



9 Reasons to Keep A Reading Journal

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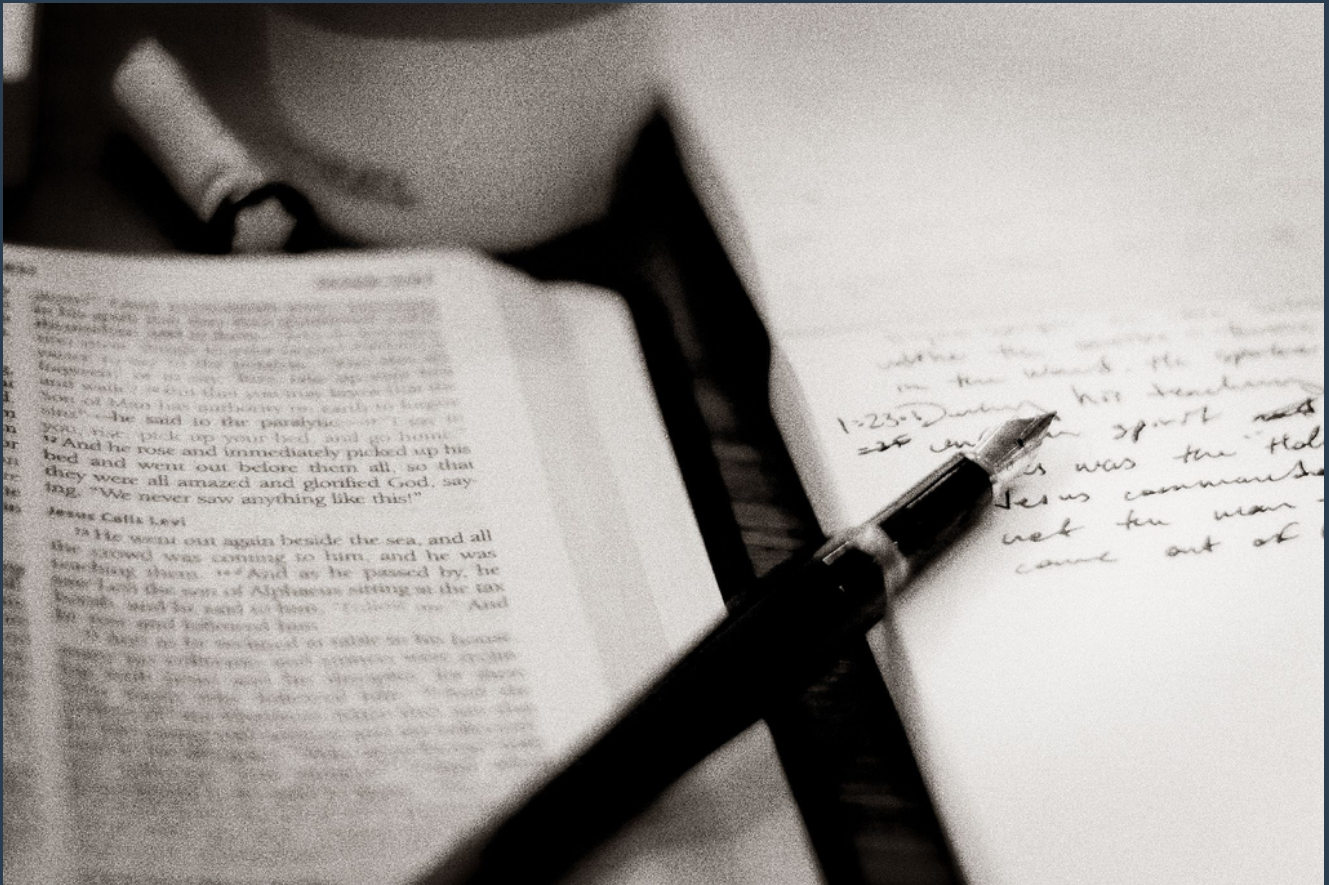


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This is a two part article. In this, first part, we are going to talk about why you should keep a reading journal, and in part 2, we will talk about how to keep a reading journal. With part 2, you will also be able to download a FREE guide that will help you get started with your reading journal.

