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For the Love of Reading

Fact Sheet #2

Motivation

by Tony Trott

What motivates a person to read? I can't speak for anyone but myself on this issue. But hopefully after reading about why I read, you will understand a little more about what motivates you to read. From there, you can spur others to read.

When I am motivated to do something, I almost always want to do whatever it is. There are two basic ways to get a person to do something: 1) fear of what will happen if the task is not done; and 2) pure enjoyment. Of course, the second motivator is better, but I'm sure that we have all experienced reason number one at some time in our lives. For me, this happened in high school.

My class was assigned *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. Naturally, there was a big test on that book. Now I had a copy of the book and it didn't look too tough to read, but it held no interest for me. I took no pleasure in reading it. It was real work. I managed to get through it enough to pass the test but once the test was over I put the book on my shelf where it stays to this day.

At the same time I was supposed to be reading *The Stranger*, I was reading *The*

Lord of the Rings trilogy by JRR Tolkien. I found these stories exciting and extremely interesting. So in about the same amount of time it took me to read *The Stranger* I read two of the three books in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

From the example above, you can see that I was more motivated when I was interested. The same is true for most people. We all have unique interests. But one of the good things about books is that they don't cater to only one interest! One book can be interesting to many different people for many different reasons.

I'll use *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy as an example. It appealed to me, as a teenager, because it had sword fights, magic, and monsters. It might appeal to someone else because it has a completely make-believe world. It might appeal to a third person because it tells a story of good triumphing over evil. These are just a few of the ways *The Lord of the Rings* was interesting to my friends and me. And I am sure there are other reasons for wanting to read this book.

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What is the same is that we read the book. Why did we read it? Because we were motivated. Why were we motivated? Because we were interested.

When selecting a book for a young reader, keep in mind his or her interests. Even better, include the child in selecting the book. That is not to say that young people should only be reading books they choose. Parents and teachers can open up new interests by suggesting new books.

If you are introducing a book to a young person, spark their interest instead of their anxiety. Do not tell them to read it because they will be taking a test or writing a three page book report. Explain to them what you find engaging about the book and why they

might like it. After that, let them find out for themselves what is interesting in the book.

Think of motivation to read as a boulder at the top of a high hill. It may need a push to get it started rolling. But after that, it starts rolling faster and faster. Motivation feeds on itself. Eventually we might find motivation in things that we didn't think held it before. Excuse me now, I'm off to go read *The Stranger* by Camus.



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