

Autobiography of a Reader

This is an invitation to talk, on paper, about what reading meant to you while you were growing up. It's an opportunity for you to recall, and record, the experiences that shaped your concept of what reading is, and the experiences that determined your attitude toward books and other forms of written language.

If you're a tireless, voracious reader, never stopping till you turn the last page of a book, you'll no doubt wish to focus on how your love of reading was born, and how it was nurtured. You'll write a different story, of course, if reading is not one of the joys of your life, and if you read only when a teacher tells you to.

Whatever kind of reader you are, I hope the questions asked here will take you into some self-involving writing. For writing this autobiography--and then listening attentively as you read it--could help you become a more perceptive and thoughtful reader.

Like most folks who write autobiography, you may wish to begin with your earliest memories--of the written language in this instance. For example:

- The word games you learned to play, and the reading lessons you saw and heard, while watching *Sesame Street* or another TV program.
- The brand names you learned to recognize--first on TV commercials, and then on the shelves of the supermarket.
- The first word games you played with your family, at home or on long trips.
- The sound and rhythm of a loving voice reading your favorite story, singsonging the nursery rhymes you loved, repeating the familiar words, talking about the familiar pictures. That voice may be your first memory of books. Listening to it, night after night, may be the first ritual you remember. If so, tell your reader about that significant reading experience.
- The first book you read all by yourself. or the first verse you memorized. If you remember, or if your parents have told you about it, talk about this happy experience.