The Bond Between Joy and Rereading

Depending on the person, one may read a novel and reread it until the pages fall out of the spines, whereas some may pick up a novel, go through it, and never pick it back up ever again. While some people enjoy reading more than others though, there are some general factors that affect one’s desire and ability to reread a text.

Aside from one’s personal tastes, generally, those who read a text carefully and fully comprehend it are much more engaged with the text than those who quickly breeze through it. This general trope extends to art, music, and other fields as well; the more carefully one does something, the more one learns, realizes, and has an enjoyable experience. This is probably why one may initially find a poem boring and straightforward on an initial readthrough but after spending after spending hours looking it over line by line, it becomes a swirling ocean of hidden metaphors and stylistic choices that makes it feel astonishing that not everyone knows that one poem. However, I am not trying to imply that the key to a desire to reread does not lie in how much one scrutinizes the text on the initial readthrough, but rather that it is important to take time to read the text and simply absorb everything and enjoy it. In the high school classroom for instance, many students don’t read texts for “the sake of reading,” reading only to find details that may be the answers to questions on their upcoming quiz. When people read through a text initially only to get it over with, it usually diminishes their desire to reread that text, and doing such may also affect one’s very own ability to reread as well. Personally, I have found that in the times where I read breezed through a reading in preparation for a quiz, hastily going back and trying to reread the text, two, three, or even more times would prove unfruitful, and at times futile because it is difficult to get a full grasp of a book when you don’t immerse yourself completely to begin with. However, one reads something that the person is going to analyze later, it is better to simply read the text for enjoyment first because I have found that when I have done that, rereading the text for specific details is much faster and easier.

For a teacher, it may be hard to get students to read “for the sake of reading” because students are busy, they procrastinate, and some simply don’t want to read. One suggestion is to change the approach to the text: don’t teach a specific novel just because “it is good preparation for the AP exam,” or because “it’s famous and they ought to read it.” One of my most memorable English teachers who helped me to enjoy almost every book and play we went through that year would help us realize that Shakespeare’s comedies are actually pretty funny when you get into them, and he would show us poems he loved and explained what it was about poetry that made him change from a physics major to an English teacher, and the approach of teaching students to enjoy reading rather than teaching students to analyze has helped me to appreciate novels, plays, and poems, and as a side effect improve my ability to discuss and analyze text.

One the note of teaching students to enjoy the text rather than teaching them to purely scrutinize text, for teachers, doing things like changing up the books that are being taught for the year periodically or simply talking about things that “are cool” with the play that they are reading can help the teacher remind themselves of why the are teaching those books and plays in the first place. After all, if the teacher isn’t enjoying it, how will the students do so?

When people read books, plays, news articles, or any other medium, rereads are usually necessary in order to obtain further insights and scrutinize the texts. However, one shouldn’t forget the joy of reading, because no matter how many times one reads a text, if it’s unenjoyable, reading the text will probably not be as productive as it could be.