

OF STUDIES

– Francis Bacon

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring, for ornament, is in discourse, and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one, but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar. They perfect nature and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants that need pruning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men condemn studies; simple men admire them; and wise men use them: for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation.

Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested, that is some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read but not curiously, and some to be read wholly and with diligence and action. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others, but that would be only in the less important arguments and the meaner sort of books, else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things.

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore if man write little; he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit, and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not.

Histories make man wise, poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. '*Abeunt studia n mores*'. (Studies pass into the character). Nay there is no stand or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies: like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercise. Bowling is good for the stone and reins, shooting for the lungs and breast, gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head, and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics, for in demonstration if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen; for they are *cymini sectores*. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyer's cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

Comprehension:

1. For what do studies serve?
2. What's the use of studies in the disposition of business?
3. Why is it sloth to spend too much time in studies?
4. What is the humour of the scholar, according to Francis Bacon?
5. In what way are natural abilities and natural plants similar?
6. How can we distinguish among crafty men, simple men and wise men in terms of studies?
7. What suggestions does Francis Bacon make for the readers about reading?
8. How does he classify books?
9. What does he actually mean by 'some books are to be chewed and digested'?
10. What is the importance of reading in human life?

11. How does the knowledge of history help readers?
12. For what type of person is mathematics suitable in Bacon's view?
13. How does writing make one an exact man?

Long - answer questions:

1. "Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability." Elucidate
2. "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested." Elaborate this quotation.

Discussion questions:

1. What do you think about the role that books play in the life of a student?
2. John Milton says. "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." Do you agree with this remark?

Composition:

1. Write an essay on the importance of books.
2. Write a letter to your friend expressing your views on the books that you have read recently.