

My Somerset Life

A diary by Brian Snellgrove

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My difficulty in concentrating when reading a book

Brian: About the method of reading books especially serious stuff I will tell you what happens. I read a couple of pages and I can get so excited by an idea that I have to stop reading and pace around for half an hour and I just wondered what your experience was a reading stuff.



Friend: It depends of what it is. If it's stuff I've done and really know I could only read for a few minutes and make a note and then read for another few minutes and then put things in conceptual frames. In other words I add up like a big rack or mesh of knowledge to form a larger conceptual idea so when I read a book I get – I always work to add to my knowledge the latest content of my reading. I retain an overview mind.

I could then describe to you the entire book without having to revert back to the detail of the volume. As a scientist you can read very quickly and pull out all the salient points and it amazes other people that you can do it. However, it takes an awful lot of practice to do that.

If I'm reading a novel I relish every word like having a nice steak and I actually enjoy the way it's written in that I'm not pulling facts out of it, I'm actually enjoying a story. I can enjoy fiction – it would be like that I just enjoy the story and being within the world I imagine myself within. If I'm dealing in fact you not really bothered too much about the way it's written, as long as it's written in a way that you can extract the information.

BJ In a way it's like serving a tennis ball, you are serving, you are responding.

Friend – A lot of these books I read are only partially correct in my view. I have not only the fact of what they're saying but also the fact that I don't think everything is correct so I am therefore making an ongoing critique of the work that I'm looking at.

BJ – I think my problem is that I try to take an interest in too many things and so I don't know much about anything in depth.

Friend – I suffer a bit from that situation. Also, when reading I get a secondary or an augmented idea, a feeling that the author doesn't get it but I do get it and then it takes you off the narrative.

You can't continue reading so you've got to go away and think about it.

As a result of this article, the feedback to and from my friend and a conversation

BJ Yes I'm pleased that as a result of our wonderful conversation yesterday I've just been hit on the head with a hammer realizing that when I read an article I'm doing so without filters, in other words I'm reading it from trying to read it from every point of view at the same time and that's an impossible task and I really ask why I'm failing to absorb, So I have to read it for example as an analyst with regard to if this person is compassionate or is this person accurate in other words I gotta make filters for myself and possibly read it through several times from different points of view.

Friend – there are different ways – when I read science I read it in one way – if I read a novel it'll be a totally different way and if I read something like what you write- you know something more philosophical -or then I read a different way then you then you have to say ok well what is the full scale of this. There are different ways that you have to appreciate different types of writing.

Friend – and then I realize that I've given false authority because I say well gosh if it's in writing it must be correct and of course there's a lot of guff out there that we know that is not true but I realize that when I actually do the reading I haven't got my critical faculties. I am too passive – what he said must be true. I of all people should know it's not true but it's it's having the courage to look at it

Friend It is quite difficult to work out what is not true but also what is simply the same thing from a different opinion. That's a trick you've got a loan too. somebody will come in from the other other view to you and say the same thing but you have to realize it because it looks like the opposite sometimes so you've got to take into account the angle that somebody is coming at it from because they may be reaching the same conclusion but we're different methodologies and I think also we've got to spot vested interest and compromise because it turns geniuses into idiots in five seconds.

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