



SO
TEXTUAL

THE READING RESIDENCY

www.sotextual.com Hudson ■ New York ■ EST 2021 @so.textual

WELCOME, *reader*

There is no single way to read well, though there is a prime reason why we should read. Information is endlessly available to us; where shall wisdom be found?”

—Harold Bloom, *How to Read and Why*

The Reading Residency invites you to consider the literary influences of your past, the aspirations you hold for your future reading practice, & the current challenges you face to achieve those goals, giving you the time, space, & community to develop your intellectual biography, goals for your reading, & the structure for creative & intellectual flourishing.

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A NOTE *from our founder*

SO TEXTUAL

Hudson, NY

January 2022

Some of us are fortunate enough to recall a time while reading when the clarity of an insight about our human experience became a physical revelation of awe, wonder, and beauty; a time when we had to stop reading in order to remark on the power of language to evoke such feelings, moved perhaps to tears. To be overcome by literature changes you. And I'm compelled to discover how and why books capture the hearts of some people – what causes them to be so “won over,” devoting time and resources, happily sacrificing other opportunities in the day, and so in love with fictive worlds that reading endures as a solitary pleasure. It is in such reading - the suspension of disbelief, our consideration of what if, the corporeal bathing in simile and metaphor - that we are confronted with ourselves.

In graduate school at Harvard Divinity School, I studied ritualization and meaning making using the material of the novel as an anthropological site. I was particularly struck by the literary theory of reader response criticism, which argues that the reader is responsible for creating the meaning in a text through her own relationship to it. In this way, reading is an intersubjective dialogue, an exercise in co-constitution. Which is why, as you know, I champion the belief that we are the books we've read.

Having felt the call to read from an early age, I can say its allure has compelled me to prioritize books without regard for much else, to be invested in the life of the mind to the detriment of, perhaps, living. But books are most enriching when they complement our realities instead of sublimating them—when we come to a work as a whole person with a life out there, with material to alchemize in those solitary moments when reading fiction gives back to reality. The So Textual Reading Residency is a resource for such engagement, marrying the lives you lead with the worlds you think about.

In taking tally of one's literary and intellectual life we come to know ourselves better. Reading through retrospection is worthwhile insofar as we acquire a new outlook on the original self who read the book in the first place, different than the self now considering the present moment, giving us a clearer path forward to who we are becoming. My life has been meaningful to me because of the playful and creative ways I can draw threads between my cultural resources and my becoming the woman – artist, wife, mother - I am today.

Are you the books you've read? I invite you to reflect on your reading practice and discover the affinities, particularities, and obsessions you possess in relation to literature. I suspect you'll find more than an answer; I presume you'll find clarity where you had yet to recognize opacity, the self reading the self anew, page by page and word by internalized word. What you do after such a realization is the responsibility of an examined life.

Sincerely,

Jennie Edgar

YOUR *reading practice*

PART ONE

In consideration of your literary biography

01 *What were the literary influences of your childhood and early adulthood?*

02 *How did they have an impact on you? How might they have cultivated your curiosity, interests, and inquiries today.*

YOUR *reading practice*

PART ONE

In consideration of your creative practice

- 03 *Do you have a creative practice? Anything at all? What does that look like? Are there any books that inform your creative practice? What has touched you deeply?*
- 04 *What are your obsessions? What does your work or life center around? What specifically are you examining or considering? Where does your mind wander to in the quiet moments?*

YOUR *reading practice*

PART ONE

In consideration of your reading practice

05 *Describe your current reading practice. How much time are you able to read a day, a week? Where do you read? How do you feel about the quality of your reading? What are you reading now, and how is that going for you?*

YOUR *reading practice*

PART ONE

In consideration of your literary participation

- 06 *Do you record the books you read? Do you write notes in the margins, or in a journal? How are you interacting with stories and making them your own? How could you improve on this practice?*
- 07 *What is the quality of your memory regarding the books you read? What was the protagonist's name of the second to last book you read? Is the plotline easy to recall, or are the details fuzzy?*

