reading exemplifies the emergence of a kind of requirement of purpose or higher meaning within texts.

Too much print and too much reading thus went hand in hand not only with feeding but with overfeeding those hungry for fiction. Regarded as a consumer product, to be read swiftly, then discarded, the novel—like the cinema later—provided short-lived bursts of entertainment, filled with cheap sentiments of thrills and, as William Wordsworth saw it, ‘deluges of idle and extravagant stories’ (1974[1800]:128). (Littau 5)

Novels, as the example goes, are deemed as not worthwhile as they were read for the sake of “entertainment” (Littau 5). Specifically, these means of entertainment are deemed as such because it is not meaning or deeper reflection that is garnished, but rather they ripple with “short-lived thrills” (Littau 5). Thrills we can deem as an aspect of affect, as it is an experience that causes us to be moved, or affected, by the experience. Therefore, these texts would be categorized as low-brow for resulting in bodily sensation and pleasure opposed to the development of intellect.

To further elaborate on this idea of sensation, it was not seen as a positive result of reading. In fact, it lay on the opposite spectrum of reading for intellect, and, quite importantly, bodily sensations of affect were never seen as possibilities that coincide with 'quality' or 'intellectual' reading.

Littau further exemplifies this distinction in the following passage:

The forgetting of oneself and becoming other than oneself while immersed in the world of fiction are not the only indicators of a pathology of reading. Uncontrollable weeping, inflamed passions, and irrational terror are some of the sensory stimuli one might experience during reading...Unlike serious book reading, which 'lifts the reader from sensation to intellect' (Hannah More 1799, qtd. De Bolla 1989: 269), novel reading, because it can 'produce effects almost without the intervention of will', as Samuel Johnson saw it (1969 [1750]:22), was feared to operate in reverse: gratifying the baser instincts by appealing less to the reader's faculty for sense-making than his or her sensations, thus reducing or eliminating the reader's capacity for action. (5)

Feelings of sensation were thus thought to be debilitating to one's ability to think, make sense of, or perhaps derive a deeper meaning from a text.

Apparently not only did one seek cheap thrills that would result in "inflamed passion" or other "sensory stimuli," but we can denote that the lack or negation of such feelings, if any at all, were a legitimate factor that constituted the worth or quality of a text (5). Affect was thus seen as a

determinant of said quality, as it lay akin to a “thrill.” Also, it was not entirely the appearance of meaning that created quality and worth in a text, but the ability to make sense of a text was the more valued interaction between text and reader. In other words, the reader must have control of the text. They must not be affected by it, but rather, a text must be crafted in a way and read in a way that ‘moments of intensity’ could not rise to inhibit the reader from the act of reading. This, in a sense, plays opposition to the many theories of Reader Response that propose that an equal interaction between reader and text is what constitutes the creation of a text as, again, Wolfgang Iser proposed. The relation between text and reader finds itself more akin to an image of a text as a resource in which the reader simply excavate the text, pining for geodes of intellect, and disregarding all else. It is a relationship that harbors no equality or individuality, as the reader does not create the text, but simply takes from it.

This statement could easily be challenged by questioning how sensation acts as a means to create the text. As discussed earlier, affect creates the text by the means of an experience. It is integral to the formulation of a text as the very act of reading itself is an experience in which we are moved or changed from. Regardless of if we read for intellect or pleasure, said ‘moments of intensity’ are the very bits of information or experience that, again, regardless of if it be information or pleasure, call out to us. In a way, we do indeed consume what comes from the text, but it is also that experience of consumption that compels us to then reflect or

regard the text in a certain way as we continue forth with reading. This continuous shifting of pleasure or 'sense-making' is the affectual response to the text that is thus created through our reflection of the experience back unto the text. As Cecilia Farr states in her book, *Reading Oprah*, "Reading is, again, something more. But this time it's something more than reflective or analytical. Good reading must also be empathetic and affective" (Farr 47). What constitutes the quality of a text should not necessarily be what can be taken from the text, but indeed should be defined by how we read—with receptivity.

III. Receptivity, or the Means to Break Down the Judgment of Reading

Receptivity, or openness to converse with and about a text, is a means by which we can get the most out of any text. If we determine books by terms such as high-brow or low-brow, then we are simply debilitating or barring our own ability to ingest the worth of a text. Again, this worth should not be defined by factors such as the search for meaning or possible intellect, but rather for interactions where readers help create the text. By being receptive, or walking into a text with an open mind, we are more prone to receive something or to be affected from and by the text. In her study on the reception and influence of Oprah Winfrey's televised Book Club, Cecilia Farr posits the idea that books that affect us can, through means of conversation, lead to the "sense-making" Littau observed as a requirement of high-brow or quality reading:

The Modern Library tells us *Ulysses* is the greatest book of the twentieth century, but even though there are more college graduates among us, Americans are reading *The Pilot's Wife*—because Oprah suggested it. “What,” gasps the critic of elite sensibilities, “is going on here?” ... reading is a social as well as solitary activity...While reading still engages the solitary self in reflection and self-examination, for many readers, inspired by the absorbing worlds of novels, it is also about encountering diversity and making connections, even, put simply, starting conversations. (Farr 91)

Farr notes that this type of low-brow fiction is “absorbing.” As noted previously, these “absorbing” reactions to a novel are most probably the affectual responses to certain ‘moments of intensity’ within the text. Exemplified here is not only the instances in which much of an individual’s experience with a text is an affectual one, but we can also see how texts that move us are capable of creating conversation. The development of conversation is extremely important to note because it is through conversation that readers not only create the text, by explaining and defining their experience of a text, but also exemplifies their ability to, and reception of, ‘sense-making’ in regards to the text. Whether it be through questions, analysis, or pure delight and remembrance of a certain moment in the text that was especially illuminous to the individual reader. The ability for a text to not only tap into the reader’s feelings of sensation, but also to urge

the reader to make sense of it, surely deems it worthy of the same regard as “high-brow” literature.

Now, one can simply say that feelings of sensation are present in high-brow texts. This is true, as the argument here is that there should not be such a classification based on meaning, but rather on affectual responses, because any text has the power to influence and affect readers, both in a sensual and thought-provoking manner. Low-brow literature, or that which is read for entertainment and pleasure, is deemed as belonging outside the intellectual or academic realm of relevance in part due to its lack of ability to provoke worthwhile thought or “sense-making.” However, as we can see through the example provided by Farr in her examination of Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club, “sense-making” is very much garnered through acts such as conversation. It should also be noted that this act of ‘intellect,’ especially for these kind of texts, happens not so much in academic settings, like through literary criticism or academic journals, but simply through spaces like book clubs or even on online forums. They may be unofficial settings, but the presence is certainly there and should not be ignored.

IV. A Return to the Classification of Judgement: An Argument Against the Exclusivity of Reading

It is important to again return to this development of the classification between high-brow and low-brow literature in order to undermine it and instead push towards the notion of affectual responses being an important

determinant of worth. Returning to the idea posited by Farr earlier on how high-brow literature is chosen, Farr completes her description as such, “So novels became lowbrow or highbrow, bad or good by way of traditional standards of aesthetic merit that, again, were aristocratic in origin and assumed the mediation of a discriminating few” (Farr 82). She thereby notes that texts belonging to a canon are considered worthwhile are those chosen by those of an “elite” or “aristocratic” class. If such a small and presumably low-diversity group is determining what is worth someone’s time to read, then it can be presumed that their factors of judgments again fall towards this popular notion of intellect over affect or a kind of affect that arises from select moments. If we return to Brooke Miller and the other authors from *The Palgrave Handbook*, we again understand how affect can be defined by many things. What then, however, would happen if those many things were shrunk down to a small size that is only applicable to a select few? This situation is the actual result of texts being defined as “good” or “bad” based upon a small group of people’s judgement. Ultimately, the classification of high-brow and low-brow literature *excludes* certain people’s affectual responses to texts and deems them as bad or not worthwhile.

Farr continues her argument against these classifications by turning to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu saying, “As French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu explains so convincingly in *Distinction*, his influential study of taste, our aesthetic choices are directly connected to our social background, yet we continue to divorce the social and the aesthetic and insist that taste is “a gift

of nature,” of sensitive spirit or high intellect” (Farr 86). Again, C.S Lewis and others like him retain the notion that reading for pleasure and entertainment is ultimately divided from reading for intellect. And as Littau discovered through her research, many people considered reading for intellect to be an act devoid or free from the overstimulation of sensation that is a result of pleasure reading. Thus, if we consider these ideologies and return to Farr and Bourdieu’s study of class, we can clearly see how high-brow literature chosen by “the few” ultimately lifts them above other people as intellectual beings of a better taste. Separating and classifying texts by worth through the attainment of intellect further emphasizes an overall idea of one’s own worth. If an individual reads a text for pleasure, he or she may feel a sense of guilt as it is not being read or possibly producing some sensation of intellect. Thus, the reader feels equal to the judgment of what they are reading—worthless.

One must work towards breaking down the use of hierarchic attacks on texts, because the judgments on texts are ultimately cast upon the reader themselves, for there is an inexorable tie forged when the reader chooses the text and this tie binds them together in a relation of self-reflexivity. In other words, they can feel equal to what it is they engage in. This may indeed pertain to any activity, but it is especially important to understand this in the case of the act of reading because the modern stigma toward reading has developed into something that praises those who search for intellect. By turning to affect, as explored in chapter one, we can see how its

importance aids in the defining and creation of a text as well as the development of the reader. In other words, the very act of reading, including any sensations derived from it, should be and can be considered of a higher value than the search for meaning or intellect as reading thus becomes a transformative act of experience opposed to a means to judge oneself or others by the accumulation of knowledge. The affectual response to reading focuses on the individual's personal experience with a text, any text, while reading for meaning focuses on garnishing information that places the reader on an objective spectrum of worth.

The importance of sensation and pleasure and how that constitutes a worthwhile experience of reading will be further explored in the next chapter. Specifically, craft and genre will be examined as factors that aid in the elimination or breaking down of classification that was defined in this chapter. The idea of a text's craft as a means to open up spaces of affectual response will hopefully aid in the overall understanding that every individual's unique experience with any text is one that should be considered worthwhile. Once again, it is beneficial to turn towards to Reading Habits Questionnaire to glean how the concepts discussed in this chapter reveal themselves through the individual reflections of readers.

V. Reading Habits Questionnaire

Answers to questions 1, 7, and 9 were chosen as they pertain to readers reflecting on their own categorization of texts. It is evident that some texts

affect us more than others and for the sake of this study these questions were formulated for readers to try and recall what about reading resonated with them. Not all answers to these questions are exemplified below. Answers to all the questions will be available to view in the appendix. These answers were chosen because of the depth and complexity by which they were described, as well as the similarity of a majority of answers. A brief analysis will be provided after the answers to the questions, though not all answers will be individually analyzed. Each number is a different reader, and the numbers do not correlate with the same reader through each question. For example, number one of Q1 is not the same reader a number one of Q7. There is also no particular order to the readers presented.

Question #1: How would you define the terms “casual” and “critical” reader?

- 1. Casual reader as being someone who reads in a stress free way and for enjoyment. Critical reader someone who paces themselves, reads to learn information and apply it as well as focuses in depth the purpose of the book.**
- 2. Casual reading is for enjoyment. Critical reading is for information.**
- 3. A casual reader is a person who either enjoys reading in their free time and does it for sheer amusement. Critical readers analyze and note particular events or take the minute details into account so that they can delve into the deeper meaning behind a work.**
- 4. A casual reader is one who reads for pleasure and doesn't dedicate strict amounts of time to reading. They also tend to not mind what the content is so long as it interests them. A critical reader is one who values the text of a book or**

otherwise and looks at it from a perspective meant to question, invoke, or imply something of value in or out of the reading

This question was asked in order to understand how readers viewed different modes of reading. These are but a few samples of the many responses that reflect a common understanding. What should be noted here is not simply how readers define, for instance, casual reading, but within their definitions we can see the type of text they are reading. A casual reader reads something that simply produces pleasure, while the critical reader chooses texts that supply them with “information” or “meaning.” This example was chosen to further clarify how readers tend to classify texts by either the experience they would gain from the text or the knowledge gained. The answers do not provide much of an overlap between the two. Thus, this reveals how deep-set the notion of classification is in our considerations of reading. We choose books based on what we believe they will offer us, and ultimately define reading as an either/or opposed to both.

Question #7 When you read for pleasure, would you define your reading material to be "for entertainment"? If not, how would you define your reading material?

(Answers to Q7 and Q9 will be analyzed together)

- 1. I wouldn't necessarily say "for entertainment." I would probably say instead "for knowledge." I suppose it could be entertainment if you consider that I genuinely enjoy learning new things, which could be a form of entertainment.**

- 2. I read nonfiction books for pleasure, but sometimes that is to learn--I just find learning pleasurable. I also read some pure entertainment reads.**
- 3. Everything I read provides enjoyment. I don't see the point in reading something I didn't enjoy. But that could be either the enjoyment of a good story, or learning about something new and interesting.**
- 4. I read philosophy books to enhance my knowledge and educate myself more on the field, as I plan to pursue further studies in philosophy. The learning I get in the process is what gives me pleasure/entertainment/satisfaction.**

Question #9 When you read for requirement, do you ever find it pleasurable?

If so, what was the material?

