

# Habits to Make You a Better Reader

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No matter why you read, there is always a nagging voice at the back of your mind that tells you to become a better reader. And simply reading every day is not enough.

LET GO

First things first, drop the book if you don't enjoy it. Normalise abandoning a book and not feeling guilty about it – it is no sin. Instead of torturing yourself with a bad book, use the time to find a better read. Bad books kill time and keep you from discovering the richness of the literary world.

But when should you quit a book? Basically, whenever reading becomes a chore and you'd pretty much rather do anything but face that book. That being said, it doesn't mean once you drop it, you can never go back. Maybe you feel bad about not liking the classic everyone raves about. You may not understand a book the first time; give the author the benefit of the doubt. And if things still don't work out, there's something called the "rule of 50" where you read the first 50 pages before you decide to give up or commit.

BE FUSSY WITH SELF-HELP BOOKS

Your time is valuable; read selectively. Many self-help books are regurgitating the same facts and notions. Why not skip to Chapter 10 (which is why you bought the book) instead of dragging yourself through the entire title? Better yet, find

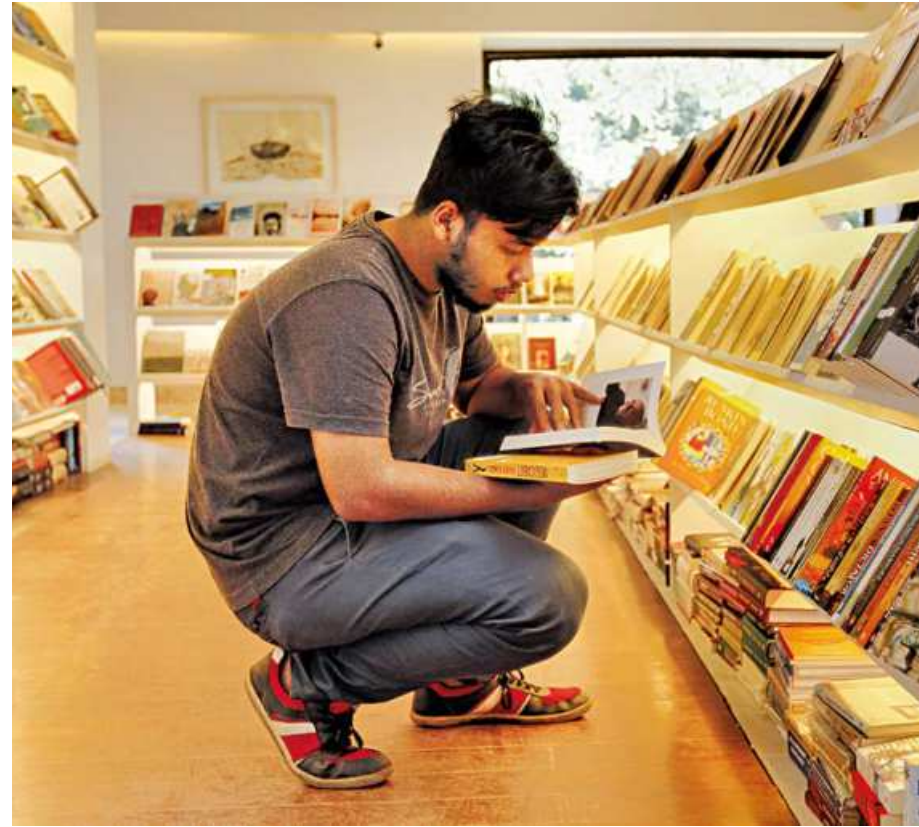


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

the book summary on the web; cover three hundred pages under 15 minutes (obviously *only* for self-help books).

ONE IS TOO FEW

Read more than one book at a time,

preferably two or three. It gives you a break from the scene and by the time you return to a book, you'll feel more absorbed. Perhaps this could get you through a book you thought you'd never finish. Make

sure to form a balance between the heavy reads with light ones and select the genres comfortably. This way you can read more books, too!

THE RIGHT BOOK WILL CLICK

A series of bad books can potentially drive you away from a worthwhile hobby, especially for a beginner. Don't just grab the closest book you find. Look for recommendations online. Follow your favourite celebrity's reading list. Talk about books. Ask your friends for suggestions. If you're at the shop, make a go at the first 5 pages or so before you thump it on the cash counter.

YOU'RE NEVER TOO BUSY TO READ

Make use of the "hidden hours" in a day. On an average day, there are many instances where you can squeeze in some reading. Think of your daily commute and waiting queues. You'd be surprised at how much reading you can get done during breakfast every day. Besides, the hours unnecessarily spent on social media and such can find a new use. It is not about finding the time to read but rather creating the time for it.

Carry a book in your bag or phone. Set some reading goals and track your reading habits. Sooner or later, you will find your niche and the authors that cater to your tastes given that you persist in the pursuit.

*Hiya loves food that you hate by norm – broccoli, pineapple pizza and Bounty bars. Find her at hiyaislam.11@gmail.com*



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

## EXAMS CANCELLED: *Should We Celebrate?*

ABHOY HRIDDO & ANUSHA MOURSHED

Many of us approached 2021 as if the coronavirus would magically disappear and the world would slowly return to normalcy. Unfortunately, that did not work out. With even more cases every day, the uncertainty piled on.

While many students have had to cope up with the loss of loved ones, others felt underprepared after doing a whole year worth of classes online. Naturally, due to unforeseeable and inconceivable circumstances, students found it extremely difficult to cope up with their academics alongside maintaining a stable mental health and resorted to demanding that the O & A Level examinations be cancelled. The risk factor of catching the virus was the most prominent contributing factor to the exam cancellation. Although their reasons are justified under the current circumstances, will the future implications work out in their favour, in the long run?

