

Are You “Chicken” or the Egg?

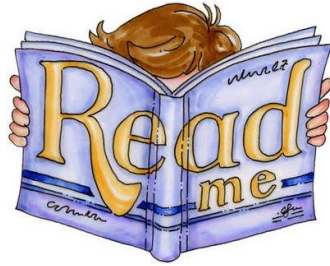
It was a dark, ominous evening. I don't know how I got here. The last thing I remember is leaving Jill's house to walk home. It started to rain; thunder, lightening. It became too much to bear, so I sought shelter at the first place I saw: the local library. I planned to wait for the storm to pass under the green and white striped awning. It was just big enough where, if I stood right up against the old, weathered building, only the tips of my sneakers would get wet. The seconds ticked away, it felt like this storm would never end.



And then I heard it. It was faint, at first, like the creaking of an upset branch or a faint howl of the wind. It got louder. And LOUDER! Until I could not avoid it any longer. There was a voice calling me from inside of the library.

I tried the door: it was open. I peered my head inside and looked around the dark, shadowy corridor. I heard it again- a call from far away. My head was telling me to stay outside, but my legs had other ideas. I walked past the circulation desk and into the tall, oak stacks. It smelled like mothballs. Or maybe that was just the smell of the old books that hadn't seen daylight in over a decade. I heard it again, but this time, I could make out what it was saying. *Read me. Read me?* What did that mean? Who was in here?

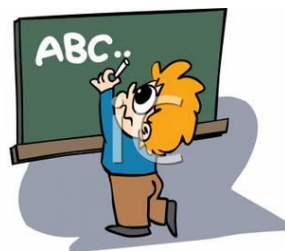
As I wandered farther and farther into the narrow walkways, I thought I could make out where the sound was coming from. But it was impossible. The *books* couldn't be talking....right? By the time I had reached the children's section, I couldn't take it anymore. I HAD to respond to the chanting: *Read me, Read me*. I grabbed the first book I could find off the low, wooden shelf. I recognized it immediately. Alexandra Day's *Good Dog, Carl* was my favorite book growing up, even before I learned how to read. I remember thinking that, because I didn't have to tackle any words, I could read it however I wanted! As long as I held it the right way and looked at the pictures from left to right, I could read all by myself! Amazingly, as I glanced at this book, the chanting ceased. I picked up another: *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs. It was the same thing: top to bottom, left to right, I was *reading* without the words. I wonder how I knew to do this at such a young age. Probably from watching my parents read to me and point to the pictures. Wow, I never thought that *that* was considered reading...but I guess it is. *Read me. Read me.* Oh no, it was back. But it was in the distance now, like the voice was leading me to where it wanted me to go next.



I knew I was there when the chanting got so loud that the rough, navy blue carpeted floor began to tremor. I thought the books were going to start falling from their homes. I grabbed a book, any book, off of the shelf and opened it up. The book looked like it was about to fall apart in my hands. The cover felt damp, like it was holding on to the tears of students who had been tortured by its contents. Inside, the pages revealed the horror. A boy, a girl, and a dog. “Dick and Jane pat the dog.” *Dick and Jane*? Really? I hadn’t seen one of these since I was in first grade! I remember how awful these books were- reading the same words over and over. And then having to *write* those words again and again. Who cares about Dick and Jane, I used to think. All I would want to write about was my new, hot pink bunk bed with cloud-like blankets. I could lie there for hours, staring out the window, imaging what it would be like to...

READ MEEEE! I nearly jumped out of my almost-dry socks when I heard the voice right behind me. *READ ME! READ ME!* But...there were no books! There was nothing to read! I knew the voice was just as loud as ever, sending echoes through my mind like waves in the ocean on a windy, fall afternoon. I couldn’t hear it anymore, though. I was panicking.

Thoughts were racing through my head. *What should I do? There’s nothing to read! Make a run for the door!* When I couldn’t think one more thought, I did the only thing that made sense. In front of me, hanging on the stained, eggshell wallpaper, was a dry erase board with a sole, black marker on its ledge. I picked up the marker and began writing. Frantically, I wrote the first thing that came to mind: *It was a dark, ominous evening...*



Now I ask you, what came first? Writing or reading? The chicken or the egg?