- 1. Yes, there were times when my teacher forced us to read books and gave us quizzes to ensure that we have read the material. I didn't expect to like "Pride and Prejudice" or "The Great Gatsby," but they turned out to be some of my favorite books.**
- 2. Yes. Pretty much anything that was assigned in my field- articles, books, and research in rhetoric, composition, and linguistics is all fascinating to me- though, for sure, some material is more useful and interesting than other material.**
- 3. I often find the materials I am required to read pleasurable because I get to see new perspectives and learn from that material.**
- 4. Very rarely. I am reading Homo Deus by Yuval Noah Harari for my Composition course, and it was very interesting. I usually never find assigned reading interesting**
- 5. not usually unless it's about a topic i am already really interested in**

The answers to questions seven and nine reveal the overlap between “critical” and “casual” reading. Though at first readers defined that there was a distinct difference between the two, when asked more specifically, it is revealed that in fact there is an overlap between classifications of “pleasure” and “purpose.” The importance of this is that these answers reveal that regardless of why individuals may be reading certain texts, their personal experience and affectual response to the text determines whether they consider the text worthwhile to them. Thus, a book read for pleasure may spur impactful intellect unto the reader and vice versa.

Chapter Three: Defining of Affect and Craft as Measures of Worth

I. The Defining of Craft: An Experience of Reading

Like the term “text,” craft, too, will be discussed and explored in a comprehensive manner. What this essentially means is that the word, here, will move between meanings, loosely referring to how the text was written, which of course can range depending on the genre or perspective it was written in. Craft, here, refers to the simultaneous attributes of a text that cause it to affect readers. It is important to define craft in such a loose manner to emphasize its connection to the similar ambiguity that is affect. Whether it be the plot, genre, or specifics of how a story was written; these factors play a primary role in spurring an affectual response from the reader.

Though craft will have a plotted movement, here, it is also important to note that craft is a term familiar with this treatment, often subjected to

fluctuating definitions. As Robert Scholes writes in his book *The Crafty Reader*, “When the word *literature* entered critical discourses as an evaluative term, around the beginning of the nineteenth century, it included a higher evaluation of newness or ingenuity than had prevailed before that time” (Scholes 143). From this statement one can observe how craft, here “the word *literature*”, was regarded not by what aspects made the text unique in its singular experience, but rather its entire being was contrasted against the pre-existing material. This is a very limiting view of craft that lumps multiple different texts into an amalgamation of sameness. If a text did not reveal anything new it was not considered “*literary*” or of a higher worth. These parameters are not as strict today, but it is clear that there are new parameters in place, as explored in chapter two, that determine whether or not a work is worthwhile or “*literary*.” Most importantly, what must be noted is the sheer weight that was placed upon a text’s total information. In other words, *what did the text have to offer?* This limits the text to being observed as a whole instead of taking into consideration the varying factors that make up its whole. One gleans knowledge or experiences not once one has finished the text, but while one is in the process of reading. Therefore, a definition of craft that focuses on the particularities of reading, as process, reveals a truer insight into what constitutes the worth of a text.

The different factors that make up a text are often divided into separate classifications that, like a text’s “*ingenuity*”, are used to divide the

text from itself and are seen as plausible means to judge a text's worth. More precisely, this refers to language and genre. A text's plot structures or use/lack thereof of certain language may be observed and judged singularly. For example, a story focused on the romantic tribulations of a character may be categorized into the romance genre and judged intensely based upon the genre it now dwells in. A judgement and classification based on something like genre takes away from a reader's individual experience of reading, simply disregarding that unique experience and replacing it with an expectation of that experience. Scholes refutes this method of classification by asserting his claim that,

The formulaic quality of [genre] texts can be thought of as indicating a very low level of craft, totally devoid of art. Without challenging this characterization directly, I would like to complicate the issue a bit. I believe that genre fiction is sometimes practiced at a very high level of craft, a level that brings it well within the range of what we normally think of as written art or "literature." (Scholes, 141)

This exploration agrees with his claim by instead asserting that the worth of a text should be assessed by a combination of such factors like language, genre, and ingenuity.

By regarding the multiplicities of a text's craft, it becomes clearer how texts are able to affect us and why that is important. For example, author Cecilia Farr, in her exploration of why Oprah's reading club is so impactful,

explains what factors exist simultaneously that make a book both pleasurable and worthwhile to read, she writes:

Like many Oprah readers, my dream of a contemporary novel demands emotional as well as intellectual commitment. I want to dive into it wholeheartedly. The best novel would meet my expectations; it would engross me on many levels with complex characters, a layered plot and lovely language. Without talking down or over-explaining, it would trust me as a reader to get it. And it would challenge me on social issues, on my understanding of people and life, opening new views or values or reinforcing the ones that are central to me. (Farr 94)

Farr's example of a "dream" novel not only combines the older example presented by Scholes of a text presenting something "new" to the reader, but it expands beyond what is gained in the end and actually is able to "engross" the reader in the moment. As explored in chapter one, being engrossed in a text can be anything ranging from feeling a strong sense of empathy towards the characters to being swayed by the overall romance that saturates the language of every page. Language, plot, and newness are all various factors that can be contributed to the craft of a text. It is these factors that are the gateway to being affected by a text.

II. Craft as a Vital Feature of a Text's Appeal

Thus far what has become clear is not only where and how affect arises during an individual's engagement with a text, but also how the varying

forms of affect are regarded in relation to a hierarchy of worth. To reiterate, our affectual responses to reading are important as they precisely reveal the influences that are derived from a text and have some kind of influence over our selfhood. Simply put, affect reveals to us just how powerful texts can be in altering our varying state of being. The means by which this happens, as stated in chapter one, comes in a multitude of factors—ranging anywhere from empathy to intensity. The most important thing to note is that these “moments of intensity” arise based upon the reader and their own personal identity that is reflected unto the text while reading. As observed in chapter two, these powerful moments of influence are not taken into as much consideration as influences in and of themselves. Rather, certain affectual responses to texts are favored over others—namely, intellectual over sensational—which leads to a hierarchical institutionalization of a text’s worth, and similarly, the worth of the reader.

Simply understanding the sheer intimacy that arises between text and reader is one way to shift one’s perspective on the worth of texts. But it must also be beneficial to peer closely at what factors may lead to affectual responses like “moments of intensity” to arise. Namely, through craft. As stated, excellence in craft is often seen as belonging to certain, ‘literary,’ texts. However, craft does flourish within pleasure-based fiction, and it is through beautifully executed works that texts open up to us and lead to the assimilation of text and reader. As theorist Robert Scholes explores in his work, the formulation of a text can aid in de-structuring the idea of high

quality work belonging only to texts that are deemed of following a certain literary criteria. He states “that writers of a crafty genre like the private-eye novel are more rewarding to read than many writers with greater pretensions to individual genius” (Scholes 141). The defining of texts that constitute literary quality were those that were perceived to have a “higher evaluation of newness or ingenuity” (Scholes 143). However, sometime over the course of the nineteenth century, the idea of the expectation of craft began to shift to the expectation of meaning. Ingenuity, or craft, was based upon a work’s ability to influence the reader to ‘think’, ‘understand’, or ‘extrapolate’ some kind of meaning. Yet, as Scholes notes, craft can in fact exist within commonly deemed lower-quality works. The lack of reception and idea of class and judgement regarding texts can be argued as a definite blockage to the realization of craft. By being receptive to books, readers are less inclined to be barred from the absorption of a text. In other words, by being receptive and not pre-judgmental, readers may be more readily open to observations to craft as Scholes was. And again, because craft is not limited to genre or classification, its appearance is what enables moments of affect to occur. It is through it which moments of intensity begin to surface in texts because of the degree of excellence in which the text was written.

Craft is by no means limited to certain texts. Any work can and does display a certain level of craft and ingenuity. Therefore, a well-written ‘pleasure’ text should not be denoted because of its ‘genre.’ Rather, it should instead be noted for its ability to affect a reader, whether that be through a

momentary, yet memorable, reaction, silent reflection, or avid conversation. An exploration of the merit of craft was examined by critic Janice Radway who spent a year observing editors in the distribution company named The Book-of-the-Month Club. The company still thrives today as a kind of personal procurer of choice books readers could engage with that month. Radway examines craft by its ability to result in the affectual response of pleasure more so than a rigid being of beauty meant only to be looked at opposed to engaged with, she writes:

In collar fashion, books were treated not primarily as well-crafted artifacts, as objects of knowledge, but as occasions of feeling, as opportunities for experience and emotional response. Writing was judged to be good, therefore, whether it occurred in a book or in an editor's report about the book, if it managed to provoke and intense reaction within the reader. One of the worst things that could be said about a piece of fiction at the Book-of-the-Month Club when I was doing this research was that the writer failed to make the reader care about the characters. (Radway 43)

Based on the standards of The Book-of-the-Month Club, a text was worthwhile not so much for its meaning, but for its ability to affect the reader. Notable, too, is the concentration on the emotional response of readers, as this was a reaction that historically was deemed a negative symptom of 'reading fever.' It can be argued, on the other hand, that

because this is a company that profits off readers seeking pleasure, they neglect literary works in favor of cheaply written works that pull on both the reader's heart strings and wallet. But to suggest this ignores the care of the editors. Throughout her observational experience, Radway depicts the conflict of the editor's internal fear of the company being purchased by Time magazine and expressing their concerns for having to adhere their selections to texts that will accrue the most profit. The editors of The Book-of-the-Month Club are, for the most part, opposed to the idea of selecting novels based on profit over craft.

When it comes to the judgment of 'literary' works, Radway explains why they often tended to look away from those texts, writing:

I noticed quickly that the editors often rejected books that too extravagantly foregrounded their pretension to literary value. The editors reacted particularly negatively to books that displayed any sort of literary excess, such as language too crabbed, a plot too convoluted and self-conscious, or an approach to character too fractured... Where language and point of view were too hermetic, the editors believed, self-consciously literary writers either failed to communicate with their readers or reveled self-indulgently in verbal narcissism. They produced an unreadable text or at least one that could not be read with the right kind of pleasure. (Radway 67)

This claim relates back to the observation made by Cecilia Farr when ruminating on why it is that readers were more interested in *The Pilot's Wife* opposed to *Ulysses*. Both texts contain a high level of craft, however, *The Pilot's Wife* was created in a more accessible and enjoyable manner. Not to say *Ulysses* is written with “verbal narcissism,” but it is written with a different type of craft, one that chooses to challenge the reader more so than seamlessly engage it. Neither is better or worse than the other. Yet, texts that rely on a means of craft where meaning must be searched for is often regarded as more ‘intellectual’ and ‘literary.’ If a text is formulated in a way where a reader can immerse themselves within it and allow themselves to be vulnerable to affect, then they are engaging and creating the text on a deeper level than simply looking at it objectively. Again, affect and craft can exist in different ways, but to classify texts based on how affect and craft are imbued within a text results in a biased negligence on the part of the critic.

What the editors of The Book-of-the-Month Club are trying to do is share, and also re-define, what good reading is. It should not be defined as reading something of good quality, but of a reading experience that results in a well-crafted balance of sensation and intellect.

The editors seemed to associate reading enjoyment with the somatic and affective responses of the body to the experience of being transported by words to a meaningful and altogether human universe inhabited by people with similar needs and concerns...In valuing books that were neither too void of

intellectual content nor so dense and weighty that they made no provision for a reader's delight, they celebrated the individual who wanted to pursue enlightenment and entertainment at the same time...Good reading, as they described it, produced an awareness of the self-expanded, a sense that the self was absorbed into something larger, not dissolved exactly, but quivering with solution, both other and not. (Radway 113-117)

The quivering that Radway writes can be seen as the balance between text and reader; the means by which texts are created through an equal engagement. Texts should not be classified, especially negatively, by their ability to entertain the reader. To judge a text on the black and white parallels of 'worthwhile meaning' and 'pleasure' is to neglect the very idea of the creation of a text through affectual responses, including pleasure, and even riveting sensations of intellect. What Radway was able to observe through her time spent with the editors was their understanding not only of a text's craft, but also of the reader—for it is the reader who is affected by beautifully crafted 'moments of intensity'. As she notes, there is a balance between intellect and pleasure that engages the reader in a more intimate relationship. Thus, one should not ignore the surge or seeking of pleasure that arises from a variety of texts, as they are means by which the lines of a constellation are formed.

III. Reading Everything

Whether or not the classifications or the language that surrounds all texts changes to be a more inclusive one or not, the fact of the matter is that affect has always and will continue to persist as a result of reading. Affect is not limited to reading, as it of course arises in an array of experiences. However, when it is the result of reading it becomes something different, something special. Reading is not physical in the classical sense as it does not require us to get up and exert our body, yet our bodies are still prone and subject to a surge of sensation or churning of intellectual movements. This idea relates back to Littau's assertion that reading is physical in the sense that our body is prone to sensations and reactions derived from the very act of reading. Reading changes us, and this experience is not limited to certain texts. It is a viable result of reading all texts, therefore, it should not be deemed as a negative value, but as a present and impactful one.

While Janice Radway examined the importance of a text's ability to inspire some kind of connection between reader and character, Cecilia Farr expands on this by remarking that "Good reading must also be empathetic and affective" (Farr 47). The theorists of the *Palgrave Handbook* have exemplified to us just how empathetic reading can be. On some personal level one finds oneself attached to some factor like plot or the characters, and thus one begins to feel for them as though they were more than ink on a page. It is affective because it causes us to engage with the text, to enter into a relationship with it. Human relationships require us to exchange a kind of sentiment. Texts intoxicate us with emotions and responses, and in return

one continues to read. Thus, one continues to move forth the lives of the text within.

