

## Pile Up That Bookshelf

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Whenever I come across biographies of well-known authors, it is a commonality that they all had a reading habit since they were young, and many had a home library available to them in their parents' bookshelves. In fact, many famous writers used to be librarians. Lewis Carroll (*Alice's adventures in Wonderland*), Madeleine L'Engle (*A Wrinkle In Time*) are two examples.

Even in this generation of ebooks, audiobooks or kindle, many authors have such all-inclusive personal libraries of their own, it would give anyone shelf envy.

Indeed, we mustn't limit our reading habits only to sit for exams or attain jobs as the benefits of reading transcend all limitations.

Learning anything new is a gift one gives to oneself, and imagine if that gift is a language!

However, those not inclined to read often claim that reading is a slow learning process; nothing could be further from the truth.

As the human brain remembers more when it sees, books provide visual cues effectively. Books have a more prosperous and broader vocabulary than a spoken language does; thus, we become confident communicators due to improved vocabulary and language skills.

Books allow one to gain a great deal of knowledge and enhance the ability to think critically. An avid reader understands different cultures, the ways of the world, and s/he discovers life beyond the known.

The radio was invented in 1864 and the television in 1927. Yet, in his novel 'A Journey to the Centre of the Earth', which was published in 1864, the prolific French author Jules Verne gave a vivid description of Iceland's landscape, people, and habitat. But, how could the author, who had never been to Iceland in his life, sketch such elaborate illustrations?

Jules had read about Iceland extensively.

So why not let books inspire, enlighten and motivate us? In fiction or fantasy, any book is a source of inspiration and information that can propel us to be creative and open.

Though a range of boxes has replaced the seventeenth-century peepshow boxes to whisk us away to different parts of the world and even to the celestial bodies, nothing can replace the power and creativity our imagination may provide. Fortunately, reading creates that opportunity for us.

Books enrich the mind and spirit, and that is precisely why we must incentivize children to grow a fondness for reading. When a young mind falls in love with reading, s/he automatically develops autonomy, which means that our young readers become capable of taking responsibility for their learning and following them through. Luckily, it is not all that difficult to help them cultivate a healthy reading habit; a bookshelf with the proper collection is sure to draw them in like toddlers to candy.

Moreover, books provide a safe space for quiet contemplation. No wonder Leah Price, an American literary critic, said, "A self without a shelf remains cryptic; a home without books naked." A bookshelf is an expression of one's self. It provides an evocative glimpse of the owner's taste, interest and life. On the other hand, a home without books is akin to prison within oneself: a lonely place devoid of the voices of company and with no view of the outside world.

Again, books act as memorabilia, reminding us of certain times in our lives when we read some of our favourites. Just as photos from our travel experiences keep our memories sharp and we can revisit these memories time and time again, books also provide us with endless opportunities to experience exotic locations, new continents and daydream about exciting adventures.

Importantly, every reader is a traveller. Have we not witnessed the lush greenery of the Shire and peered into the comfortable and cosy hobbit-hole long before the movie 'The Hobbit' came out?

Books ignite our mind to remarkable heights of insight and artistry, feed our curiosities and open the mind to simpler realizations. We are only required to relax and allow ourselves to be immersed and enchanted. The simple act of reading will exercise the brain, and the intellectual stimulation will in turn empower us. Besides alleviating any apprehension or depression, it can also bring positivity to our lives.

So, sit back in the comfort of your special couch and experience the fascinating world, dive into the depths of the mysterious ocean and rise to meet the graceful heavens. All you need to do is answer to the quiet, cheerful beckoning of the friendly friend bookshelf at your home.

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