

Surrender to fiction: Fall books: Reading habits

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I would love to tell you that I read psalms every morning, poetry every noon, theology every afternoon and prize-winning fiction every night. The truth is that I read largely by necessity during the school week, saving the good stuff for late nights and weekends.

On weekdays, my early morning reading includes a review of the material to be covered later that day in class. I seldom assign the same textbook twice, which means that I am always reading something new in Bible, theology or world religions. This not only helps me keep up with fresh developments in these fields; it also reminds me that there is no “neutral” approach to any of them. An author’s values are embedded in the work.

On Fridays I shift gears, reading something that puts my mind out to pasture for the weekend. Right now it is the collected poems of Jack Gilbert; next on the list is *Kayak Morning*, by Roger Rosenblatt. I have a few trusted friends who send me such books, which I accept as maps to places I might never have gone on my own.

Bedtime reading is always fiction, in predictable rotation: a mystery, a memoir, a literary novel or short story collection. I also make sure to read men and women writers, from this country and abroad, both classical and experimental. The point is to surrender my grip on my own life before I go to sleep, which begins by stepping onto the magic carpet of someone else’s life through the pages of a book.

Saturdays are the best. On the Sabbath, I am free to read all day long—anything I like, for as long as I like, in pajamas if I like—as close to literary heaven as this reader expects to get.