Farr, too, has identified the humanness in reading. She explains how exploring affectual responses to texts is a way for her and other readers to be on “even ground” (Farr 42). In other words, affect brings out our true human responses, instead of focusing on a more distant ‘moral’ or ‘interpretation’, which thus allows for separate individuals to relate and connect with each other. Farr writes:

I see reading for connection and affect as a legitimate way of reading, too. I have been in book groups that employed these skills, mainly of responding to characters as people, of applying human insights to books. Doing so allowed us to approach books realistically and on even ground despite differing levels of experience with reading. (Farr 42)

Affect allows varying people to relate with one another. Farr gives another example of how Oprah encouraged her mostly middle-class white and female audience to read Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*. Despite the exact experiences and identity of the main character, Pecola, being different from the audience, Farr points out how this readership is still able to connect and respond with her in some way as “all races and cultures identify with Pecola, the book’s tragic main character” (Farr 68). Our affectual responses to texts are the substance with which these bridges are made. By emphasizing our response to a text instead of trying to dissect it for information, the

sensations that rack us can imprint upon our very humanity. Texts, what are normally deemed as mere objects, can and should instead be understood as means to deeper understand ourselves, those around us, and those one otherwise would not know.

Despite both Farr and Radway's attempts to reveal the nature of reading that attracts many of us, it cannot be ignored that a sense of hierarchy still persists even in their dialogue. For example, Radway's purpose was not to fight for the justice of all books by asserting for a removal of the hierarchical taxonomy of books, as this essay attempts. Rather, her time observing the editors of the Book-of-the-Month Club was done so in order to observe how they identified which books would be popular, successful, and, most importantly to her agenda, enjoyable to read. Within her observations, instances of attributing certain texts to certain classes of people was evident. It is important to highlight this information to reveal the reality of how books are chosen. In this case, they are a combination of affect as well as a hierarchical framework:

...the editors simultaneously differentiated themselves and the general reader from that other reader who was characterized, above all, by a refusal to recognize the value of education and information in the first place. This individual they dismissed as part of the common populace, as someone who sought not substance but the empty pleasure of vacuous entertainment...A certain appreciation for seriousness and a recognition of the

value of knowledge set the general reader apart from the common reader in the universe mapped out at the Book-of-the-Month Club. When the editors looked for “trash” to satisfy the general reader’s momentary need for “escapist entertainment” they looked for “class trash,” in Joe Savago’s words, books that displayed a concern for the language and an interest in conveying inside information at the same time that they captivated the reader with sensation, gossip, and an emotionally engrossing tale. Judgement at the club seemed both to enact and to depend on the familiar hierarchy of high, middle, and low. (Radway 112)

The question arises: *is it possible to truly separate affectual reading from the judgement of hierarchy?* Despite the fact that all books, class and trash, make the reader subject to feelings, some are still being placed on a higher level due to their value of intelligence—this factor being the one most commonly associated to a “literary” text. The curious thing about “trash” texts is that on an objective level, many people attest to their existence. However, readers are unlikely to ever call what they are reading trash. If they do, it is attached to a sense of guilt arising from the perceived judgement of others. This reaction is something Victor Nell observes in his own research:

Two cognitions are dissonant if the obverse of one follows from the other (Festinger, 1957). Since bad taste (the enjoyment of

the aesthetically worthless or, worse, of the aesthetically repulsive) is a quality I attribute to my neighbor and never to myself, it follows that the books I choose for my ludic reading are in good taste. However, authoritative voices in my society judge them to be trash; the same voices tell me my time would be better employed in work, study, or devotion than in giving myself pleasure I may not have earned, the penalty for which is blindness and decomposition of the brain. There are two ways in which I can resolve the dissonance and recover my self-respect. One is to acknowledge that I do in fact read trash, but that I have a moral license to do so; the other is to argue that while many people read trash, of which bookshops and libraries contain an abundance, my own reading matter is clearly not trash. (Nell 44)

Thus, “trash” reading is never done by the self. Instead, it is always done by the other. Even if one, however shamefully, admits to reading such texts it is with an exonerative clause. It is done so, as Nell notes, not because that is all one is able to read, but simply because that is what one chooses to read. As he says, one has the “moral license” to choose and not to choose. Radway exemplifies for us that editors label certain texts as trash and thus funnel only select works to select audiences. The ‘general’, categorized by the Book-of-the-Month Club as their main audience, were those that were above the common reader who simply looked for entertainment or “trash” reading. Again, by the editors and by themselves, this group was presented

as one who had the “moral license” and ability to fluctuate between “trash” and “intellect.” The general reader, observed by Radway’s group of editors, fit into the mindset presented by Nell. Namely, they viewed “trash” reading to belong to the class of the other. Yet, they still sought elements of those texts. Elements that “captivat[e] the reader with sensation.”

Who is the common reader then? As the Book-of-the-Month Club describes, they are those who solely read “trash” for the sake of entertainment. This “trash” could be the Harlequin romances that Robert Scholes identified as possibly having high levels of craft; the same kind of craft that is often attributed to more “intellectual” or “literary” pieces. What this reveals is that all texts are capable of containing the language and information needed to be considered “literary.” The difference between *The Pilot’s Wife* and *Ulysses* is not the level of craft present in each text, but rather it is the very instance of the craft that is able to affect the reader. As Radway observed with the editors of the Book-of-the-Month Club, nuanced language and meaning means nothing if it is too tightly interwoven into itself. There needs to be some kind of notion of affect for the reader to latch onto. Craft reveals affect. The common reader and “trash” texts are othered not for their lack of craft or affect, but simply because of the hierarchy that defines them. That the intellectual reader reads *Ulysses* while the common reader reads *The Pilot’s Wife*, is a hierarchal notion. Craft is present in both texts, therefore, both texts exist not to the ambiguous “other” or even on the opposite spectrum of the minority “intellectuals.” Both texts exist, like all

texts, on the same plane to all readers, because both texts contain within them the ability to affect a reader. It matters not what particularly affects them, or how or what was gleaned from the experience. As posited in chapter one, the importance lies in the very ability for readers to be moved, in whatever way, by the experience of reading. Thus, this essay endeavors to suggest that we are all common readers reading not “trash” or “literary” texts, but, simply, texts.

IV. Reading Habits Questionnaire

Answers to questions 4 and 8 were chosen as they pertain to readers reflecting on how and why certain experiences with reading impacted them. It is self-evident that some texts affect us more than others and for the sake of this study these questions were formulated for readers to try and recall what it is about reading that resonated with them. Not all answers to these questions are exemplified below. Answers to all the questions will be available to view in the appendix. These answers were chosen because of the depth and complexity by which they were described. A brief analysis will be provided after the answers to the questions, though not every response will be analyzed. Each number is a different reader, which includes the numbers for Q8 as well. For example, number one of Q4 is not the same reader a number one of Q8. There is also no particular order to the readers presented.

Question #4: What type of reading material do you read the most and why?
(Example: Stories on Wattpad, poems on Instagram, novels from Barnes and Nobles, stuff for class, etc.)

- 1. During the semester I mostly read class texts, but I occasionally have some pleasure reading simultaneously. When I read for pleasure I mostly read novels, philosophical texts, and meditation/self-help books.**

As can be observed from the answers to this particular question, many readers define “pleasure” texts to be those that satisfy a kind of need on the part of the individual. Whether it be a novel for, say, entertainment, or a kind of self-help text, as this reader indicated, reading for pleasure is synonymous with reading for purpose. The same can be said for those who want to read something “literary” for the sake of gaining intellect. There is a kind of underlying purpose for all texts that we choose to read, thus why should some purposes be heralded as better than others?

- 2. Mostly stuff for class. However, when I read for myself, I tend towards the short stories (and some longer works, but rarely) posted on various websites (fanfiction.net has some gems, despite its reputation). Despite this, if I'm given the choice, I do prefer hard copies, so if I can, I purchase those.**
- 3. Short stories found on several places, mostly Reddit or fanfiction websites. Sometimes material for university, however it is notably being phased out.**
- 4. Mostly nineteenth-century British fiction and poetry, read in physical books because I love the era and I love having a book in my hands. I will read poems online if needed, and have only ever read the aforementioned silly fanfiction on my laptop.**

Something noted here that was not specifically prevalent in the theorists' observations, though quite prevalent in the answers to this survey, was the means of accessibility to reading. Many of the theorists, though their claims can still be applied to arguments today, as they have been with this essay, are in fact somewhat dated. That is, reading on digital platforms was not as prevalent then as it is now. Though this paper did not deeply explore the relationship between digital and physical reading, it can be noted here that accessibility has also changed people's perceptions of reading. Digital platforms like Wattpad or Fanfiction.net are regarded to have a negative "reputation", thus devaluing most if not all the texts on the platform. However, due to their accessibility, they are still places readers turn to in order to satisfy their need to read. This observation on platforms reveals how the hierarchal taxonomy of texts persists, but has now slightly changed to how one reads opposed to what one reads. In a way, this somewhat alleviates some of the pressure of texts trying to be "literary" as they now become simply due to their physical form. The obvious negative pitfall is that now online texts are disregarded as shameful reading endeavors, despite their accessibility. Despite this, the argument of affect presented thus far can be applied to digital texts, as the point was that all texts, despite parameters like genre or platform, have a sense of worth based on their ability to affect the reader.

Question #8: Would you consider books/ stories that are to be read for pleasure as "trash" reading?

- 1. Sometimes, depending on the book I am reading. There are books that are published from Wattpad, and I find them pretty grotesque. I do enjoy a sappy story once in a while, but sometimes I dislike the writer's style and language, and the characters seem much more annoying and horrible than they were intended.**

This individual's response relates back to what Radway observed in the editor's reactions to some books. As she notes, one of the worst things an editor can say about a story is that "it failed to make the reader care about the characters" (Radway 43). This individual has a need that he/she wants to be fulfilled through the act of reading, so they turn to an accessible digital source to fill that need, in this case its Wattpad.

However, the craft within the stories the individual read was not strong or prevalent enough to entice this particular reader. Does this make a story worthless? This individual may say as much, but again, another reader may have greatly enjoyed the "style and language" employed by this particular author. Like clothing, craft appeals equally to some and not to others. A text cannot be judged as worthless due to it not meeting the standards of a certain individual's needs.

- 2. No. I think there is a thin line for books that are entertaining. Those are the books that are obviously written for a dull and brainless audience. Entertainment is embedded in a lot of qualities of life and humans love that kind of stuff. Books don't always have to take a critical role to be valuable, because it**

could be even something small in a book that shifts ones perspectives or teaches them something new.

Most answers to this question shared the sentiment that they did not believe pleasure reading to be synonymous with “trash” reading. This reader seems to have the mindset that Nell observed, as well as what the editors of the Book-of-the-Month Club tended to have, that there is always a kind of lesser other that reads “trash” books. Yet at the same time they admit that, despite this, there is a kind of value to be had in these texts. By admitting this value, they, in a sense, nullify their previous statement of there being this “lesser other” audience. This is because only the “lesser other” reads void texts, or ones lacking a pre-determined value, yet there are no void texts thus there is no “lesser other”. Therefore, both trash reading and the “lesser other” audience can be considered an irrelevant concept.

3. It does depend on what you are actually reading for pleasure. For example, if you are reading People magazine for pleasure I would consider that “trash” reading. Otherwise, I generally do not see reading for pleasure as “trash” reading. Fiction books that are read for pleasure can still have a lot of value to the reader.

This reader sees the value in the traditional and most recognizable form of reading for pleasure, fiction reading. Yet, they find a lack of value in a reader’s choice to engage with a work that, in this case, gossips about celebrities. To understand how even this has value, one must return again to the idea of purpose. An individual’s intention or purpose for reading reveals how important affect is. Though we do not have a specific reason

in this example as to why one may be reading a magazine it could simply be to pass the time in a grocery line, for example. Is this worthless? If the reader satisfies their, say, boredom, then no. They have chosen reading a magazine as a way to fulfill their needs. If it successfully fills their needs and leaves them with a sense of enjoyment, then it is worthwhile. If they instead found it not to satisfy their needs then the text is not worthless, but rather it is not effective. The difference lies again in that the text has the ability to satisfy and affect the reader, it just may not do so for all readers. A text is only classified as worthless to the eye of the observer not the reader, like this particular individual.

4. Not at all. I think that kind of reading is really essential for many people. I think a lot about rhetoric and how people are socialized, and for that reason, I find that all types of reading are important and meaningful, even if they aren't genres that I myself seek out. I think that suggesting that some reading is important and others isn't sends the wrong message- reading in all different contexts is important for people. Reading as a "thing" is more important than the material.

The sentiment itself falls along the lines of what this essay is attempting to assert. The activity of reading itself holds within it many opportunities for a wide range of readers to be subject to affect.

And the world was calm. The truth in a calm
 world,
 In which there is no other meaning, itself
 Is calm, itself is summer and night, itself
 Is the reader leaning late and reading there.

