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Reflections on Reading

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REFLECTIONS ON READING

Professor John E. Jackson of the Naval War College is the Program Manager for the Chief of Naval Operations Professional Reading Program.

As we have noted in previous articles in this series, one of the primary missions of the CNO Professional Reading Program is to encourage sailors at all levels to develop the habit of reading books of consequence. In this article, we would like to share with you some short excerpts (somewhat paraphrased) from writings by influential leaders about how much reading contributed to their lives and successes. Perhaps one or more will inspire you to take the time to make reading a part of your professional development.

- “When I want to discover something, I begin by reading up everything that has been done along that line in the past—that’s what all the books in the library are for. I see what has been accomplished at great labor and expense in the past. I gather the data of many thousands more. The three essentials to achieve anything worthwhile are, first, hard work; second, stick-to-it-iveness; third, common sense.”—Thomas Edison
- “I really had a lot of dreams when I was a kid, and I think a great deal of that grew out of the fact that I had a chance to read a lot.”—Bill Gates
- “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”—Martin Luther King Jr.
- “If you cannot read all your books . . . fondle them—peer into them, let them fall open where they will, read from the first sentence that arrests the eye, set them back on the shelves with your own hands, arrange them on your own plan so that you at least know where they are. Let them be your friends; let them, at any rate, be your acquaintances.”—Winston Churchill
- “I insist on a lot of time being spent, almost every day, to just sit and think. That is very uncommon in American business. I read and think. So I do

more reading and thinking, and make less impulse decisions than most people in business. I do it because I like this kind of life.”—Warren Buffett

- “Of all things, I liked books best.”—Nikola Tesla
- “If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson
- “From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books.”—Benjamin Franklin
- “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.”—Frederick Douglass
- “My definition of an educated man is a man who never stops learning and wants to learn. I am not interested in whether a man has a PhD or not, or an MA for that matter, or a diploma. Mao never had one, neither had Khrushchev, nor Stalin.”—Lee Kuan Yew, first prime minister of Singapore
- “When I decided to return and work in Africa in the early 1980s, I sold all my few possessions—things like my stereo systems, my color TV (big thing in those days!), my prized music albums . . . everything I could sell. I then used all the cash to buy books, because I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to find some of my most important books. When one of my friends asked me why I was doing this, I said books were my most important possession, because with the knowledge they give me, I can make enough money to buy anything else!”—Strive Masiyiwa, international entrepreneur and philanthropist
- “Balance your reading. Read broadly. Include people you don’t agree with. This is how we are stretched.”—Rick Warren
- “Reading is important. If you know how to read, then the whole world opens up to you.”—Barack Obama
- “Years ago I got hooked on a habit that turned out to be one of the most valuable of my life: reading at least 30 minutes a day. Jim Rohn, one of my teachers, told me that reading something of substance, something of value, something that was nourishing, something that taught you distinctions, was more important than eating. ‘Miss a meal,’ he said, ‘but don’t miss your reading.’ Remember: leaders are readers.”—Tony Robbins, personal development coach
- “If there is education, there will be everything in life. Government can make roads, hospitals, and also construct school buildings. But your homes can brighten up only if your children are educated. I am confident that if we focus on education, our society will certainly develop.”—Narendra Modi, prime minister of India

So there you have it: words of wisdom and encouragement from billionaire businessmen, world leaders, and noted philosophers. We could not agree more!

JOHN E. JACKSON

(adapted from an article on SmartandRelentless.com posted on October 20, 2016)