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What comes to mind when you think about reading? A story that transports you to another world? Endless adventures that entertain and arouse the senses? A love story that deepens and excites with every turn of the page? For accomplished readers, it is all of this and more, for there is truly nothing more enjoyable than curling up with a good book on a cold and blustery day or any day for that matter!

However, for emerging readers, reading can often be an intimidating experience as they struggle to make sense of difficult words and passages. Yet, this is what reading is like for everyone at the beginning; learning a new skill is always difficult, for everyone. Like most things in life, nothing of value will ever be gained quickly, it takes hard work and determination. There are no short-cuts.

Unfortunately, what many young readers don’t realize is that reading proficiency is the single most important predictor of future academic success and even future earnings according to current research. A study published in 2016 (Akbash, 2016) showed a strong correlation between reading comprehension and Science and Mathematics performance. Another study (Ritchie et.al., 2013) even showed adult socio-economic status (e.g. how much money your make and your standard of living) is directly correlated with reading proficiency in primary and secondary school. Clearly, then, reading comprehension is a foundational skill necessary for success across all disciplines and subjects.

However, although this is undoubtedly true from a purely pragmatic perspective, reading is so much more than this. Reading improves memory, critical thinking, analytical skills, helps you socialize, develops empathy, improves your oral and written expression… indeed the benefits are too numerous to mention. If you think about it, reading is perhaps the only way that we get to see someone else’s thinking. It is the closest we will ever come to understanding the mind of another. For this reason, reading the ideas of others will teach you more than any person ever could. It is no surprise that the greatest minds and the most successful people are also accomplished readers. Ask anyone who has achieved great things and they will tell you that they were influenced and inspired by great books.

So, for those of you who have already developed a love of reading, well done!

Keep it up. You are already on the path to greatness.

And, for those of you who view reading as a chore, as a headache,

as a pain in the posterior… don’t give up! As with all things,

it gets easier the more you do it, so be patient and start small.

I promise you, if you persevere, good things will come your way.

Onwards and Upwards!

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Mr. Melville