-“The House was Quiet and The World Was Calm” Wallace
Stevens

Conclusion

Complacently drifting upon a current, readers enter texts like miniscule particles slipping into the mouths of mollusks. Whether we grasp a text with a fervent gaze infused with purpose, or we simply find ourselves, by some circumstance, within the shell of a text, we nonetheless become subject to the text. We are within it, and thus we open ourselves up to it. And like tiny floating irritants, texts coat us with a kind of iridescent nacre. Before experiencing a text, we were simply ourselves in that moment. Throughout and afterwards, we begin to shimmer with the slick film the text places upon us. We depart it as someone else. Earlier, this change was compared to a kind of wind that passes through us, rattles us from the inside, and again moves on. Whether an oceanic current or atmospheric wind, there is a kind of natural movement that arises within the text. Its solid form is but a façade of the sheer force within. That force being affect.

The lives of texts have prevailed through a kind of intertwinement with our own history. It should not be thought of as a relationship that is parasitic or symbiotic, but rather mutual. The life of a single text persists and morphs as it is picked up and molded through human hands and human time. Conversely, when the inky membrane of a poem or a phrase or a simple word attaches itself to us, we, too, succumb to a kind of alteration. On a

rudimentary level, the relationship between the being of a text and the being of a human is indeed a mutual one.

Yet, as examined, this relationship has undergone and continues to be subject to a kind vivisection. Texts are torn from each other and from us through a classification that imprints a value of worth upon it. Through this classification, that value transitions from the text unto us. Thus, readers and texts become higher and lower than their neighbor, despite the fact that the intimate relationship between the two can only truly be valued by individual readers and their text. As posited, this thesis hoped to aid in the breaking of such a classification by turning one's attention to the sheer importance of affect and the complexities that exist within readers and texts of all kinds.

The psychological investigations of reading presented affect to be an undeniable result of the effect of reading. The theorists behind these investigations attempted to identify the origin of affect. Theorists like Dana LaCourse Munteanu and Howard Sklar assert affect to arise from empathetic or sympathetic connections where the reader began to feel for what was within a text as though it was not a text, but a person. Others, like Brooke Miller, instead noted how it would be more beneficial to not try to pinpoint such occurrences, but to simply understand them as present though ambiguous moments. Somewhere in the text and by some means, we become inspirited by the words silently shaping upon our lips. Regardless of one's methods, the affectual response to reading has indeed been identified, its untraceable movement passes us, though its origin remain to be found.

The chorus of theories that look through the psychological lens are crafted with an intention to chart the constellation somewhere upon a universal sky. What must be remembered is that this cluster of stars consistently rearranges itself according to the eyes cast upon it.

Again, its presence is there and its light warms our skin. We feel it. We feel the texts in some way as they communicate to us in their silent language. Humankind's need for structure has extended itself over this relationship. By instructing a classification over texts, we become unbound from them. Our conversation has been intruded upon, and an omnipresent voice looms overhead to define the worth of our relationship before it has begun. One may simply argue that the craft and intention behind a text is what defines it and sets it apart from others. This is a perspective that places importance on a standard and expectation that must be met by a text. In other words, "good" texts are those that check off a set of criteria. They are written well, they challenge us, intellect is gained from reading—the exchange of our time is worthwhile. These are examples of common values that can be placed upon a text. It must not be forgotten that any values placed upon a text that do not derive from the reader warps the relationship of the reading experience.

When someone says that a poem is difficult, does he or she simply mean the language of the poem, or the mind of the poem, or the sentiment of the poem is not like *his or her* language or mind or sentiment?

I mean this: I feel like what we are really talking about when we talk about “accessibility” and “difficulty” and “ease” is intimacy, and a desire for intimacy. Practically a demand for intimacy—and of just the exact degree and flavor that we desire. (Vap 11-13)

These “intrinsic” values that are expectations of a “good” text must be questioned. A reader who does not question their own criteria of a “worthwhile” reading experience simply succumbs to the hierarchy of judgment. We force the text to bend to the “exact degree” of our perhaps false expectations, and thus a text becomes wrongly subjected. To read and thus to judge a text authentically can best be done once the reader has gone through a kind of judgement of themselves. This is not to suggest that reading is never done authentically unless one creates a set of criteria for themselves, nor is it suggested that texts cannot be judged as “good” or “bad” at all. Rather, this thesis suggests that a reader would benefit from discarding values placed on a text by others or by at least assessing their own values in order to determine a kind of value for themselves.

Critiques of texts can be influential for us indeed. They can guide our reading experience and even inspire it. A universal judgment, however, cannot exist in the realm of the relationship between texts and reading as it cannot exist in many facets of humankind’s world. Understanding affect allows us, as readers, to more deeply understand this simple yet often undermined notion that all texts have worth. This thesis attempts to remind the reader that worth, however, should not be considered universal. Like the

word affect, like the word experience, and the word text, worth, too, is an anomaly in the sense that worth is derived from the individual and their personal relationship to reading. The worth of a text, then, becomes subject to the individual's identity—their history, culture, or gender—that cannot be fairly considered by the “canon”.

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Reading Habits Questionnaire

The following pages present the answers to the Reading Habits Questionnaire. These questions were formulated in order to provide an insight on reader's reflections. The survey was created in a Google Form and can be viewed at the following link: <https://forms.gle/5gTYwazyk8ra5mvp7>. The survey was initiated in October of the year 2018, and was kept open until December of the same year. There was a total of 53 responses. Participation in the survey was entirely random and optional.

Though not all questions and answers were highlighted in each of the chapters of the thesis, the entirety of the survey proves beneficial for those interested in a more complete scope of individuals and their relationship to reading.

Timestamp	What is your age?	What is your gender?	What is your ethnicity?
10/3/2018 14:38:27	18 - 30	Female	Mixed
10/3/2018 14:38:28	18 - 30	Female	Asian
10/3/2018 14:40:02	18 - 30	Male	Asian
10/3/2018 14:53:27	18 - 30	Male	White
10/3/2018 15:00:18	18 - 30	Female	Hispanic
10/3/2018 15:13:38	18 - 30	Female	Hispanic
10/3/2018 15:53:15	18 - 30	Female	Hispanic
10/3/2018 16:01:20	18 - 30	Female	Hispanic
10/3/2018 16:04:15	<18	Female	Asian
10/3/2018 16:07:32	18 - 30	Female	Hispanic
10/3/2018 16:10:09	41 - 60	Female	White
10/3/2018 16:21:28	18 - 30	Male	White
10/3/2018 19:09:40	18 - 30	Female	White
10/3/2018 19:13:25	41 - 60	Male	White
10/3/2018 19:49:36	18 - 30	Male	Asian
10/4/2018 2:27:52	>60	Female	White
10/4/2018 13:45:07	18 - 30	Male	Asian
10/4/2018 14:49:25	31 - 40	Female	White
10/4/2018 14:57:14	18 - 30	Female	Hispanic
10/4/2018 15:54:52	18 - 30	Female	White
10/4/2018 19:27:29	18 - 30	Male	White
10/5/2018 12:06:38	18 - 30	Male	Black or African American
10/7/2018 20:49:57	18 - 30	Female	White
10/9/2018 9:21:00	41 - 60	Female	White
10/9/2018 11:16:46	18 - 30	Male	White
10/9/2018 12:27:10	18 - 30	Female	White
10/9/2018 13:49:22	18 - 30	Male	White
10/9/2018 17:51:32	18 - 30	Female	Mixed
10/11/2018 9:39:17	18 - 30	Female	American Indian or Alaska
10/19/2018 13:11:03	18 - 30	Female	White
10/19/2018 13:35:57	18 - 30	Female	White
10/19/2018 13:48:28	18 - 30	Female	White
10/19/2018 14:02:33	<18	Female	White
10/19/2018 14:18:16	18 - 30	Male	White
10/19/2018 14:46:07	18 - 30	Female	White
10/19/2018 14:47:40	18 - 30	Female	White
10/19/2018 15:04:51	18 - 30	Male	White
10/19/2018 15:19:57	31 - 40	Female	White
10/19/2018 16:21:01	31 - 40	Female	White
10/19/2018 16:33:00	18 - 30	Male	White
10/19/2018 16:40:31	<18	Female	White
10/19/2018 16:43:32	18 - 30	Female	White
10/19/2018 20:51:34	18 - 30	Male	White
10/19/2018 21:13:00	<18	Female	Mixed
10/19/2018 22:24:19	31 - 40	Female	White
10/20/2018 0:11:24	18 - 30	Female	White
10/20/2018 1:26:49	31 - 40	Male	Human
10/20/2018 1:47:01	<18	Female	White
10/20/2018 3:12:53	18 - 30	Female	White
10/20/2018 7:08:46	18 - 30	Female	Asian
10/20/2018 7:38:15	18 - 30	Male	White
10/20/2018 23:41:51	31 - 40	Male	White
10/22/2018 17:06:24	18 - 30	Female	White

How would you define the terms "casual" and "critical" reader?
Casual- for fun critical- only when necessary
Casual reader is someone who reads for fun and critical reader is someone who analyzes while they read.
casual - reads for fun critical - reads for purpose
Casual reads not extremely often but now and again and for more enjoyment. Critical readers analyze literary elements more in depth such as the theme, language, etc.
Casual reader: someone who reads for pleasure but not often Critical reader: someone who carefully analyzes whatever they're reading
Casual reader as being someone who reads in a stress free way and for enjoyment. Critical reader someone who paces themselves, reads to learn information and apply it as well as focuses in depth the purpose of the book.
Casual passively reads a story and doesn't analyze much. Critical is actively analyzing and evaluating what you're reading
casual being reading things just for what it is, critical being fully taking in the reading and getting very hands on with the reading.
A casual reader is a person who either enjoys reading in their free time and does it for sheer amusement. Critical readers analyze and note particular events or take the minute details into account so that they can delve into the deeper meaning behind a work.
casual reader is more of a "for fun" reader and critical reader is someone who reads for class or academic purposes
Super chill lazy reader
Casual reading being that of someone who isn't paying very close attention to the literary devices used etc. Critical being the opposite.
A casual reader is one who reads for pleasure and doesn't dedicate strict amounts of time to reading. They also tend to not mind what the content is so long as it interests them. A critical reader is one who values the text of a book or otherwise and looks at it from a perspective meant to question, invoke, or imply something of value in or out of the r
Casual readers are not very intelligent. Critical readers are trolls.
Casual = reading for fun, critical = reading for research
casual reading is for enjoyment. Critical reading is for information.
A casual reader is someone who just reads to gain a broad understanding of the writing. A critical reader gains a broad understanding but uses their own evaluation techniques to determine whether they support or reject a broad idea.
Casual: reading for fun and pleasure, for purposes more like recreation or interest Critical: reading closely with a purpose of understanding an argument or to appreciate an author's style/analyze literary works
Casual is a reader who reads for enjoyment and do not read "seriously". Critical readers, in my opinion annotate their readings, read to option a certain goal and are most likely writing some analysis of the piece.
Casual is used to define something that can be used in off hand or non formal areas. Critical is something that is absolutely crucial or essential to something.
Casual readers don't necessarily absorb every bit of information. Rather, they read and let the story or whatever take them somewhere. Critical readers are looking for something whether its conscious or not. They look for differences in point of view, holes to poke, and anything they can say to the author "you're wrong"
Casual reader meaning you read for fun and on your free time. A critical reader meaning you read for a specific purpose
I associate casual reading with reading for pleasure or reading to receive knowledge. I think critical reading is reading done to test an idea, style, or argument against other ideas, and to evaluate the quality of the ideas.
A casual reader is reading for the experience, what I often call an entertainment (or beach) read. A critical reader is examining the text for content and style to make a judgement.
A casual reader is a person who reads simply for pleasure or entertainment.
A critical reader has tangible goals in mind while reading. These can include learning, improving a certain skill, or just generally bettering themselves as a person. This type of reader probably takes notes and marks pages for future reference.
Casual reader is a reader who reads for leisure. They aren't reading to delve deeper into the text they are simply reading for enjoyment. Critical reader is one who is analyzing the text to discover the meaning of the text and delving deeper beneath just the surface layer of the story.
As I understand it, a casual reader reads exclusively for relaxation or pleasure, not delving into a text with a critical eye, whereas a critical reader looks for patterns, themes, ideas, and other potential areas of improvement to critique.
For me, a "casual" reader is one who reads primarily for pleasure. They may pick up on the "deeper" meaning of a work of literature, but they do not do so intentionally. A "critical" reader is one who reads primarily to discover the themes, structure, etc. of a work. The two categories can and do overlap, and I would imagine that most habitual readers
Casual reader is for fun, "critical" reader is reading with a purpose
Casual is defined as relaxed, critical is defined as important, attention demanding
casual - someone who just reads for fun and does it when they feel like it, critical - thinks critically about the story
Casual: reads just for fun Critical: way more in depth with their reading, analyzes it
Casual: reads for their own enjoyment and pleasure, critical: reads to analyse and compare texts, think more deeply about them
I see a casual reader as someone who likes to read purely for leisure. I see a critical reader as someone who may read for fun but also reads other books for the purpose of studying and analyzing them.
Casual - reads for fun, critical - reads to get meaning from books and analyse each one
A casual reader reads works without thinking too much about them, and most likely tends to read more trivial books. A reader on the critical side would think deeply about the literature. He would most likely have background knowledge on the content of the book, and also perhaps the author and the time period, and would be more likely drawn to a
Casual readers usually take the book away face value - they go along with the journey the author provides. Critical readers usually analyze the text more, not just follow the story. They might question more why things and events are the way they're written, or they might compare a story to similar works or their underlying themes.
Someone who reads for fun vs someone who... analyzes either the writing or what's written. I guess.
casual=for fun, critical=for necessity
casual = reads for fun, critical = reads to learn new ideas or perspectives, probably spends a lot more time analyzing the characters or the book
Casual readers read as a pastime, and critical readers are reading to understand certain subjects or ideas.
Critical reader is reading to find specific details and has a purpose of intent that is not for leisure. Casual readers read for leisure
Casual- reads for fun, critical- read to get something out of it or learn something or analyze the text beyond surface meaning
A casual reader reads for enjoyment only (the result of that enjoyment could be anything from education to escapism) whereas a critical reader wishes to also evaluate various aspects of their reading material, these aspects could be their literary value, the political arguments they contain, or their value as a work of art etc.
Reading largely for enjoyment vs. analyzing everything
Casual reader reads now and again. Never heard of critical reader.
A casual reader reads to enjoy the story, a critical reader analyzes the plot and writing
Moderate
Casual- just enjoys the story and reads for pleasure, Critical- analyzes and breaks down the story's theme and structure.
Casual: Someone who reads in free time without much thought put into the material they are reading. Critical: someone who analyzes the narrative patterns used in a story/arguments used in an opinion piece/etc.
casual for fun, critical for thinking about or learning the content
Casual is reading for pleasure, critical is close reading for research etc.

