

## Four Methods For Choosing What To Read Next



Dana Staves 09-30-14

There's always a bit of a lull between finishing one book and beginning the next. It may be brief, but it can last days if the book you just finished was perhaps a particularly powerful, resonant one. But alas, we all come to that moment when we cast a glance at our to be read stack, stand before our bookshelves, scan our Kindle, or swipe through our Audible accounts and ask ourselves that age-old question: what book should I read next?

I was thinking, when I found myself in that very moment, of the peculiar methods I go through to pick my next book. Sometimes, it feels like dating. Sometimes, it feels like visiting a salad bar. And sometimes, it's just the willy-nilly, seat-of-my-pants moment of insanity that only happens in my life when it comes to books (and food, let's be honest).

So here are four methods for deciding what book to read next, based on my experience:

### **The Charlotte "Double-Booking" Method**

Once upon a time, in Manhattan, four women were all friends, tossing back Cosmos and dating and finding their way in the world. One was named Charlotte, and Charlotte wanted desperately to find true love. She felt, however, that time was not on her side, and so she began "double booking": she scheduled two dates, with two different men, in one night.

Here in book world, we sometimes apply double (or triple) booking in a more literal sense: we read two or three (or, God help me, four) books at a time, reading a few chapters of one book before reapplying lipstick and diving into another. And the brilliant thing is that if true love happens to hit – if you end up finding the right book while you're double/triple booking – no one judges you or gets their feelings hurt. Unlike with Charlotte.

### **The Goldilocks Method**

We all know the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears: Goldilocks stumbles onto a lovely little cottage, and she tries out porridge, chairs, and beds, looking for the one that's just right for her.

The Goldilocks Method involves a similar methodology: we gather a collection of possible books, determine an arbitrary sample size – one page? first chapter? first lines? – and give them each a shot to find which one is just right.

## **The Bran Flakes Method**

If following your readerly pleasure center isn't working for you, it's not unheard of to use the Bran Flakes Method. Bran Flakes, sprouts, chia seeds – we hear that this stuff is good for us, full of fiber and vitamins and superfood things that we need and are supposed to want.

The Bran Flakes Method, therefore, is the method of seeking out a book that's not just good; it's also good for you. Maybe that "required reading" pick you didn't get around to in high school; maybe that big book of philosophy you bought on an impulse at a used bookstore; maybe that hulking classic that you swear you'll get around to one of these days. (*Anna Karenina*. She's always just there, on my bookshelf, asking me when. When, Dana?)

## **The Summer Lovin' Method**

Summer love is fleeting, spontaneous, full of passion and excitement. It's not about lasting love and building a relationship; it's about the sun and the sand and, let's face it, sexiness.

The Summer Lovin' Method is your walk on the wild side. It's the book that's the opposite of Bran Flakes. It's whatever you don't usually read – for me, that's mysteries and romances. The Summer Lovin' Method isn't about longevity; it's about flying by the seat of your pants, settling down for pure, unadulterated enjoyment, whatever that may mean for you. Because the heart wants what it wants.

What methods do you use to choose your next book?

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