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1. **To keep a log of what you've read**

When you are a regular reader, eventually there comes a time when you can't remember if you've already read something or not. This is particularly possible in certain situations. For example, you've watched a movie based on a book, so you know the story, but you can't remember if it's just from the movie or if you read the book. Another instance is when you are reading a series of books which have similar titles, and same characters. Bernard Cornwall's Sharpe novels, and J. D. Robb's In Death series are good examples of this.

2. **To keep a log of how much you've read**

Whether you have a specific book list to get through for a project, or because you simply want to get an idea of how much you read, a reading journal will aid you. It's also useful to figure out what are your best reading months. For example, if you are an accountant, December with end-of-the-year work, and Christmas is probably not your most leisurely month. But if you tend to spend few weeks in summer lounging on beach, you probably read a lot more. Sometimes, the reading amount changes from year to year, but if you have a fairly established life, then you will be able to see the patterns for what are your best reading months.

3. **To record your impressions**

We don't read just for the sake of reading. We read for a reason. Whether it's for pleasure, escape, research, study, or project...we read because we want to get something out of the experience. And when you finish reading that book, you feel something. By keeping a reading journal, you are spending more time on capturing that fleeting "something". You can record your impressions throughout your reading, but particularly after you've finished the book. You can figure out what the book did for you, how did it impact you, and if it changed anything.

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4. **For research**

Writing a dissertation, working on your Phd, writing a book, or numerous other things that involve large quantities of research? Then you will want to keep all that information straight in your head. When you read a lot of material on the same subject, after a while, it all starts to blend together in your head. It will be difficult to remember who said what, and who was on which side of the argument. By keeping a reading journal, as you read, you are not only keeping facts straight but also preserving potential sources. You will have citations ready, and all the material to mine from, without having to go back to all the books when you finally sit down to start using your research for whatever purpose.

5. **To write an essay, article, thesis**

If you have to write something based on the book, you can keep a reading journal to explore the story's theme, it's motifs and characters. Again, just as for research purposes, for writing purposes, having the material ready from your notes during reading, will make it a lot easier to use it for writing.

6. **To gain an awareness of your reading taste, and the changes in them**

Your reading taste will change, if not permanently then at least temporarily. Over time, as you read new material, you will be tempted to try something new, to experiment. Sometimes, other people's recommendations or gift of books also leads us to try out something new. If you are researching a particular topic or time, that may impact what you are reading at any given time too. By keeping a reading journal, you will be able to see how your taste evolves over time, and whether or not there are any significant changes.

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7. **To strengthen your understanding of the reading material**

Have you ever read through something only to feel when you put the book down, you had no idea what the hell happened? It leaves you feeling annoyed, and often frustrated that you wasted so much time only to understand nothing. It may also make you feel stupid. Lack of comprehension usually has very little to do with intelligence, especially if you are a regular reader. Some books simply require closer reading than we are used to. By keeping a reading journal, you can note down your impressions, questions and confusion as you read, so that these thoughts will remain fresh in your mind. As you read further, you will be able to gauge whether the text itself is answering some of your concerns or not. If it doesn't, you can use your notes to review the book, and also to reflect on what it was that made this book difficult to understand.

8. **It makes you a better writer**

Being a better reader makes you a better writer. When you keep a reading journal, you are practising close reading. You are focusing on what works in a book and what doesn't. You learn about structure and syntax. You think about how characters are portrayed, and how the plot works. It's not an overnight process, but as you do more close reading, you will gain an instinct for doing things in your own writing that work.

9. **To better remember what you've read**

The act of writing things down acts as a memory aid. When you write things in your words, they sink into your subconscious better. You are not just memorising, you are taking in the substance of the words you've just read. By simply keeping a reading journal, everything you read will become more memorable.

These nine reasons to keep a reading journal have something that will be useful for almost everyone. But I'm sure there are more reasons that I haven't thought of. If you know, please share them in the blog post comments.