Would you consider yourself a "reader"? If yes, would you say you're more of a casual or critical reader? If no, do you wish you were a reader/read books more often? Why or why not?
No, I wish I was because I know it would help me with writing skills
Yes more of a casual reader.
yes, critical reader
I'm more of a casual reader however I read scientifically based books so perhaps they are critical, but not in an "English" class definition.
I don't consider myself a reader. I wish I do read more. It would probably help me improve a lot things I'm not good at such as writing
Yes, but more of a casual reader.
Yes I wish I read more, I think it would expand my knowledge/perspective
I am a reader but I am a full on casual reader just to enjoy and think too hard.
I would consider myself more of a casual reader because I enjoy reading, and I'm not really interested in overthinking that much unless absolutely necessary.
Yes, a casual reader
No I don't read much these days because of bad eyes
Casual reader
I consider myself a reader despite the fact that I don't read often. I hold onto my past reading habits and consider them valid now. That said, I want to read more because I know reading enriches the brain and opens up different perspectives that may not be available in an individual's immediate world.
Yes, I am an indiscriminate reader.
Yes, getting more critical
I am a reader for both casual and critical.
I am more of a casual reader
Yes. More critical.
Yes, I am more of a casual reader when reading for fun. However, when it comes to more creative pieces I do tend to analyze the piece and annotate.
I wish I would read for fun more often, but I do read a lot of school texts. I'd call myself more of a critical reader in the sense of school work.
I'm a critical reader. I like to see errors in authors' logic because it helps me not make those same mistakes. Critical reading really opens me up to new points of view.
No, I don't consider myself a reader. I kind of wish I was because it would be a lot easier to read books for classes for book reports and tests.
I would consider myself a reader, but I think in ways that are a little unusual. I read all of the time, but fiction comprises less than 10% of what I read—I am almost always a critical reader, and am far more likely to pick something up at the store that seems like a book for school than it does for fun reading. I do sometimes wish that I could be as com
Yes, I am definitely a reader—strong part of my identity. I am both a casual and a critical reader. I enjoy moving between the two types of reading. I read all kinds of books, including nonfiction, fiction, science fiction, poetry, etc.
Yeah, I'm mostly a casual reader though.
Yes, I do consider myself a reader and I would say I am more of a casual reader.
I'm more of a critical reader, insofar as I don't read many novels, works of fiction, or similar escapist texts/genres—instead I read journal articles, news stories, stuff that isn't light in content, looking for overarching ideas that define those texts.
I'm not really a reader, and when I do read, I tend to veer on the casual side. I'd like to read more, if only to improve my writing skills, but I don't want to associate myself with what I'll call "bookstore culture"—that is, the culture that views reading as a hobby that makes a person superior and "weird". I don't like that at all.
Yes, casual
Yes, casual
yes, casual
Yes, definitely a casual reader
I've been trying to read more lately, though mostly non-fiction where the categories don't seem to fit as well
I consider myself a casual reader for the most part. I at times read books for study purposes.
Not a reader, would like to be because in the past I've read great stories that still stick to me.
I consider myself a reader, though as to whether I'm more casual or critical, it depends. With the silly/fantastic I used to drunkenly read at the weekend, I certainly did not think critically about it unless leaving a constructive comment. With real literature (my beloved Victorian novels and poetry), I'm much more reflective about and studious of what I
Mostly? I usually consume more video or interactive media, but I'll have a book to read a chapter or two from before bedtime.
Casual, wish I had more time. I've been listening to audio books though.
yes, casual. I need a more comfy environment and fewer distractions, my house is too loud for reading
No, I don't really wish to be one, because I'm too old to be forcing myself to do things I simply don't enjoy, without a real reward. I also don't think being a reader or a non-reader determines your value as a person.
when I do read I'm a critical reader because I have to be for school, but in general I'm not much of a reader anymore. I do wish I read more often because I used to read all the time and I think it helped my creativity and there were some really great books
I'm in between. As I've aged, I've grown more towards reading scholarly articles or non-fiction.
No, I used to be but I don't feel like I have the time and patience to commit to a book anymore (stopped around 15-16 years of age)
Casual
More of a critical reader.
Yes, a casual one
I like reading often but I didn't realise there were different terms for how you read.
I used to be a big reader, and I'd say I was a casual reader. I don't read much anymore but I wish I did
Yes
While I'd say I'm more of a casual reader, it's hard not to critique the text I'm reading as I usually read philosophy books.
Yes, I consider myself a casual reader.
critical - more nonfiction than fiction
In my spare time I am mostly a casual reader but I studied English in university so I still tend to read in a somewhat critical manner...when I have the energy. P and it depends on the type of literature I'm reading

How often do you read books/short stories/poems/etc.?
Once a week
Every other day
4 to 5 times a month
A few books a year
Rarely
Not as much as I would like to but I casually read news articles everyday and try to read short stories every now and then.
Once a month or less
at least read once a week
I haven't been reading often because of school, but during breaks I would read books, articles, and short stories. Once in a while, I would read poems, but I tend to read more books or online works because they are more accessible to me.
I read books kind of often, I'll start and finish a book in about a month and a half
Not often
Not very often
I tend to read poems the most often, but even then, that is scarce. If anything, I read a lot of articles and news stories—short and to the point.
Every day.
A couple chapters a week
daily
Once a week
Often
I try to read 2 books a month for fun. I read once a week for academic purposes. This includes articles and research journals.
Not very often.
Once or twice each week
Very rarely
I read books and academic articles weekly if not daily. I can't think of the last time I read a short story or a poem. I'm super boring.
Almost every day
I try to read a little bit every night. Sometimes it's a novel, sometimes a collection of short stories. It just depends on what book I'm currently on
With school I read about a book every month or two but during summer I try to read 2-3 books a month.
Not very often, other than if they touch upon politics or history.
I read short stories fairly often, since some of my friends are writers themselves. I read books and poems only when I'm required to, for the most part (since I'm an English Literature major, there's usually something like that assigned at any given time.)
When I can read I try to. I finish maybe a book a month.
Very often, once per week
every month
At least once a week
I always have books on the CB but it's only a couple of times a week that I read a chapter
Daily
Read a full book once a year, but short stories I can read one monthly
Daily.
It varies - I try to do a chapter or at least a few pages most nights. It depends on the size of the book, but I'll average a standard novel every month or so. Mostly I read novels or story stories - I don't read a lot of poetry.
I read a few books a year
every day
I finish a book about once a year. I start a book about once every other month, but I usually grow disinterested and leave it.
lately only when required for school
About 2 times a week.
Rarely. Maybe about once a month or two
Once a week nowadays
Almost every day
Every day, or most days
Every day
Not very often
A few times a week. More if the kids were bigger
Almost everyday. I have a bunch of books on my reading list.
Not as often anymore - maybe twice a month.
quarterly?
I wish I could say every day but more like 2-3 days a week

What type of reading material do you read the most and why? (Example: Stories on Wattpad, poems on Instagram, novels from Barnes and Nobles, stuff for class, etc.)
Stuff for class, articles, studies
The news
stuff for class
Scientific novels
Short stories or YA novels because that's what I usually find most interesting
Merced Sun Star and books that I have at home.
Things for class
stories on wattpad, novels from B&N, and stories in Spanish.
I mostly read books from the library because they are accessible to me and I enjoy hard copies much more than online. I do read stories on Wattpad, but not as often because I get bored of the plots and lack of originality on there. I occasionally see poems on Instagram, but I mostly avoid them because they aren't as meaningful to me as actual st
Novels from bookstores
Stories on the internet
Articles and research papers
Articles such as news or crime stories, true crime books, poems, etc
Books, magazines, blogs, a bounty of words on several social media sites and the occasional shampoo bottle.
Business books because they interest me
Library books for entertainment and google for information
I read a lot of books for class so that I stay interested in the topics being taught in my class. Upon that I also read the news and short stories on Reddit.
For class
I go to Barnes and Nobel and just read what catches my eyes. I read academic journals that interest me and that relate to my courses.
Stuff for class.
Research journals and nonfiction books. I like being able to understand these topics and explain them to people in a way they can understand. Basically, I read so I can "explain it like I'm 5"
Typically a few times a week at the most and it's for class.
I read academic articles to learn about new trends in my field or new ideas. I tend to read books that teach me something about history or the human experience or the way that language works.
I probably read novels and peer reviewed journal articles the most.
During the semester I mostly read class texts, but I occasionally have some pleasure reading simultaneously. When I read for pleasure I mostly read novels, philosophical texts, and meditation/self-help books.
Mostly stuff from class since its required for me to be able to pass the class. I also read a lot of science fiction since I find it super interesting.
I primarily read news articles on the midterms and the guy in the White House, not because I find it relaxing (far from it), but because I'm concerned about the future of our country. I also read for classes/class assignments.
Mostly stuff for class. However, when I read for myself, I tend towards the short stories (and some longer works, but rarely) posted on various websites (fanfiction.net has some gems, despite its reputation). Despite this, if I'm given the choice, I do prefer hard copies, so if I can, I purchase those.
Fiction novels
Novels, they are most interesting to me
fantasy novels
Books
Non fiction from bookshops, classic fiction free online
I mostly read books on my kindle for the convenience, but sometimes I purchase novels from Half Priced Books.
80% of what I read is stuff for class. Also read stories o wattpad/AO3 (=fanfiction)
Mostly nineteenth-century British fiction and poetry, read in physical books because I love the era and I love having a book in my hands. I will read poems online if needed, and have only ever read the aforementioned silly fanfiction on my laptop.
Whatever novels we have in our home library.
Fiction and adventure, prefer medium to long stories
books and reddit
Books for classes.
Mostly information on the internet
News articles online to keep up to date, textbooks/journal articles for uni study/assignments, short stories related to League of Legends for my own entertainment
Text in my AP english class
Physical books, either new, secondhand or from the library
Novels/books
Physical books
Stuff for class, because I have to
Nonfiction, comedy, classics, mystery, fiction. Usually from the library
Ah, I mostly read academic philosophy books. Sometimes, I might find myself browsing the web for fanfiction.
Short stories found on several places, mostly Reddit or fanfiction websites. Sometimes material for university, however it is notably being phrased out.
library or public domain
Novels or non-fiction

Do you ever yearn to read? Why or why not?
Maybe if the context was something of interest
Nope because I don't have time to think about it
yes, if it is appealing to my interests
Yes because it can be a knowledgeable and calming activity
Yes because when I find something I'm really interested in it's so great
Yes because I love to be engaged and imagine what the reader is saying
Yes, it's peaceful alone time
yeah, because it is fun and really nice to just unwind.
Yes, I love reading but I never have the time to do so. Sometimes when I'm bored, I just pick up a random book and start looking through it.
I do, because I'm so busy I'll miss the feeling of picking up a new book and getting really into the story
Yes
Yes when I need to learn or want to understand something more closely
Yes but that yearning derives from a place of wanting to escape to another world or to explore someone else's misfortunes (such as with true crime) in order to escape my own
Always.
Recently yes lol of the knowledge in the book
almost always have reading material at hand
Yes I especially want to be reading fiction, because it doesn't feel like studying and I can escape from the news and my real life.
Yes--I just want more time
Yes, over summer I have the tendencies to want to read but lack the time or opportunity to. This is due to work and summer school.
Yes, I yearn to let my mind wander to somewhere else where deadlines and societal rules don't apply. But I never have the time nor the ability to get out of my head that often.
Not especially. I yearn for new things to think about and sometimes that comes to me in the form of books, but not always
No, and I feel like the book I have to read really has to capture my attention. It really has to be about something I like or enjoy or find interesting and from a young age I have always been forced to read books and materials that did not fit under that category so it just turned me off to the whole idea of reading
I would say that in my professional life, I think of reading as a reprieve from writing. I yearn to understand things that I don't really understand yet, but I don't super yearn to read just because of reading. Unless its in a specific context. I love some great non-fiction reading at the beach or when I'm really trying to relax and I'm not at home. For me, I love to read, but it takes dedicated time, so I often feel like I want to have more uninterrupted time to read.
Yeah, quite a lot. I have a giant list of books I want to read.
Yes, I sometimes have days where all I want to do is read a good book
I do yearn to read, especially fictional works, because it'd be nice to escape to a fictional world now and again.
It depends on what "yearn" means in this context. If it here means "want," then yes, sometimes, there's many authors I find engaging enough to seek out. If "yearn" here means "wanting something unavailable," then not particularly, since there's nothing actually preventing me from reading.
YES because it gives me a chance to relax and live in someone else's world
Yes, I love reading and often miss the book I am currently reading when I am not reading
no, I read whenever I feel like it so I don't have to yearn for it
Yes, sometimes. I read alot as a kid and wish I could read more, but school and work get in the way, along with video games
Not really,
Yes, I do sometimes yearn to read. I like diving deep into a book and getting lost in the stories.
Dont know
Yes, because reading is pleasurable and is the best escape, and sometimes one just wants to sit on one's lazy bum all night and learn about Egyptian dynasties, early church history, and cat breeds on Wikipedia.
Not really. It's more often just "a thing to do before bed", like if there's not enough time for a TV show, or I can't be bothered to go to the other room to watch something (we have a strict "no screens" policy in bed, so we don't wreck our sleeping habits)
Yes, because I used to read so much as a kid. But it's hard to find really engaging books now. Hard to sort out all the bad ones.
No. If I'm going to do something for myself, it should be something necessary and/or enjoyable. And for me, reading is neither.
Not really anymore. Too many other things I have to do.
Yes. Mainly to learn new information.
No. Just doesn't appeal to me anymore
YES. I used to read a lot and I miss diving into a book.
Always, because it expands my world
Yes
Wish I read more
Not really - too much effort
Yes. I love reading. It's stress relief for me
Yes. I get anxious when I don't get to read at least a chapter each day.
No, because I think reading isn't very suitable for me as a pastime.
yes. distraction during solitary meals is best with things which stay open e.g. newsprint or magazine, else I would read even more books
Yes pretty much every day

