TODAY A READER, TOMORROW A LEADER

WHO IS MARGARET FULLER (1810-1850)?

Margaret Fuller; was not only a journalist, she was the first female full-time book reviewer in journalism. By the time she was thirty, she was considered the best-read person in New England and she became the first woman who was allowed use of the Harvard College Library. She was also a staunch women’s rights activist. Margaret is the author of the famous quote:

“Today a reader, tomorrow a leader”.

I couldn’t agree more with what Margaret Fuller said: “If you are a leader, if you want to be one, you have to read. It’s not a bonus, it’s an absolute requirement. You cannot grow in your leadership without learning from others and that requires reading”, to acquire new insights, you have to read as much as you can.

I love reading, I always have. My mom made me a member of the local library when I was two or so because I devoured books. Not that I could read at two, but from the moment I could read, I’ve been reading multiple books a week. And I have learned so much by just reading. I have learned from world leaders and politicians, from and pastors, from military commanders and business leaders, from novelists and simple house wives. Leaders are readers, if you want to learn, you have to read.
THE DEBATE OVER TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOMS

At the heart of the matter are three questions: “Do we need technology to learn?”, “Why is it implemented in our schools at such a rapid rate?” and “What is the best way to use it?” In the article Matt Richtel carefully examines (among other items) technology’s influence on standardized test scores, overall student learning processes, and interaction in a classroom environment.

What makes the article worthwhile is how difficult it is to truly assess technology’s influence – for good or ill – on classroom learning. In some cases it fosters interest in students for subjects they might otherwise be bored in – such as a Civil War History class with interactive digital Q and A. In other cases technology proves to be a distraction for students – perhaps in the case of a student using facebook during class time. Other conflicting examples are also noted – especially in regards to standardized testing scores. And yet there is a sort of blind acceptance of technology’s value?

Back in 1997, a comprehensive report was issued regarding the use of technology in the K-12 classrooms across the United States. Its findings: we need more research, by highly paid people – but this shouldn’t stop us from using it in the classroom. It appears that this translates to today’s practices as well.

Perhaps the best one can say about technology is that if and when used properly, it can be a welcome aid. A good teacher in a good classroom environment will use technology to the class’ advantage. A bad teacher (and yes they do exist) will not; and technology then becomes a distraction rather than a tool.

At Beyond Montessori, we believe how children learn is imperative. The classroom is a peaceful, communal place fueled by self-discovery. It is a classroom that focuses on tactile, sensory learning. We’ve found that technology’s role in such an environment is minimal – though not nonexistent.

MOTIVATING KIDS TO READ

Motivating children to read is one of those agony-ecstasy tasks every parent and teacher faces sooner or later. When the desire to read is planted, nurtured, and grows—ecstasy; but when an appreciation of reading fails to take root—agony...for the parent, teacher, and child. There are myriad reasons children don’t like to read, and the following selection of articles will explain why and what parents and teachers can do about it; provide valuable tips on what won’t work (nagging, bribing, criticizing); and offer practical advice on reading activities that will keep
the entire family engaged during summer months and holiday breaks. As one article says: “The most effective way to encourage your children to love books and reading is to read aloud to them, and the earlier you start, the better. Even a baby of a few months can see pictures, listen to your voice, and turn cardboard pages.”

**THE FUTURE OF E-READERS**

It's difficult to predict the fate of traditional books in light of e-reader technology, but it might help to look at the music industry as a comparison. Until relatively recently, there was very little variation in the way music was recorded, distributed and enjoyed. Around the start of the new millennium, however, MP3 files, iTunes, YouTube, Pandora and a host of other technologies changed the entire industry. Could a similar tech-friendly trend be happening in the world of books?

Before you conclude that printed books will soon go the way of the eight-track, cassette tape and CD, consider that -- unlike these formats -- many people have an emotional connection to actual books, not just the stories and information they contain. In this way, books are more like LPs. Though impractical, many people still cling to their vinyl collections for the richness of their sound.

"It makes sense for some books to be available digitally, such as textbooks and certain reference material, but traditional books will never go away entirely," says Steve Cymrot, owner of Riverby Books in Washington, D.C. "A 200-year-old hand-bound text printed on rag paper is a thing of beauty, and that will never change."

And interestingly, booming sales of e-readers don't necessarily translate to a decline in sales of traditional books. For example, Amazon.com's January 2011 news about e-books outselling paperbacks came on top of reports of continued growth in paperback sales -- at least for the online retailer. The situation, however, is a bit different for some traditional bookstores. Borders, a national chain of bookstores, declared bankruptcy in February 2011, reporting that it will refocus on e-book and e-reader sales in order to save the company [source: The Wall Street Journal].

More and more Americans appear to be jumping on the e-reader bandwagon, too. An August 2010 poll by Harris Interactive revealed that 8 percent of Americans were using e-readers and about 12 percent planned to do so in the next six months [source: Harris Interactive]. In 2011, sales of e-readers are expected to reach more than 20 million [source: IMS Research]. This is good news for makers of e-readers, which continue to advance the technology by making these devices lighter, faster and smarter.

Considering the growing popularity of e-readers, sales of traditional books may eventually decline. In fact, the entire world of book publishing may be headed for a radical transformation. But fear not, bibliophiles. It's unlikely that traditional books will ever become completely obsolete. They simply need to find a new place alongside their cool new cousin, the e-reader.
Reading is an important skill that needs to be developed in children. Not only is it necessary for survival in the world of schools and (later on) universities, but in adult life as well. The ability to learn about new subjects and find helpful information on anything from health problems and consumer protection to more academic research into science or the arts depends on the ability to read.

Futurologists used to predict the death of the printed word but, ironically, Internet has made reading more and more a part of people's daily lives. The paperless society is a myth. The computer's ability to process and analyze data means that endless variations on reports and other types of documents can be and are generated. Internet, itself an enormous new source of information and recreation, is based on the humble written word. To effectively utilize the web and judge the authenticity and value of what is found there, both reading and critical thinking skills are of prime importance.

The more children read, the better they become at reading. It's as simple as that. The more enjoyable the things they read are, the more they'll stick with them and develop the reading skills that they’ll need for full access to information in their adult lives. Reading should be viewed as a pleasurable activity - as a source of entertaining tales and useful and interesting factual information.

The more young children are read to, the greater their interest in mastering reading. Reading out loud exposes children to proper grammar and phrasing. It enhances the development of their spoken language skills, their ability to express themselves verbally.

Reading, by way of books, magazines or websites, exposes kids to new vocabulary. Even when they don't understand every new word, they absorb something from the context that may deepen their understanding of it the next time the word is encountered. When parents read aloud to children, the children also hear correct pronunciation as they see the words on the page, even if they can't yet read the words on their own.