



## A Reader on Reading

*Alberto Manguel*

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# A Reader on Reading

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## A Reader on Reading Alberto Manguel

In this major collection of his essays, Alberto Manguel, whom George Steiner has called “the Casanova of reading,” argues that the activity of reading, in its broadest sense, defines our species. “We come into the world intent on finding narrative in everything,” writes Manguel, “landscape, the skies, the faces of others, the images and words that our species create.” Reading our own lives and those of others, reading the societies we live in and those that lie beyond our borders, reading the worlds that lie between the covers of a book are the essence of *A Reader on Reading*.

The thirty-nine essays in this volume explore the crafts of reading and writing, the identity granted to us by literature, the far-reaching shadow of Jorge Luis Borges, to whom Manguel read as a young man, and the links between politics and books and between books and our bodies. The powers of censorship and intellectual curiosity, the art of translation, and those “numinous memory palaces we call libraries” also figure in this remarkable collection. For Manguel and his readers, words, in spite of everything, lend coherence to the world and offer us “a few safe places, as real as paper and as bracing as ink,” to grant us room and board in our passage.

## A Reader on Reading Details

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Author : Alberto Manguel

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Genre : Writing, Books About Books, Nonfiction, Essays, Criticism, Literary Criticism, Literature

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## From Reader Review A Reader on Reading for online ebook

### Cheryl says

Alberto Manguel is the epitome of the erudite idealistic booklover. He ushers us into his library of ideas, knowing that his and our enjoyment of books, the reading, the collecting, the savouring, will be mutually enhanced by the sharing of ideas. He is one of those rare authors who make you feel that he is putting into words your own unformed thoughts. *"Because I loved books (which I collected with miserly passion) I felt the guilty shame of someone in love with a freak."* You recognise them on the page as your own, and are grateful for his immense skills of articulating what you didn't know you thought, until you read them. And then he tells us so much more, he is showing us worlds, and he is our knowledgeable guide.

He doesn't restrict his essays to books and libraries. They are about reading, about words, or Words, and their power. So his subjects are wide-ranging. He decries the falsity and hypocrisy of wordsmiths such as Maria Varga Llosa and his essays on Argentina's dirty war. He chafes at the North American use of the editor in publishing. *"Before going out into the world, every writer of fiction in North America (and most of the British Commonwealth) acquires, as it were, a literary back-seat driver."* He thinks that this is because of the "mercantile fabric of American society. Because books must be saleable merchandise, experts must be employed to ensure that the products are profitably commercial. At its worst this unifying task produces mass-market romances; at its best it cuts Thomas Wolfe down to size." As always, he has quotations to fit every need. When Graham Greene was asked to change the title of his novel Travels with My Aunt, his eight word telegram said, "Easier to change publisher than to change title."

Delightful.

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### Tiffoknee the 3rd Conner says

Alberto Manguel is someone I would love to have a glass of wine with, so long as we can sit, sip, and dip into our mutual love of reading. My whole life I have been considered "odd" because of my love for reading and the written word, but when I read Manguel I feel comfortable. I know that I am not alone. As a child I spent many a summer vacation squirreled away indoors with books while the rest of my family went swimming, played outside, or was planted before the television. Perhaps I avoided the outdoors because I knew, even then, of my deep hatred for the sun and heat of Texas summers (something which would eventually plant the seeds for my distaste for Texas in general, but that's another story). Even today I own a deeper preference for books over people. They are the truest friends I have ever known.

When you read Alberto Manguel you know you are reading the words of a man whose passions and appreciations are simple, but deeply held. He does not love a thing for the thing's sake, which is the mistake many of my family make when they observe my love for books and reading. It is more than that. There is in my love for books and words a communion, a very real, visceral relationship which helps to keep me sane and connected to the few parts of myself worth loving. Even as my hope fades in the face of life's disappointments, persistent adversity, and that most unsympathetic of villains, time, I am forever in love with the word. There is power in words, books, and ideas, I will believe this until my dying day. Manguel knows this as well and he writes of it with unrivaled intelligence, wit, and loyalty.

I recommend any of his books.