When you read would you say you read more for pleasure or requirement (classwork/etc.?)
Requirement
Requirement
both, depends on what I am reading
I currently read more for requirement due to the scientific journals I read for my classes.
Pleasure
Pleasure
Requirement
for pleasure
Right now, I'm reading more for requirement, since my writing class forces us to do a lot of reading.
I read more for pleasure
Requirement
I'd say for pleasure
Pleasure for sure. Required reading bores me even if the content is good the fact I have to do something within a certain amount of time agitates me
Everything is a pleasure to read.
Pleasure
pleasure
I read both equally.
Requirement - work
It's a mixture of both.
Requirement.
Pleasure
Definitely more for requirement
Somewhere in between, I think. Part of my work is staying interest in rhetoric and language and human behavior, but mostly I'm just interested in those things anyways, so it becomes kind of work and kind of pleasure. I read for pleasure and to learn professionally and personally. I probably read a little more for "learning," but I do a lot of reading for many reasons.
I'd say it's probably 50/50 but it depends on my course load and how much reading is required.
A bit of both, at this point mostly for requirement.
Requirement.
Requirement, typically.
Most of the reading I do is required but I prefer to read for pleasure
Pleasure
pleasure
Pleasure
It's probably 40/60 pleasure school
Pleasure
More for requirement because I have to read a lot to pass classes (medical school).
Pleasure. I finished my postgraduate studies two years ago, and during that time I was definitely reading more for lectures. I still did, though, have [limited] time to read for pleasure
Mostly for distraction, honestly. Reading is fine, but I'm usually in bed like a half hour or so before I feel tired / "have to" be asleep, so I pass the time reading
Pleasure
pleasure
Work.
Class
Pleasure
Requirement
Requirement now.
Pleasure
Pleasure
Pleasure
Requirement
Pleasure
I read mostly for pleasure.
Both, but slightly more than usually requirement.
pleasure
Pleasure, at the moment

When you read for pleasure, would you define your reading material to be "for entertainment"? If not, how would you define your reading material?
Things to keep me more informed
Yes entertainment
for entertainment
Yes
Yes for entertainment
Yes more for entertainment
Entertainment or knowledge
Its for my entertainment only choosing books based on the summaries
Yes, I would. When I read in my free time, usually its for me to do something or because I truly enjoy the book.
My reading is for fun, or for entertainment. When I'm bored of scrolling through my phone I'll pick up a book or read the news or something
Yes definitely entertainment
Entertaining yet educational
My reading material is definitely for entertainment I like reading stuff that takes me away from life as I know it.
All reading can be entertaining. Are you entertained by my responses? Is this not some sort of work or class assignment? See there? You are smiling. And now you are going to yawn. Pretty cool, huh?
No, reading for knowledge and improving aspects of my life
entertainment
Yes it is mainly for entertainment
Interesting things I'm interest in, so I suppose entertainment fits
Yes, however I also read to get more understand of events and scientific breakthroughs. Or data in certain topics that interest me.
Most of the time I'm reading new articles that are shoved into my face by ads when I do end up reading "for pleasure" but I do love a good novel.
Its for entertainment, yes
Yes, for entertainment.
I wouldn't necessarily say "for entertainment." I would probably say instead "for knowledge." I suppose it could be entertainment if you consider that I genuinely enjoy learning new things, which could be a form of entertainment.
I read nonfiction books for pleasure, but sometimes that is to learn-I just find learning pleasurable. I also read some pure entertainment reads.
For entertainment to help me fall asleep is usually the reason
Yes, I would define it as being for entertainment.
No. As stated above, I read mostly to keep abreast of current events and nerd out about elections.
I would! When I read for pleasure, I focus more on the quality of the plot than the formal aspects of the work.
Yes
Yes, for entertainment
yes, entertainment and escapism
Its for entertainment
For information and knowledge, which I find entertaining
It is for entertainment but it also to gain different perspectives and expand my grasp on the English language. I at times prefer reading to movies or tv because reading is more stimulating to me.
Yes
Entertainment? I read what I read because they're academic interests and are intriguing to study, but it's also fun. Some things are more "for fun" than for academics, though.
Everything I read provides enjoyment. I don't see the point in reading something I don't enjoy. But that could be either the enjoyment of a good story, or learning about something new and interesting.
Yes, for entertainment
I enjoy educational and lighter reading. Just depends
Yeah, if I read for pleasure it's almost always fiction for entertainment
Yes
Yes
Yes entertainment
For entertainment but not exclusively. Also for escapism, education, to challenge myself. Endless reasons!
Sure, but also for curiosity, or learning from different viewpoints or life experiences/culture.
Not entertainment, no. More factual stuff to learn stuff e.g. history, culture, travel, language, religion, science etc. I think there's far too much entertainment in the Western world these days. We need to focus on being better people for the benefit of ourselves and others rather than being more entertained people. That just creates self-centred individ
Yes
Entertainment and for relaxation
I read philosophy books to enhance my knowledge and educate myself more on the field, as I plan to pursue further studies in philosophy. The learning I get in the process is what gives me pleasure/entertainment/satisfaction.
I would define it as such, maybe a bit more to "take inspiration" or "bun time".
learning is entertainment
Yes

Would you consider books/ stories that are to be read for pleasure as "trash" reading?
No
Nope
not at all
No, but there are "trash" readings. Those that have poor stories and grammar and such
No
no
No
no because to each his own books
Sometimes, depending on the book I am reading. There are books that are published from Wattpad, and I find them pretty grotesque. I do enjoy a sappy story once in a while, but sometimes I dislike the writer's style and language, and the characters seem much more annoying and horrible than they were intended.
no
Pleasure
No
No. I think there is a thin line for books that are entertaining. Those are the books that are obviously written for a dull and brainless audience. Entertainment is embedded in a lot of qualities of life and humans love that kind of stuff. Books don't always have to take a critical role to be valuable, because it could be even something small in a book that
Only if I am reading said material in a dumpster.
Not all of but most of them.
not at all
No
Nope.
No. Reading is never "trash" in my opinion.
No
Absolutely not
No
Not at all. I think that kind of reading is really essential for many people. I think a lot about rhetoric and how people are socialized, and for that reason, I find that all types of reading are important and meaningful, even if they aren't genres that I myself seek out. I think that suggesting that some reading is important and others isn't sends the wrong
I don't think anything is trash reading.
No, that's mean. (
No not at all.
Sometimes. If you're talking about books you'd find in the magazine/ reading aisle of a grocery store, sure. Books that are consumed in the mainstream I generally consider to be "trash"—although I by not to judge books by their covers.
It would depend on the quality of the writing.
No
No
not at all
No
Never!
It does depend on what you are actually reading for pleasure. For example, if you are reading People magazine for pleasure I would consider that "trash" reading. Otherwise, I generally do not see reading for pleasure as "trash" reading. Fiction books that are read for pleasure can still have a lot of value to the reader.
Not at all
Depends on the book. Mills & Boon books, IMHO, are usually read for pleasure and are trash. I read Thomas Hardy for pleasure, and I doubt that this would widely be considered trash.
Absolutely not! Life is for living and having fun, not for being boring and and doing stuff you hate. If you enjoy reading "crappy" stories, that's fine - you do what's right for you.
Sometimes, but they don't have to be
no
No.
No? Why would it be?
No. Everyone has the right to read whatever they wish for pleasure.
No
NO
No!
No way. Yes, there are books I might consider to be pretty low quality or "trash," but to view all non-academic or non-fiction work as trash is just wrong.
Not always. Some.
No. It is perfectly reasonable to want to read for pleasure, just as someone might want to watch movies for pleasure or eat for pleasure without being a judge on masterchef
No
Definitely not. Trash reading certainly isn't limited to "pleasure books".
Absolutely not, unless this was the author's intention.
only trash if poor grammar, layout, spelling, etc. was not intended by author
Maybe

When you read for requirement, do you ever find it pleasurable? If so, what was the material?
Not at all
Sometimes. the material is on anthropology
yes, economic theory type of stuff such as game theory
I sometimes found it pleasurable but in high school it was often "in the way". However I did love The Kite Runner and To Kill a Mockingbird. I enjoy some of the academic journals I read now.
No.
sometimes
Yes, chemistry
I only find it pleasurable if it would be something I would read on my own once I start reading
Yes, there were times when my teacher forced us to read books and gave us quizzes to ensure that we have read the material. I didn't expect to like "Pride and Prejudice" or "The Great Gatsby," but they turned out to be some of my favorite books.
no, unless it's something that I find genuinely interesting
Yes The Maynard James Keenan book A Perfect Union of Contrary Things
Yes, when reading about historical events or some obscure topics
No.
I enjoy reading about gardening since I work in the gardening industry. One example would be the periodical Maximum Yield.
No.
always pleasurable to learn something
Yes. If it's a new scientific study or concept I have never heard of.
Yes. Work that I'm interested in and have the opportunity to spend time with. Novels, poetry, arguments...
Some materials I am fascinated by new and old studies conducted within the sciences. I am also interested in reading about teaching methods.
Yes, I love reading about psychology so whenever I have some good material from class I find it pleasurable.
Yes. Its usually really boring technical material so I try to personally the instruments. Instead of reading "avoid contamination of assay" I read "dont get the machine too dirty or it'll be mad"
Only one time have I read for requirement and it was actually pleasurable and that was back in high school. We had to read a book for English class and as I forced myself to read it I actually started to like what it was about.
Yes. Pretty much anything that was assigned in my field- articles, books, and research in rhetoric, composition, and linguistics is all fascinating to me- though, for sure, some material is more useful and interesting than other material.
I often find the materials I am required to read pleasurable because I get to see new perspectives and learn from that material.
Yeah, pretty much all of my core humanities readings (except Plato). Some of the short stories from the medieval era were genuinely hilarious
Yes, I do sometimes find it pleasurable such as for my Core Humanities classes the historical readings were very interesting.
Absolutely. I've read journal articles in the history field that open my eyes to new concepts, ideas, or events, and that to me is pleasurable.
Yes. In ENG 281 (Introduction to Literature), we read some short stories that I found really engaging. The Seagull reader has some excellent pieces.
Yes, when I was in introductory classes that were reading fiction instead of science articles
Yes, the material is peer-reviewed articles from academic journals
not usually unless it's about a topic I am already really interested in
Very rarely. I am reading Homo Deus by Yuval Noah Harari for my Composition course, and it was very interesting. I usually never find assigned reading interesting
Rarely
Sometimes I find it pleasurable, but I rarely am required to read anything that people would find pleasurable. I am an accounting student, therefore, most of my required reading consists of accounting textbooks and accounting guidance.
Yes! Sometimes medical books explain stuff very well and everything makes sense. Also lots of symptoms/diseases... are very interesting!
I have in the past, and to me, it truly depends on the material. Some good "forced" reads that I studied were loads of Elizabethan & Jacobean literature (at ~16 or so?), Ancrene Wisse (surprisingly, I enjoyed studying it!), and actually many others. Not enjoyed: scholarly articles about non-literary topics, African-American literature, and Twilight (it was almost never. I resent being told what to do in general, so when I had assigned reading in high school, even if the book was otherwise fine, I despised being forced into it.
I can't think of any
meh, I always skimmed required reading. I love learning but the textbooks were always too repetitive for me
Some books I had to read in grade school were enjoyable.
Sometimes. Books from school I have really enjoyed include Macbeth, Othello, and The Book Thief.
No
Some topics can be, especially ones related to sociology and psychology. I am studying hospitality so those aren't very often though
Yes! Lots of things that are just interesting to me!
Almost always, because I've chosen to be in that situation in the first place. For example essays about art when in university
There were probably a few works of fiction I had to read in school that I had a mild interest in, but I'd say that's pretty rare for a requirement.
Sure because I enjoy my job and the subject I work with.
I often find it pleasurable when it's for classes I like and am interested in. So if we have to read something for chemistry or biology I enjoy it because I am interested in those subjects
Sometimes. Shakespeare
Depends on the material. I struggle reading up on a subject I don't care about. Unless it's psych or philo
Pleasurable is another thing, however I am certainly not complaining when I must read about computer algorithms.
fiction for English credit?
Yes. I read some good novels and essays for college. Others were an ordeal to read.