As Edexcel has decided to cancel exams worldwide, drastic measures were taken to grade the students. Schools have had to take mock after mock exams to determine their final grades. To make matters even more hectic, the board has also offered schools a chance to provide students with "unseen papers" made by them. Ultimately, the whole thing boils down to sitting for exams at home. Edexcel has declared that they will also provide their own checkers to get a better understanding of a student's skills and to ensure accuracy. On the bright side, these are just options; the unseen papers are not mandatory.

Unlike last year, many Edexcel students are quite unhappy that the exams got cancelled. Others have mixed feelings.

Ariq Hussain, A2 student of South Breeze School, mentions, "I think there are two sides to the coin here. I am glad that I don't have to sit for exams physically where chances of contracting the virus would increase exponentially and being an asthma patient myself, my life would be at risk. On the other hand, the increased workload and early deadlines set by the examination board have been taking a toll on my fellow students and myself both mentally and physically and it seems sitting for an actual exam would be less pressurising."

It is no surprise that exam cancellation

has also led to a lot of students slacking off academically which may have some severe implications in the future. Thus, many students are concerned that they will have to put in extra effort in their universities.

"Without the exams, the degree of how much a student has learned sitting at home, in my opinion, will fluctuate drastically from one person to another. I think some won't be prepared and will be forced to start from ground zero in university while others who kept their studies in check will go into their freshman year well prepared," says Faraz Rahman Khan of

not receive the grades they truly deserve.

"This past year has been extremely strenuous for me, and many other students who have been eagerly waiting to sit for a fair exam to judge their true potential. However, due to the uncertainty of Covid-19 and having to adapt to remote learning at our respective homes, it's been really stressful to devote focus and concentration to what was being taught in online classes. Even students like me, who maintained perfect attendance throughout the academic session, were left in a whirlpool of dilemma as to how we will be graded this year. Pre-

majority of the students as they, themselves, will realise how they achieved their grades. They might even be ashamed of sharing their grades upon realising that in many cases they do not truly deserve them. This insecurity regarding their achievements might affect their confidence in the future which might further affect their success in their respective fields."

He concludes, "Lastly, this batch will always be labelled as the 'auto pass' batch in the society which is again likely to meddle with a lot of their self-esteem. However, at the end of the day, it all comes down to the individual and how they decide to let this



## Satyajit at 100: *A Guide to the Maestro*

ADHORA AHMED

You might be wondering why I'm guiding you into the world of an already world-renowned filmmaker. There are three reasons. Firstly, because Satyajit Ray's birth centenary is on May 2 of this year, just next week. Secondly, Ray was much more than a filmmaker; he was a writer, illustrator, music composer and more. Thirdly, perhaps you've never had a chance to delve into his vast body of work before, so thank me later for giving you some recommendations.

FILMS

Any discussion about Ray's films is incomplete without mentioning the *Apu Trilogy*, which brought him worldwide acclaim. Hence, if you're new to his filmography, a good starting point could be watching all three films in chronological order: *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito*, and *Apur Sansar*. Of course, Ray has left behind many other beautiful works of art.

If he were writing this piece, he would probably recommend *Charulata* since it was his favourite work on film. If you're into slow-burning romance full of longing, this adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's *Nastanirh* will suit you just fine. Like *Charulata*, Ray was adept in making outstanding films about female protagonists. If you want to watch more movies with feminist narratives, then you'll definitely enjoy *Devi* and *Mahanagar*. If you love

complex psychological character studies, *Nayak* will certainly be up your alley.

Apart from feature-length movies, Ray has made a number of documentaries and short films as well. As for documentaries, you might pick the controversial *Sikkim* to learn about the titular Indian state. Among Ray's short films, I highly recommend *Two*, which packs heavy social commentary with no dialogue in only about twelve minutes.

LITERATURE

The wider world is perhaps largely unaware of Ray as an author, but there is no doubt that he is the creator of two of the most enduring characters in Bangla children's literature: Feluda, and Professor Shonku.

If you haven't discovered Feluda's magic already, then dive right in! Allow Feluda and his sidekicks — his cousin Topshe, and his friend, the popular thriller writer Jatayu — to take you along in their adventures. Although Feluda's practice is based in Kolkata, his cases usually take him far beyond the environs of the city, including Kathmandu in *Joto Kando Kathmandute*, and London in *London Feluda*. Most of the stories have been adapted to film and TV. Ray himself adapted *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath* in the seventies.

Let's not forget Ray's foray into science fiction either. Professor Shonku also deals with cases like Feluda, but unlike



the detective, his cases are not firmly rooted in reality. This mad scientist's explorations take him from his abode in Giridih, Jharkhand, to far-flung places that are not necessarily tourist-friendly. For instance, in *Byomjatrir Diary*, Professor Shonku builds a rocket that takes him to Mars. Then, in *Professor Shonku o Roktomatshya Rahasya*, he spends some time underwater to investigate mysterious red fish. As a cat person, Professor

Shonku's pet feline, Newton, is probably one of my favourite fictional cats. Unfortunately, Ray couldn't adapt his fantastical creation on screen during his lifetime. Nonetheless, the power of our imagination is enough to visualise this wonderful creation of his. So, depending on whether you prefer watching or reading, celebrate Satyajit Ray's 100th birth anniversary with one of his timeless works.