

Books and Reading

If you ask people about their favourite leisure time activity, the answer you'll get quite often is reading books. People have always liked books. Even before the printing press was invented and most people were illiterate (they were not able to read), they loved looking at manuscripts (hand written books). In the past, being able to read was considered a unique achievement. After Guttenberg made printed books available to almost everyone, people fell in love with books. Each year, millions of books are written, sold, read and even presented as gifts on occasions such as birthdays and Christmas.

We had our first contacts with books in our childhood when our parents read fairytales to us. Books for children normally do not contain a lot of text but have a lot of pictures to catch the interest of small children. They are full of fantasy stories, and they teach kids to distinguish between what is bad and good. Probably the most famous authors of books for children are the immortal Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen.

There are books of various genres: Non-fiction books (textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, travel/history/art books and cookery books); **Fiction books** – poetry (poems, sonnets), prose (tales, short stories, novels, romances, crime stories, science fiction, thrillers, westerns and historical novels).

Teenagers and young people usually read adventures, science fiction, romances or novels. Adults, on the other hand, like to read detective stories, historical novels, and books of travellers or biographies. There are some people who enjoy reading poetry, but for most people this genre is not easy to read. Books (paperbacks or hardcovers) can be bought in a wide range of bookshops. Nowadays a lot of them are situated in shopping centres; in this way books are reachable for many people, but there are also highly specialized bookshops which offer literature for more advanced readers.

It has also become popular to buy books via the Internet. Many books already exist in electronic form – so-called e-books – so you can read them directly on your computer or on an e-reader. In addition, we can visit public

libraries where we can borrow books. However, people in our countries do not buy many books. There are two main reasons. The first one is that books are getting expensive, and many people cannot afford them. The second reason is a lack of free time. People are so busy that they don't have enough time for reading, especially reading books. They look up all the information they need on the Internet and when they want to relax, instead of reading they watch films. Reading a book takes maybe days or weeks, and a film takes only two hours. People don't need to concentrate so much on the plot and think about it because they see everything on the screen. Therefore, it is very important to develop a good relationship with reading and literature from one's childhood. Reading books gives people a lot of pleasure and enriches our lives. There are books that give us a chance to learn about the world around us. Other books give a lot of information and advice. Others are amusing. When we read, we can find an answer to many questions. It trains our imagination. Reading increases our vocabulary, and we become better speakers and writers. When reading books about people, we sometimes find that their lives are a mirror of our own; they help us to better understand the situations in our own lives, so we know how to make decisions. Books are like a remedy when we are tired or sad; it is a good way to escape from reality. Every year, the Nobel Prize for Literature is awarded to a writer whose work of fiction is considered to be outstanding. Some of the more famous Nobel Prize winners are, for example, Ernest Hemingway, Albert Camus, and John Steinbeck. Up to now the youngest Nobel Laureate was Rudyard Kipling; best known for *The Jungle Book*, he was 42 years old when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907.

Explain these sayings:

Do you agree with them?

Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counsellors, and the most patient of teachers.

~Charles W. Eliot

A good book has no ending.

~R.D. Cumming

Talk about your favourite book (author, brief plot, characters, main ideas/
message).