What is your most memorable experience with reading? (Please be thorough)
Finding book that pertain to my interest
I love being in the library and I remember trying to read Harry Potter books in one day. I remember reading to the point where I won this prize for being the best reader in the elementary school I was at.
reading as many books as I could in elementary school in order to win a pizza party for my class. It was the most reading I have done (80+ books in a span of a week) We did win the pizza though!
My most memorable moment was reading The Kite Runner and having all the signs pointing to a theme of redemption line up in my head as the story climaxed and feeling connected to the story and meaning.
Reading the Masque of the Red Death when I was younger really pulled me in and I couldn't put it down and eve. Read it multiple times and I still sometimes still read it!
My most memorable experience of reading is that it felt enjoyable and casual
Reading dystopian novels "We" and "Handmaid's tale"
Being in 4th grade and my teacher Mr Lopez doing out loud reading and he was reading Number the Stars by Lois Lowry. I remember him being so into the story and so much excitement or drama to the book, bringing it to life. I was so interested I asked to borrow the book, because I wanted to finish it on my own which I did. I loved the book so much.
I like reading in the summer, because it gives me a good feeling about the life I'm living. In a lot of coming-of-age novels such as "Catcher in the Rye," I found that I could relate to the main character and I stopped feeling like I was the only one who was experiencing the wildest emotions. Sometimes, when I'm sad, it's reassuring to read a book where
When I was little my parents would take me to a used bookstore once a month and let me buy 3 books, and I would get home and immediately start one of the books. I remember I would read all day, everyday until I finished the books I had bought and then I'd eagerly and impatiently wait until my next bookstore trip to find 3 more books I could dev
True Crime books is all that I read
Probably the stories and books read in my eng 033 course
I remember reading this book when I was very young that involved a dog passing away. It was part of this strange animal rescue series that I wish I knew the name of. Anyway, I remember reading the part about the dog passing and crying so much because I thought of those ASPCA commercials and that moment validated in my young mind!
When I was interviewed for an article in High Times about POE trolling. I was in character as Wanda Gritzwald and we ran a Facebook page called Fox Online where we made fun of the hard right and their anti-cannabis propaganda. It was a hoot.
When I get the thrill of excitement when reading this one self-help book.
The Hobbit series including National Lampoons "Bored of the Rings" Rudyard Kiplings "Plain Tales from the Hills" Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged". The Bible. Numerous mystery stories, too many to count starting with "Nancy Drew" in 4th grade.
The most memorable experience is reading about someone sick. She had cancer as a teenager. She recovered, then she got it again and it was more aggressive than ever. She tried so many different methods of treatment. She lost her hair and in her perspective the treatments were big blurs.
I remember finally being able to read a book by myself at the age of 8. I was a slow reader because English was my second language. It was a huge accomplishment for me to be able to read a book. That sparked my interest in reading anything I could.
I was obsessed with reading these books about a tribe of cats called, "Warriors" in middle school. I would fight people in the library for the next novel I needed in the series. I was obsessed.
My mom reading Harry Potter books to me and my siblings before bed. Her voice was amazing.
I was back in high school, I think the 10 or 11th grade and we had to read this one book. I don't remember the full title but I just know it had "Pat Time Indian" in it. Every day after school and practice I would find myself wanting to finish my homework so I could read a little more of it each night.
I grew up reading Dr. Seuss a lot, and when I was in high school, I did a project where I researched his perspective and strategies as a great American author (I first had to present my teacher with an argument that he in fact qualified as a great American author). As I started researching, I realized that so many of the books I loved from when I was
I am the youngest of five children. I remember a book mobile coming through our neighborhood each week when I was young. My whole family would pile onto the bus to choose books. We were such voracious readers that they had to change their driving pattern so we would be the last house and not take all of the books for the whole neighborhood.
When I was a kid I read every single Magic Treehouse book over and over. It was really interesting because I got to experience the fantasy genre through a somewhat historical lens. Every book was something completely different and I just remember feeling so excited by how much history there was that I could learn and read about.
My most memorable experience with reading was when I was around 8 years old. My parents were still going through a brutal divorce and it was beginning to take a toll on me. At one point it got so bad I had to start going to therapy in order to make sure I was coping with the stressful situation. This continued for many years and the only thing that
It's difficult to single one out as the most memorable. I will say that many of my most memorable experiences in reading center around required texts that I later became enamored with. In my freshman year of undergrad, I read excerpts of philosophical texts by Plato and Kant, which was my first time being really absorbed in philosophy. Another class
I remember finishing, in the fourth grade, the last Harry Potter book at my grandmother's house. I'd read the previous six the year before, so it enhanced the world around me faded away (which never happened before, and hasn't since.) In those days, I tended to read ahead if a certain section of a book was boring, so I'd already read said ending a c
The most memorable experience with reading that I have is reading the Lovely Bones for the first time when I was around 12 years old. The experience was memorable because it was a very explicit and graphic book, and also because it was instantly a favorite book of mine.
reading the Harry Potter novels as a child - pre-ordering them, getting them on day of release and just sitting down to read the book in one day.
I read Inkheart series when I was 9, I read non stop and finished the last book in 2 days. 2-reading divergent and 5th wave under the covers of my bed in the middle of the night having just flown to Australia and struggling to get over jet lag. 3-I read all of tomorrow, when the war began in a couple of weeks, I was obsessed.
I have two similar examples. When I was in elementary school and began reading Harry Potter, I remember my love for the fantasy genre blossoming. I had a similar situation with Orson Scott Card's Enderverse that got me interested in science fiction.
There was a book about a murder, and the main suspect was an autistic boy. The story is told via multiple points of view (the dead girl, the autistic boy, his mom), and slowly we get different details from each point of view that shape the story as a whole. Also, reading the same scene (where the autistic boy was "making a scene") as told by himself
One of my most memorable experiences with reading was discovering Shakespeare at sixteen-- really getting Shakespeare. I'd first read Romeo and Juliet two years prior, and The Tempest and his sonnets the year before, but digging into and really analysing Othello, King Lear, Hamlet, and the sonnets sparked something in me in a literary sense.
I re-read some Roald Dahl stories recently, since I enjoyed them when I was younger, and while I liked revisiting his wacky world, I realize that the writing definitely feels child-oriented in a way that alienates older readers (compared to other writers, notably JK Rowling, whose work is child friendly, but can be more easily enjoyed by adults too). Like
I'd rather not be. But I remember a few really emotional scenes.
this is a great question :) in my parents front yard, on the grass, under the shade of our big pine trees, on a warm summer day. I was about 11 or 12. Then some men who were doing work for us pulled up, and said "you love to read don't you?". They were slightly creepy so I went inside.
My most memorable experience was not a certain event, but over a period in my life where I would read fiction novels every day. I liked to place myself in the protagonist's shoes. It was my escape from reality.
Reading the game of thrones books when all my friends were at about 13-14yo
I remember reading all these series as a middle schooler.
Hunger games, Divergent, Harry Potter, selection, etc. I would just DEVOUR them.
Lying in bed on a weekend drinking coffee and reading an engaging novel without being interrupted.
After picking up the seventh Harry Potter book at the midnight release, I stayed up until 7 or 8 AM reading it before falling asleep. I just couldn't stop!
When I was 16, I was dumped by my first boyfriend. He was my first love, so I was devastated. I was so depressed I couldn't eat, I didn't leave the house all summer. To escape the pain, I picked up silence of the lambs, and read the rest of the books in the series. It didn't cheer me up, but it was the only way I could escape the pain I had in reality.
Reading a book for the second time after so many years and getting the same wistful feelings after finishing it again.
Reading the ending of my first book, about a primary school teacher who had gone missing, and his class went off to find him. Turns out their substitute teacher is of royal blood, and wished to stand in class to "better know his subjects".
I read the Series of Unfortunate Events as a child and I was always really excited for the new books to come out. Lots of other kids in my class read them too.
A few times when the new book came out my dad would come to my school during my lunch break and bring it to me. :)

What would you say inhibits you the most from reading? (Lack of interest, too busy, more interested in digital media, etc.)
Lack of interest
Too busy
too busy
Lack of patience
Having time but not using it to read. Putting reading as my last priority
Too busy
homework.
I'd say that time is the biggest factor that prevents me from reading more. Now, I'm using my time to do homework and attend classes, and even participating in clubs. And at night, I usually sleep pretty early so I don't have the opportunity to crack open a book. It's becoming more difficult for me to read because I don't really have the time to.
I'm always really busy and I can't seem to find time to sit down and read
Medical my eyes are getting worse and worse as I get older
Lack of time
I'd say the fact that digital media exists is enough to keep me from reading. I can scan five different sites within the course of ten minutes whereas in ten minutes with a book my mind is so used to the digital flow that reading feels grueling and taxing
Sleeping.
Lack of interest
I read everything. Licence plates, billboards, etc.
Too busy
Time and vision issues.
Scheduling and lack of interest
I'm busy reading classwork that tire my eyes out so when I do have time to read or do anything fun I end up on the internet or asleep
Time management. I can't read for 30 minutes and be satisfied. When I read, it must be until I feel "ya, thats enough for now" Could be 10 pages, could be 100, could be 5.
Definitely lack of interest and then distractions like television, social media, video games, friends.
I guess actually a form of reading is what most inhibits me from reading (at least what inhibits me from reading things I would go out and buy). Grading is what inhibits me from reading, but not necessarily in a bad way. Teaching writing means that a huge percentage of what I read is from my students. By the time I grade 80 student essays, I just
Lack of time when I am not distracted
Books can be expensive and I genuinely hate reading on digital formats.
I would say I'm just too busy for reading. In working two jobs and having a full credit load it can be very difficult to even get my homework done let alone read for fun.
I tend to either be too busy with school and other obligations, or just have such a shortened attention span that few books hold my interest.
I'm more interested in video games, to be honest!
Time and focus
Too busy
lack of free time, too much time spent online (on social media, watching netflix etc)
Too busy, focused on video games and social media
I watch television and listen to podcasts, so I don't feel like I'm missing out on the storytelling aspect of it, and I can't concentrate on just words without my mind wandering
When I get really busy, reading is sometimes thrown to the wayside because I get tired and reading becomes more difficult to commit to.
Lack of interest because the last few books I've picked up have been disappointing/didn't even finish them :/ But also more interest in phone/cp. (faster and quickly engaging media)
I'm busy with a full-time job and am trying to have a baby, but I do have enough time to read and consider at least a poem a day. I'm also a poet, and that takes up time as well.
Distracted by other media, mostly.
Not much time, can't tell which books will be good
distractions
Lack of interest.
Busy
I use psychoactive substances to escape reality now.
All 3 of those prompts, plus I don't want to spend money on downloading/buying/renting out books online or from libraries and stores
Im so busy now :(
Time
Currently, nothing. A few years ago, I wasn't reading much (compared to the fair amount I read growing up), but now that I have my kindle I'm reading all the time. I prefer checking out library books over purchasing, and it's so easy to check out library ebooks!
Lack of time
Digital media has made it hard for me to want to read a whole book, since it instead allows instant entertainment without much work. I wish I could read more but digital media definitely distracts me.
I have a baby that hates sleeping, so when I have free time with no kids, I try to sleep. I'm perpetually exhausted
School requirements stressing me out, basically, my procrastination issues,
These days it's mostly me being busy, and classical reading material is being phased out across society.
library licenses materials infected by drm https://www.defectivebydesign.org/what_is_drm_digital_restrictions_management
Working (being too tired), easier to sit down to watch a show/youtube videos

