

## Preparation for Books and Reading

Reading books can provide comfort and inspiration, help us understand others and ourselves, and offer entertainment and escape. At our next meeting, we'll reflect on the influence of books and reading in our lives. To prepare, think about books that linger in your memory, books that you read again and again, books that offered the right message at the right time, books whose impact surprised you.

These can be books of any genre—children's books, fiction, fantasy, classics, science fiction, nonfiction, how-to, religious works, poetry—whatever has resonated with you.

In books I have traveled, not only to other worlds, but into my own. I learned who I was and who I wanted to be, what I might aspire to, and what I might dare to dream about my world and myself. More powerfully and persuasively than from the “shalt nots” of the Ten Commandments, I learned the difference between good and evil, right and wrong.

*Anna Quindlen, How Reading Changed My Life (1998)*

A book burrows into your life in a very profound way because the experience of reading is not passive. *Erica Jong, O Magazine, 2003*

A truly good book attracts very little favor to itself. It is so true that it teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down and commence living on its hint. When I read an indifferent book, it seems the best thing I can do, but the inspiring volume hardly leaves me leisure to finish its latter pages. It is slipping out of my fingers while I read. It creates no atmosphere in which it may be perused, but one in which its teachings may be practiced. It confers on me such wealth that I lay it down with regret. What I began by reading I must finish by acting.

*Henry Thoreau [Journal, 19 February 1841], from walden.org*

I hate that sad moment when you return to life after reading an awesome book.

*Postcard from grammarly.com*

But perhaps the greatest thing to be gained from the reading of books is the desire to truly communicate with one's fellow man. To read a book properly is to wake up and live, to acquire a renewed interest in one's neighbors, more especially those who are alien to us in every way.

*Henry Miller*

'Tis the good reader that makes the good book . . . in every book he finds passages which seem confidences or asides hidden from all else and unmistakably meant for his ear.

The profit of books is according to the sensibility of the reader; the profoundest thought or passion sleeps as in a mine, until it is discovered by an equal mind and heart.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The world was hers for the reading.

*Betty Smith, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

## Questions to Ponder

1. Think about a book you read recently or are thinking about reading. Be prepared to give the exact title and author in case people want to take a note. This topic will be a part of the sharing at the meeting.
2. Which types of books do you enjoy the most? Fiction, poetry, non-fiction, biography, another genre?
3. What was your family's attitude toward reading and books when you were growing up?
4. Do you have fond memories of a certain book or story from your childhood? What connections are there between that book or story (titles, themes, hero/ine(s), etc.) and who you wanted to be or who you are today?
5. Was there a book you read as a teenager or young adult that changed your life? What was the book, and why did it resonate with you?
6. Describe a point in in your life when a book motivated you to make an important internal or external change.
7. What books do you turn to when you are in need of comfort, advice, hope, or encouragement?
8. Has technology changed your reading habits in any way? How do you feel about new reading technologies such as computers or Kindles?

*Some questions adapted from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stony Brook, NY, April 2014*