

## SUMMER READING



AS A CHILD, I lived a block away from the public library. It was a wonderful old Carnegie library, built in mixed Classical and Mediterranean Revival styles, leisurely situated in the middle of a city block of its own. The library was surrounded by large magnolia trees, whose tangy-smelling blossoms I can still summon up in memory, and bordered on two sides by the elementary school. I spent many a summer day at the library. Often this meant outside the library on the grounds, catching Tiger Swallowtail butterflies in nets fashioned out of old pillowcases, playing games after hours like “No Bears Are Out Tonight,” crawling through secret hiding places in the bushes, climbing the library walls (much to the irritation of the staff), and simply lounging on the grass to read.

The library had two entrances: one for adults, which led to the main collection, and another for kids, which led to the children’s and young adult collection. The children’s library was a magical place. Even the entrance promised a world of adventure within as it was flanked by statues depicting a sailing ship and a knight slaying a dragon—romantic scenes from the world of story. Inside was cool, quiet, and welcoming. The librarians knew me and my siblings well. We were practically daily patrons. We participated in summer reading programs sponsored by the library to encourage community children to read. This meant a chance for us to put stickers for every book we read on posters for all to see and, ultimately, to receive ribbons at the end of the

summer if we read more books than other children our age. My brother often won. He was a fast reader. I was a slow reader; I still am. But I read well enough that a librarian singled me out once for a memorable honor. She invited me to be the first one to read a brand-new book, which not even she had read yet, and tell her if I liked it. It was called *A Wrinkle in Time*. What a read that was!

Those halcyon summer days in the public library seem far removed from my summers now, which are filled with endless meetings and memos, punctuated only rarely by a few hours in the library for research. Yet I know that I am the poorer if I neglect summer reading. So are we all, as faculty and as human beings.

So I encourage us all to make time this summer to read or listen to books, as well as to see good movies and plays, in order to recreate our minds just as we do our bodies. “Recreate” is an apt word. It means, of course, re-create. We all need re-creation time—time to get away from BYU, our careers, and the pressures of the workaday world. Biking, hiking, and even mowing the lawn help take me away from quotidian troubles and get my mind off work. So does travel, of course. But for intellectual travel, “There is no Frigate like a Book / To take us Lands away” (Emily Dickinson).<sup>17</sup>

Here are some books on my summer reading list, including some I’ve recently read, some I’m reading now, and others I hope to read soon:

*1776* by David McCullough. McCullough will be on campus this fall as a forum speaker. I hope many faculty and students will have read this or other books by him.

*Paradise Reclaimed* by Halldór Laxness, a Nobel Prize-winning Icelandic author. I just learned about this novel from the president of Iceland when he was on campus. It deals with an Icelandic farmer who converts to Mormonism, comes to Utah, and then returns to Iceland as a missionary.

*Soul Searching* by Christian Smith. The new study of the religious lives of American teenagers. It contains valuable insights about how Latter-day Saint youth compare to those in other faith traditions.

*God on the Quad* by Naomi Schaffer Riley, a look at student life at various religious colleges and universities in America. Riley was on BYU campus researching her book during 9/11.

*In the Beginning* by Alister McGrath, the story of the creation and influence of the King James Bible.

*Undaunted Courage* by Stephen Ambrose. Reread in connection with the bicentennial of this epic journey and a hoped-for bike ride along some of the trail.

*Opening the Heavens* by Jack Welch, editor, an impressive collection of primary documents of divine manifestations in early Church history. Also Lucy Mack Smith's *History of Joseph Smith*. Books to commemorate Joseph's bicentennial.

*Don Quixote* by Cervantes. Reread some of this long novel in connection with the quadracentennial of its publication and forum this fall.

*Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel, a couple of best-selling novels my kids want me to read.

*Ex Libris* by Anne Fadiman, a delightful collection of essays by an incorrigible bibliophile.

*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* by J. K. Rowling, another book recommended to me by children.

More important than all these reading goals, I want to reread the Book of Mormon by the end of the year, as per President Gordon B. Hinckley's recent challenge to the Church. I can think of no summer reading that would have a more significant effect for good on us as faculty than this. Years ago, in a preschool conference, President Marion G. Romney challenged the faculty to read the Book of Mormon twenty minutes a day, just as he had done as a lawyer. He promised them that if they did their classes would be filled with the Spirit. One of my teachers took his challenge to heart. I didn't know until much later that she never missed a day. I only knew that there was a powerful spirit in her class. We need such a spirit in our teaching and research. So, in all our summer reading, let's make sure we not neglect to read what matters most. I can think of no more fitting way to honor the founding and current prophets of the Restoration.