



The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction

By Alan Jacobs

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The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction By Alan Jacobs

In recent years, cultural commentators have sounded the alarm about the dire state of reading in America. Americans are not reading enough, they say, or reading the right books, in the right way.

In this book, Alan Jacobs argues that, contrary to the doomsayers, reading is alive and well in America. There are millions of devoted readers supporting hundreds of enormous bookstores and online booksellers. Oprah's Book Club is hugely influential, and a recent NEA survey reveals an actual uptick in the reading of literary fiction. Jacobs's interactions with his students and the readers of his own books, however, suggest that many readers lack confidence; they wonder whether they are reading well, with proper focus and attentiveness, with due discretion and discernment. Many have absorbed the puritanical message that reading is, first and foremost, good for you--the intellectual equivalent of eating your Brussels sprouts. For such people, indeed for all readers, Jacobs offers some simple, powerful, and much needed advice: read at whim, read what gives you delight, and do so without shame, whether it be Stephen King or the King James Version of the Bible. In contrast to the more methodical approach of Mortimer Adler's classic *How to Read a Book* (1940), Jacobs offers an insightful, accessible, and playfully irreverent guide for aspiring readers. Each chapter focuses on one aspect of approaching literary fiction, poetry, or nonfiction, and the book explores everything from the invention of silent reading, reading responsively, rereading, and reading on electronic devices.

Invitingly written, with equal measures of wit and erudition, *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction* will appeal to all readers, whether they be novices looking for direction or old hands seeking to recapture the pleasures of reading they first experienced as children.

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The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction By Alan Jacobs Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #189437 in Books
- Brand: Oxford University Press USA
- Published on: 2011-05-26
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.70" h x .80" w x 8.30" l, .65 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 176 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Delightful...appealing and convincing." --*The Wall Street Journal*

"As so many recent studies have suggested, the activity of reading itself is seriously threatened in this digital age. But Alan Jacobs -- bless him -- has an approach that will warm the hearts of serious readers and lead many prospective readers into the deeply satisfying swells of good prose. Reading should be a pleasure, and Jacobs shows us how to make sure we take delight in this work, which is not work at all. This is a witty and reader-friendly book, and it's one I would happily give to any potential reader, young or old." -- Jay Parini, author of *The Passages of H.M.* and *The Last Station*

"A vigorous and friendly exhortation to get back into the kind of reading that made you a reader in the first place." - Library Journal

"Jacobs' little, witty ode to pleasure found between hardcovers is a useful reminder of the joy of text." --Dan Kois, *NPR*

"Jacobs gives us the best entry to date in the flurry of recent attempts to augur and meditate upon the fate of reading in our time." --John Wilson, *Christianity Today*

"It seems a rare accomplishment that a book on the pleasures of reading could actually pull off being pleasurable itself. But Alan Jacobs' newest book, *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*, does just that. It is a marvelous manifesto of sanity in an age of jeremiads about the modern predicament of attention loss on one hand, and those proud champions of distraction singing the hallelujah chorus of a world devoid of long-form books on the other." --Trevor Logan, *First Things*

"A passionate call to indulge one's readerly passions in the pursuit of centeredness and growth, this book just might change the way you think about reading." --Brendan Driscoll, *Booklist*

"Alan Jacobs' bright, broad paean to reading is a sort of secular prayer book. It instructs, exhorts, laments, reveres; it has great faith and best of all shows the Way. Or a way at least for author Jacobs, a college English professor, warns well that the road to reading Nirvana is a highly personal one." --Joseph Mackin, *New York Journal of Books*

"wonderful" --Micah Mattix, *The Weekly Standard*

"Reading Jacobs is a supreme pleasure...Jacobs has reshaped not only how I think about reading but how and what I actually read." --Lauren Winner, *Books & Culture*

"Jacobs makes a persuasive case that reading for pleasure should remain a live option in any discipline...The book as a whole makes many compelling points and refreshingly celebrates the God-given gift of reading in an age where texts are ubiquitous but often neglected."--*Themelios*

"Using Auden's terms to describe judging books, I conclude that 'I can see this is good and I like it.' *The Pleasures of Reading in a Time of Distraction* represents a realistic approach to recovering deep reading for the sole purpose of pleasure."--*Journal of Education and Christian Belief*

About the Author

Alan Jacobs is Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Baylor University. His books include *The Narnian*, a biography of C.S. Lewis, *Original Sin: A Cultural History*, and a *Theology of Reading*. His literary and cultural criticism has appeared in the *Boston Globe*, *The American Scholar*, and the *Oxford American*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tonya Hooper:

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Richard Hennessy:

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reserve you will enter the new shape that you ever know prior to. The author explained their strategy in the simple way, and so all of people can easily to understand the core of this e-book. This book will give you a lots of information about this world now. To help you to see the represented of the world on this book.

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