Have you ever had an experience with reading that affected you emotionally? (Reading a book upset you, caused you to cry/get excited)
No
Yes
no
Yes the fault in it stars made me cry
An experience where it made me cry and think about life
Yes if a story is well written I get excited to read it
yes.
Yes, it happens a lot more than I care to admit. For example, one book that resonates with me to this day is "Perks of Being a Wallflower" because like the main character, I have trouble fitting in and making friends. I'm usually a bystander in almost everything, and I usually hear things that go on but never really know what's going on. I think if the b
Yes, I've experienced many emotions while reading. I've cried, felt excited, scared and anxious for characters
Animal stories always upset me
No
Previously mentioned
You ever read the end of the Dark Tower series?
Yes, get excited
I've laughed, I've cried, I've kissed Sbucks goodbye.
Yes I cry a lot and get excited a lot from reading
Yes
I read certain books when I want a good cry. I was not able to finish "milk and honey" because it resonated with me and I was not ready to open that part of my life back up.
I cried when I read a John Greene book. I can't remember why or what book, but any John Greene book would probably get me.
Yes. The book was called Toes and I was at that age where the world expands beyond the perimeter of your house so this book really spoke to me, as a kid.
Yes, I had read something that made me get a little mad before at what was happening and excited too.
Absolutely! Just yesterday I was reading a history about mental illness that involved a chapter about the Holocaust which I had to stop reading because it was making me cry while on a plane. Even things that seem relatively emotionally neutral can impact me emotionally because I'm thinking about how it affects people in ways that are complicated
I have definitely had books make me laugh out loud and make me sob.
The characters in the Thomas Harris novels felt so real to me. I really ended up connecting with them throughout the series. Even Hannibal Lecter, oddly enough
Yes, there have been a few books regarding certain human experiences that have made me cry and feel like I could almost see and feel the emotion the character was feeling.
Sure. I cried after Sirius Black died in Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix.
My friends write some pretty heavy stuff sometimes, and it tends to leave me kind of sad. But I've never cried, or anything that extreme.
Yes
Yes, I have cried in reaction to books before, gotten nervous, scared, or angry.
yes
Yes, I have cried when people die in books. I cried at a death in the Eragon series by Christopher Paolini
Wolfbrother at the start when the wolf cub's family died in the flood, all from the view of the cub. Finishing 5th wave and tomorrow when the war began and realising that, unlike in so many books, things can't just go back to how they were before, and they may have won the war but would have to live like that forever
Yes I have. If reading stories did not have an effect on me, then I probably would not be as inclined to read.
Reading Marley and Me made me cry like a bitch. Also, lots of fanfiction make me really involved with the characters to the point where I feel bad/happy if something bad/good happens to them. Only when the fanfiction is really well written and "realistic" tho
Of course. My favourite novel is Jude the Obscure, which I get upset and cluttery-feelings (not a word) about every time. I get nostalgically weepy about many books as well, particularly Lord of the Rings, which I reread every December, and Clive Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm. Oh, and I cried multiple times whilst reading the A Song of
Not recently. About the closest I can think of is reading some Shakespeare plays, and having a bit of fun at the expense of characters who do foolish things.
Oh, lots
all the time
The book, Racing in the Rain. The dog dies at the end. That made me come very close to crying. I haven't read it in a few years, but my dog has died since the last time I read it and if I read it again now I'd definitely cry.
Yes
The first hunger games book- I read it after I watched the first movie so was very excited to re-experience the story
Almost every book I've read! I remember the first book that made me cry (Counting By 7s) and a book that I deeply felt (Eleanor and Park)
All good books will do this
Yes
Flowers for Algernon made me cry. It is an amazing book.
Oh yes. This one book was such a tease. All that romantic tension with no explicit direction. You're left stuck on that "wishing they get together" phase by the time the book ends.
Nothing quite of an outburst. I think it's because of the way in which schools "force" reading upon you and made the process uninteresting. That being said, a few plot twists in novels have left me very surprised.
bridge to abrabitha
All the time

Do you think reading to be important? Why? Can you relate this to you? (Example: It teaches us certain moralistic values. I feel I have learned...)
Teaches reading and writing skills along with informing us
Yes because books gives us knowledge and wisdom that we cant really get anywhere else
yes, it teaches you to appreciate the views of other people and allows you to learn from what others have to say. Everything you read has a meaning, you just have to find that meaning and see how it is applicable to one's life.
Yes because you can gain various kinds of knowledge through reading
It is important because it nourishes our brain cells, helps us asks questions and enables us to take actions on certain things. It is a powerful tool.
Yes for the reason stated (knowledge and morals)
yes because it teaches everyone to stimulate there brain in ways that we don't get when playing video games.
Reading is important because it's one of the ways we as humans can retrieve information. When we pass on information, we usually write it down and keep it somewhere, and I think that many people can learn from reading. I feel that I've learned more about myself and understood that some feelings are okay and natural, and reading is underpre
Yes, I do think reading is important. I read and comprehend readings a lot faster than my friends who didn't enjoy reading as children, and also it promotes expanding vocabularies. As a child and well into the beginning of college reading gave me an escape when I felt overwhelmed in my life so I think reading is super important
Reading will always be important
Yes very important to understanding
Reading is incredibly important. It is the language of the mind that isn't often communicate in day to day communication. Reading enriches perspectives, opens the mind to experiences, etc. Reading can be morally valuable, but it also functions as something that questions morally, challenged predisposed ideas, and so on. It's necessary for a well
Brain stimulus is kind of need-o
Yes, reading is important since people don't read enough
I love learning.
Yes I feel I have become more empathetic.
Yes. It teaches empathy and perspective taking.
Yes, I believe that reading helps us develop our cognitive and language skills. I believe that people who read more tend to be more academic, however, this is from my personal experience.
Reading is extremely important, I feel it is the best way to gain knowledge and open your mind to new ideas within your own imagination.
Yes. Its how you learn without a mentor. Books are mentors. Not all are good, but they all have something to offer
Yes reading is important, especially for the younger generations growing up because it does help to develop our minds and enlarges our capacity to learn other words.
Yes, in more ways than I can probably summarize. Reading is important because it teaches us about the things we don't know from our limited experience of being human. It prevents what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie calls "the myth of the single story," or seeing the world through one, or even a few, particular contexts and then using them to repr
I think reading is very important because it allows us to explore scenarios and think through how others respond and to consider how we might respond. Reading also builds our vocabulary so when we need to communicate with other people we have more tools in our toolbox. Reading also exposes us to ideas, people, etc. that we might not otherw
I think reading is important because each text you read offers you a new perspective based on the author who wrote it. I think being exposed to these new perspectives is a very valuable way to learn about the world and the people in it. Reading can help you understand why people think the things they do, or perhaps challenge certain biases or be
Yes, I think reading is very important because it allows one to escape into a world that is not their own. In everyday life we can get so caught up and overwhelmed that it can sometimes be very difficult to cope. In reading a book you can delve into a entirely new world and forget your own for a few chapters.
Absolutely. Reading an array of works and genres provides us with a more robust vocabulary and assortment of perspectives. It also provides us an empathetic and emotional understanding of the world. Sure, reading and being devout to one text—and one text only—can give us a detrimentally-narrow moralistic and ethical perspective of the world
Despite my lack of interest, I think it's important to be well read. The works we've come to consider "classics" gives good insight as to what cultural values a certain society holds dear (as do the works that, for whatever reason, are hoh/ considered classics.) There a way to view controversial topics from a safe distance and to gain empathy without (
Yes. Through reading we are absorbing language and life skills while also giving ourselves corrections for our every day lives
Yes, I think reading is important. It teaches us new perspectives, expands our worldly knowledge, gives us an opportunity to live in a world that is entirely between our brains and the text in front of us, and makes us smarter.
yes, I think it helps you to be smarter and reading about other cultures/people that are different from you etc can make you a more understanding and open person
Yes
Yeah, see from different perspectives
I find reading incredibly important, especially in this day and age of digital communication and content. Reading helps the reader to imagine things for themselves. It also helps the reader to really dive into someone else's world and world-view. Seeing another perspective can help people to understand each other better and be more apt to hear son
Not really sure, it can be a way to expand your horizons and way of thinking and knowledge, but there are other ways to gain the same benefit
Yes, yes, a hundred million times yes. Reading exposes one not only to structured vocabulary and syntax, but also to various cultures, viewpoints, topics, and interests. Reading is a broadener of the mind and self—and again, I doubt that "broadener" is even a word, but I reckon you get the point. I feel that I know more about myself and the w
It seems like it should be important, but it's hard to specify exactly how/why it is. I guess I'll settle with being a good source of literacy and vocabulary building, and maybe as a method of gaining insight to the society in the time and place a book was written (man, Roald Dahl really ****ing hated television)
Yes. I look up to the characters, and I actually think it's given me an outlook on life wherein I try to strive for ideals. I strive to be a good person who will do the right thing, like all those characters I love.
absolutely, you can go to new worlds, learn new things, experience great things, books are friends and adventures and with them, you're never alone
I dont think it's important, it's just a hobby, and not all hobbies are for everyone.
Reading is important. It exposes us to new ideas and new ways of thinking. It can teach us things too. We've been talking in my Spanish class about children's stories especially and how they're one of the ways we pass our values on to children.
I also think reading is important for vocabulary and spelling skills. I attribute my wide vocabulary to the fact that I read constantly through middle and elementary school. And now, when I have read much less over the past three years (4 books per year vs 4 books per month) I also find myself struggling to remember how to spell words. I used to know
Yes because it introduces individuals to new ideas from different perspectives and acts as a medium to open their creative mind.
For children and young teens especially, yes, because it's good for their imagination/creativity, to set goals and aspirations, to have idols (relating to morals/values)
YES! You learn about other's point and of view and how they look at the world. I have learned about divorced families, Native American lives in 2018, having OCD, being married, all types of things.
Reading is a fundamental part of my life. I am able to be a lifelong learner because I read.
Yes. It's wonderful to get lost in a story, and to go on a journey (an emotional journey, an actual journey, etc) with the characters. You can read about experiences totally different from your own, and build empathy.
It's a good discipline to get into.
It improves English. I read a lot as a kid, and I got very high grades in English and knew a lot of words simply because I spent a lot of time reading
Yes
Of course! You can learn a lot about reading. In turn, it also improves your writing and your speaking. You get to develop your ideas more concretely, the more you're confronted with viewpoints that challenge your perspective.
It is absolutely important, if not mandatory for everyone. It's part of the initial cultural digest which helps you find your interests in life. As for me, I found it enjoyable, just not to a very broad extent.
zen/patience/concentration
Yes extremely important

After reflecting on your reading habits via this questionnaire, do you think they will change? Why or why not? (Ex: deciding to read more because..., no change because...)

Maybe, if I ever find better options to read

No because I am busy

yes, I will actually try to read more when I have time just to be more informed about what is going on in life (news) and expand my horizon of books and authors.

Most likely not because habits are hard to change

I will most likely consider reading more especially hard copies

Someday, but not because of this questionnaire. I've planned to become more of a reader for a while

no because I think I read often and read good books and enjoy it

I want to read more, so I might incorporate it more into my schedule. Perhaps I might read more on the weekends, since I don't have class. Since I haven't been reading for fun anymore, I've decided that I'll pick up on my reading habits again to improve my skills and hopefully become better at reading quicker and more thoroughly.

I will probably try to read more, but things might not change because of my schedule

No I'm old school type lady ♥️

No change because I think reading is important and I integrate it into my daily life when possible

Yee man I definitely want to read more even if for a short amount of time to start it's something both necessary and therapeutic

I need to read about some people sending thoughts and prayers to my buddy so she doesn't get bed bugs. It will make me smile. And yawn. Yaawwwinnn! You just yawned again.

No, I will keep reading

I will remain a reader as long as I am able.

No change because I read a lot and I am busy. Maybe I will pick up a full fictional novel as I have mainly been reading short stories.

No change. I'm pretty aware of my reading habits already.

Yes, I am always changing and I might change to more of a critical reader in the years to come. Career wise I will continue to read and I hope to inspire students to do so as well.

No change (even though I want to) because I am very busy being a student. (

No. I can't. Its the time management, thing. I dont have time to read 100 pages and I cant predict when I will be satisfied so...

I do not believe they will be much change because I am so set in my ways, to be honest I think it would take a miracle for me to be able to change my reading habits.

I think that I'm always trying to find ways that I can read more fiction, because I know its important and can be really enriching. With that said, I'm not sure my reading habits will change drastically. Being an academic means that I've signed up to the reading game for life. Reflecting on my reading habits in this survey though has made me rethink I love reading, so I think I will keep looking for opportunities to read more.

Now I really just wanna buy some of the books on my wish list

Yes, I think in doing this it made me realize that I need to include more reading in my life and make sure I am allowing myself to escape once in a while.

They may change. I am certainly more conscious of why I read and to what end I do so because of pleasure or critical thought. This questionnaire has also prompted me to think about how I read more escapist, fictional texts, instead of being constantly absorbed in academia.

I doubt they'll change much, to be honest! Realizing how little I actually read on my own did make me feel kind of bad, though, so if it occurs to me, I might make a more concentrated effort to carve out time for that.

I hope I get to read more!

No, I have always been a heavy reader and always will be.

no, I do not have the free time to read as much as I'd like to

Nope.

Well I've already been trying to read more so I'll continue to change

No, my reading habits will not change. I have developed these habits over years and years of reading and I am content with my reading routine.

Probably will think about reading more/picking up a book just to try, but wont do anything in reality

My own reading habits will likely change regardless because having a baby means I'll be reading more frequently aloud. I will probably be reading even more poetry than usual. And best of luck with whatever you're using this questionnaire for!)

Not really, I'll probably just continue doing what I was already doing. It's just easier that way - I'm already in a comfortable routine.

Yes, maybe it is another straw added to the pile that keeps telling me "you need to read more".

no. books are a staple. I do wish I had a better place to read though.

No.

This survey is making me want to read more, but realistically, I probably won't. I'm a sleep deprived teenager with a million things to do and at the end of the day reading just isn't as appealing to me as it used to be.

No change because I'm satisfied with the amount of reading I do

No change, I already know why I don't read and I'm fine with that

No change because I am still too busy to read for leisure.

No change as I'm always reflecting on my reading habits already.

No change, because I'm happy with the rate of my reading!

Probably not. I wish I could read more but my child doesn't really allow that. One day when he's older I'll be able to read more

I wish I'm reading right now. And I should!! I just need to finish this homework first smh

I have always wanted to read more - but digital media proves more relevant...and time eludes me.

I may read copyright statute to learn what I am permitted to do about DRM

No