## **Ebtihal Abuali says**

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## Abdulrahman alfozan says

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## **Book Calendar says**

### ***A Reader on Reading* by Alberto Manguel**

This is a collection of short essays by Alberto Manguel. Alberto Manguel wrote *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* and was an editor for many years. He muses on his own identity as a reader by talking about many personal issues on reading. He has an essay of the Legend of the Wandering Jew as a reader as well as comments on Jorge Luis Borges defense of Jewish culture. The author is Argentinian and pulls from the South American literary tradition.

He opens many of the essays with a quote from *Alice in Wonderland* or *Through the Looking Glass* and a picture from one of these books. This adds an inquisitive quality to the essays. I like many of his quotes and thoughts from Borges because Borges was a librarian and a fantasist in the tradition of magical realism. The essays remind me of thoughts that might have come out of *The Phantom Tollbooth* or *Un Lun Dun*.

Most of the essays are about the the experience of reading and being a reader. I especially liked the essay on Don Quixote, entitled Time and The Doleful Knight on Pp. 182-186. I can relate to Cervantes even though I have not read him..

Alberto Manguel attempts to list the qualities of the ideal reader and the ideal writer in two separate essays. They are quite delightful, even though I would not agree with many of them. Alberto Manguel has a deep relationship with books. He has a personal library of some 30,000 books. He wrote about this in an earlier book, *The Library At Night*.

There is also some discussion of technology in this book. The essay, Saint Augustine's Computer on Pp. 187-198 describes the differences between the printed word and the word on the screen. They are quite significant. He claims the printed word is less ephemeral and easier to subject to deep analysis than what appears on a computer screen.

Some of the issues in the book are quite political. Alberto Manguel grew up under Peron's government which was totalitarian. He describes many of the problems with literature, writing, and reading that occur under repressive regimes. He also discusses Che Guevara and his impact on literature. This makes for some interesting, if a bit pointed commentary.

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There is a lot to recommend in this book. It has a well done index, a very extensive bibliography, and a nice feel to the book. The book is set in Fourier Type and is quite easy to read. It is printed by Yale University Press. It is an excellent book well worth reading.

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### **Suewellyn says**

Toate stelutele pentru ca Alberto Manguel ne spune inca o data de ce cartile sunt cei mai buni prieteni pe care ii putem avea ... rabdatori, tacuti, asteptandu-ne ... Despre biblioteci, despre carti, despre scriitori, despre cititori ... o lume care nu se mai termina, despre asta este " Un cititor in padurea din oglinda " ... o lume fermecata :)

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### **Nasser Moh'd says**

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## Huda Yahya says

## **Wafaa Golden says**

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### Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Oh no, can I really be giving Alberto Manguel only three stars? I didn't realize this book would be so disconnected. The beginning few chapters are amazing, about how reading forms a person, the relationship a reader has with books - his examples are personal and I marked a bunch of things to use in my reading class. But then the essays turn a bit obscure, and I didn't find much to interest me, sadly.

Some tidbits from the first few chapters:

"I learned at a very early age that unless you are reading for some purpose other than pleasure (as we all sometimes must for our sins), you can safely skim over difficult quagmires, cut your way through tangled jungles, skip the solemn and boring lowlands, and simply let yourself be carried by the vigorous stream of the tale." (3)

"How are readers to be guided by these entrusted spirits to find their way in the ineffable reality of the wood?

Systematic reading is of little help. Following an official book list (of classics, of literary history, of censored or recommended reading, of library catalogues) may, by chance, throw up a useful name, as long as we bear in mind the motives behind the lists. But the best guides, I believe, are the reader's whims – trust in pleasure and faith in haphazardness – which sometimes lead us into a makeshift state of grace, allowing us to spin gold out of flax." (7-8)

"In the midst of uncertainty and many kinds of fear, threatened by loss, change, and the welling of pain within and without for which one can offer no comfort, readers know that at least there are, here and there, a few safe places, as real as paper and as bracing as ink, to grant us roof and board us passage through the dark and nameless wood." (10)

"The possibilities offered by books are legion. The solitary relationship of a reader with his or her books breaks into dozens of further relationships: with friends upon whom we urge the books we like, with booksellers who suggest new titles, with strangers for whom we might compile an anthology. As we read and reread over the years, these activities multiply and echo one another. A book we loved in our youth is suddenly recalled by someone to whom it was long ago recommended, the reissue of a book we thought forgotten makes it again new to our eyes, a story read in one context becomes a different story under a different cover. Books enjoy this modest kind of immortality." (16)

