

Read every day and change the world

BY AMBER SHORT, THE TIMES JANUARY 24, 2012

We often speak of living in a peaceful world where people treat each other with respect and kindness, working towards positive change. We strive to understand ourselves and others, to communicate effectively and attain personal success. Where's the wellspring for these changes? Read every day!

Sustained daily reading turns us within, away from noise and haste. We sit undisturbed by technology and television screens, curled up with a delicious book. In that quiet space, we discover new worlds. We are thrust into different lives. We climb mountains and overcome impossible odds.

We stand with the world's most influential citizens while flipping pages quietly in a chair. A dreary day fades away as we consume word after word, page after page, entering worlds we never knew existed.

This internal processing develops our word bank. It is said that the language used in many children's books is more advanced than the language we use in our everyday conversations. As our vocabulary grows, so do our imaginations and mental concepts. We enrich our conversations, strengthen our memory, and increase sustained focus.

Reading allows us to sink into a tranquil, relaxed state, opening our minds to the world around us.

Mental simulations form during reading as though we were actually living what we read. Studies show that people who read every day enjoy a broader general knowledge than those who do not. Engaging in both fictional and true stories increases people's empathy and compassion. Our understanding of the world broadens. New skills, new ideas, new viewpoints are ours-just by reading every day.

Reading the harrowing experiences of a Second World War pilot helps us appreciate our veterans' sacrifices and courage. The biography of a team that climbed Everest enlivens our own ability to overcome odds and to succeed in adversity. Years of research underpin many fictional works. Kathleen Windsor used more than 500 books in her research for the novel *Forever Amber*. By reading this passionate story, readers soak up embedded knowledge.

Studies also show that regular readers enjoy increased creativity. According to a massive study done by the National Endowment for the Arts (2007), readers are much more likely to vote, attend cultural events, volunteer, and even exercise!

- Discover, revisit, or renew your passion for reading every day by participating in the City Wide Literacy Challenge from Feb. 1 to Feb. 21. Visit www.chilliwacklearning.com to learn how to participate. Read every day. Enrich your life. Enrich our world.