

What happened to books?

Business



In the afternoons, I work with a group of kids at an elementary location of my school. One of the ladies I work with teaches kindergarten at the school. She encourages her kids to practice their reading skills at home by having a contest to see who can read the most books. A couple of weeks into this competition when most of the children had read close to forty books, she noticed that one boy had read only ten. When she asked the boy's mother about reading with him at home, she told the teacher how much her son loves to play his video games after school.

Obviously the teacher was more than a little concerned. One of the major accomplishments in a child's life is his learning to read, but what happens if that child never uses this ability? Reading with my dad is a very fond memory of mine. In second grade, I picked up the Harry Potter series for the first time. I was hooked instantly, and my dad followed soon after. Soon reading the series at night before bed became a tradition. I was given gaming consoles at different ages, but none were played with very often.

What I most enjoyed was receiving books as gifts. I was the type of person who asked to take books to recess and lunch. Athletics were never my calling. I set one of the highest goals for reading in my classes, so high sometimes that my teachers were afraid I would not make it. But to me, it seemed like everyone else read as much as I did.

Time was given in class for reading, and books could be chosen that the student wanted to read. Why does it seem now that everyone tries to find ways to get around reading? OnAmazon. com, there are over 6, 500 hits for

the search “ cliff notes.” With sports, other school related activities, and after school jobs, it is hard for students to find time to read.

And it does not help when books are inundated with symbolism the students are supposed to pick up on. Why not let students choose what they read? Reading for an assignment becomes like manacles in that students have no choice but to do what they are told whether they like and understand it or not. This can become very frustrating and could ultimately turn students away from reading. I am not trying to say that teachers are at blame for turning students away from reading. They are not. It is not entirely the student’s fault either, though.

There are twenty-four hours in every day. Studies have shown that people in high school need nine hours of sleep per night in order to properly function. Between seven and eight hours are devoted to going to school. Another two or three hours go into sports practice for most students. That added up is close to twenty hours, so what do students do with their extra four hours? Homework has to fit in there somewhere, and the time that takes up depends on the night and the student. But when the choice is between reading an assignment and watching television, playing video games, getting online, or doing something with friends, reading is quickly pushed away.

How is the problem of declining reading solved? That is not an easily answered question. Forcing a child to sit down with a book will not encourage him to continue reading of his own accord. Instilling a love of reading in the child at an early age by sharing one’s own love of reading will

help reading increase. When students can decide to read something they like, they will be more inclined to pick up a book and read.