YOUR *reading practice*

PART ONE

In consideration of your literary challenges

08 *In what ways is reading a challenge? Describe in as much detail as possible: what, if anything, thwarts your reading practice, or makes it difficult?*

09 *Simplify your thoughts into a short list.*

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

YOUR *reading practice*

PART ONE

In consideration of your literary resources

10 *What do you need for your reading practice that you don't currently have —time, space, curiosity, inspiration, solitude, new experiences, a mentor, accountability, sleep, recommendations, childcare?*

11 *Simplify your thoughts into a short list.*

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

YOUR *reading practice*

PART ONE

In consideration of your reading strategy

- 12 *Looking back over your challenges and needs lists, what can you do to make reading easier to accomplish in your day or week, and what would it take to get your needs met, respectively?*

YOUR *reading practice*

PART ONE

In consideration of your Residency plan of action

- 13 *What would you like to do differently during your Reading Residency? How do you plan to improve upon the quality of your reading, your participation with the text, and the meaning you extract from it?*
- 14 *Describe how you would like to feel after six months in the Reading Residency. What have you accomplished? What have you gained? What have you contributed? How do you envision your reading practice enhancing other areas of your life or creative practice?*

YOUR *reading practice*

PART TWO

In consideration of your Residency manifesto.

15 *Write a manifesto for yourself.*

— *Using your reflections from Part One, write a few paragraphs outlining your approach to your Residency. Describe where you will read, and when. What will you change to make that happen? Describe how you hope to feel or accomplish—outline your goals and how you plan to achieve them. What are you wishing for? Are there expectations you can let go of, or new approaches you could explore? What will it feel like when you've accomplished what you've set out to do?*

YOUR *reading practice*

PART TWO

In consideration of your Residency plan of action II

16 *Create a structure for your Reading Residency.*

— *Where will you read? How many hours a day, a week will you read?
What does your ideal reading practice look like? Devise your own system
to fit your situation.*

	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
<i>early morning</i>							
<i>late morning</i>							
<i>afternoon</i>							
<i>evening</i>							
<i>notes</i>							

YOUR *reading practice*

PART TWO

In consideration of your Residency community

17 *Create community.*

— *Reading is often considered a solitary (if not isolating) pastime. The Reading Residency is designed to offer a strong community aspect with fun social opportunities. If you want a community to support your reading practice, how will you help create one? Perhaps you invite a friend to join? Or regularly contribute on Discord? We suggest attending all our Book Club meetings, and our monthly Homework Club is an excellent, informal get-together via Zoom where we share, recommend, and chat. Also, our Intelligentsia Membership tier includes an additional meeting exclusive to that group, and our Scholar Membership tier is independent of our Book Clubs and collectively designs its own reading agenda. Lastly, if you have any suggestions, questions, or grievances, let us know! We're here to help you out.*

YOUR *reading practice*

PART TWO

In consideration of your Residency starting point

18 *How might you begin?*

SIGNED

DATE

Jennie Edgar

05/01/13

READING RESIDENCY FOUNDER

HOW TO BE A DISCERNING READER

Ask yourself, do you trust this writer – with your time, with your mind?

Do you have reason to believe their vision of the world is one that will illuminate and expand your own?

If so, read with a pen in your hand.

Circle the words you do not know, and then look them up.

Read for words and consider why certain ones were chosen or omitted.

Read for sentences. Read them aloud and follow their rhythm.

Read with an awareness of how language feels.

Read gently, without hurrying. Don't read more, read better.

Keep a record of similes and metaphors, they make life richer.

Ask yourself what is not being said. Spend time in the subtext.

Synthesize: draw connections and weave the threads of your learning.

Immerse yourself into understanding and allow your mind to be changed.

Read for pleasure. Savor what pleases you.

And reread.

THE *end*

See you at the book clubs