



Reading is 'the new rock and roll'

December 16, 1998

16 December 1998. *Leading author and Chair of National Year of Reading welcomes a survey proving that those who love a good book live life to the full!*

It's official. A new nationwide survey* has discovered that not only is Britain a nation of book lovers, with seven out of 10 people saying that books are important to them, it's now become cool to read. And the survey has been received warmly by Ken Follett, author and Chair of National Year of Reading.

"People enjoy reading for countless different reasons--for information, for pleasure, to escape or relax, or perhaps because they identify with a particular fictional character. The findings of this study give us much to celebrate in the National Year of Reading and should answer the doom merchants who have been talking about the death of the book," commented Ken Follett.

The results of this survey indicate a reading renaissance, a trend which is supported by the latest data from Whitaker BookTrack which shows that early books sales in the festive season are bucking the trend of a widely reported retail recession.

The survey established that, far from being relegated into the bottom division as a result of television, the Internet and cinema, book reading has re-emerged as the nation's number one leisure activity, at a time when the Government is encouraging the pastime with the National Year for Reading:

- Seven out of 10 (73%) read purely for pleasure while a third (29%) also read as part of their job
- Women are more likely than men to read for pleasure (51% vs. 35%). Men are more likely than women to read as part of their job (22% vs. 12%) or to increase their knowledge (31% vs. 24%)
- A quarter (24%) say reading is extremely important to them
- Four out of 10 (44%) say books are important to some extent
- Only one person in five (20%) seldom or never reads a book
- Half the population own up to 75 books (53%) while almost a third (29%) own more than a hundred
- Those who regard reading as "extremely important" to their enjoyment of life were the most likely to have more than 100 books (66%)
- Southerners are most likely to be book lovers (77%) while the East of England has the lowest proportion of committed readers (60%)

Those most likely to be found with their heads buried in a book are also the people likely to get the most out of life. "People were asked to place themselves in one of four categories according to their outlook and attitudes," explains Dr David Lewis who analysed the survey findings on behalf of Amazon.co.uk, the UK's leading Internet bookstore. "Those who described themselves as "easy going, laid back individuals who got a lot of enjoyment out of life, were most likely to regard books as being extremely important to them (46%). Those who regarded themselves as "stressed and tense", by contrast, were the least likely to bother with books (9%)."

Reading and Personalities

The survey also explored the link between personality and enjoyment of books:

- More than half (54%) of those surveyed described themselves as easy going, laid back individuals who get a lot of enjoyment out of life
- One in 10 (9%) admitted to working all hours and no longer getting much fun out of life
- Just under one in 10 (7%) complained of feeling stressed and tense most of the time. People living in the South were most likely to report high levels of stress (11%), while those in the West Country were least likely (4%) to do so
- A third (30%) claimed that while they had to work "all hours" they still got a lot out of life
- Women were more likely than men to be "easy going" (58% vs. 50%). Men were more likely than women to not get much fun from life (13% vs. 6%)
- The 21-25 age group was the most likely to be "easy going" (69%). Those aged 56+ were the most likely to "get a lot out of life" (40%)

Notes to Editors

This survey was commissioned on behalf of Amazon.co.uk, the UK's largest Internet bookstore. Amazon.co.uk launched on October 15, 1998, to offer all 1.3 million UK published books in print, as well as a selection of 200,000 of the best selling US-published titles. Customers buying books on Amazon.co.uk find everyday discounts of up to 40% off High Street prices on thousands of popular books and can benefit from the convenience of shopping 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from any computer with Internet access.

About the National Year of Reading

NYR is a key part of the Government's National Literacy Strategy and its policy to promote lifelong learning. The aim of the Year, which runs from September 1998 to August 1999, is to encourage reading among all ages, all levels of competence, for all purposes and in all contexts. It is promoting reading through events and initiatives designed to encourage everyone to read for pleasure and for information, more widely and more often. The Year has the potential to help shape our future cultural, educational and economic landscape.

About Amazon.co.uk

Amazon.co.uk is a subsidiary of Amazon.com. Amazon.com, Inc. (NASDAQ: AMZN), the Internet's No. 1 book and No. 1 music retailer, opened its virtual doors on the World Wide Web in July 1995 and quickly became Earth's Biggest Bookstore. Today, the Amazon.com store has expanded to offer more than 3 million books, music CDs, videos, DVDs, computer games, and other titles. Amazon.com also operates PlanetAll, a Web-based address book, calendar, and reminder service, and the Internet Movie Database, the Web's comprehensive and authoritative source of information on more than 150,000 movies and entertainment programs and 500,000 cast and crew members dating from the birth of film in 1892 to the present.

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