

A Book Fanatic—That's Me

BY EVA GUILLIOT

I wonder if you too are a book fanatic. Do you, like me, get goose bumps when you encounter the aroma of new paper that permeates a book store? Do you get that tingling feeling just before you rip open the package containing the loot from your latest Amazon buying spree?

We book fanatics are addicted to buying, trading, and, yes, reading books. Those folks who purchase the classics in leather so they



can place them in floor-to-ceiling bookcases for their maids to dust are not book fanatics. A book fanatic is more likely to have books on the bedside table, near the recliner, in the bathroom, and on every possible inch of shelf space. There is nothing orderly about these arrangements of books, piled, stacked and squished, horizontally, vertically, and every which way.

The book fanatic will not pass up a new book but is stubbornly unwilling to part with an old one. This is me, and, as it turns out, my daughter shares my obsession. On June 21, 2003, when the fifth Harry Potter book arrived at my house, she jumped up and down, so excited she ripped the book from the box. So would she be willing to pack up her baby books to make room for her new treasures?

“Oh, no, not *Matilda the Dream Bear*, Mom. I still look at the pictures.”

Like mother, like daughter.

Here's a little test to determine if you are a book fanatic:

- Do you make plans to meet friends at a book store knowing that you will arrive at least 30 minutes early so that you can browse?
- Is your Reader's Advantage Card right next to your credit card in your wallet?
- Do you quickly dispose of the empty book boxes so your spouse does not ask too many questions? Maybe he'll think you checked them out of the library.
- Might others describe your reading habits as frenetic? The other evening, just as I finished *The Secret Life of Bees* and placed the book on the shelf, I grabbed and delved into Elizabeth Berg's *Ordinary Life*. “Another book? Aren't you ever tired of reading,” my husband asked. Silly man; silly question.
- Do you experience “blackouts” that cause you to not recall reading the same book just last month? Do what I do. Get a journal and keep track of what you read. I know this helps me to stay sane.
- Do you make promises to yourself that you will cut down or stop this obsession and then find yourself reading and buying just as much or probably even more?
- Do you get irrationally upset when others mistreat your books? When my students fold the pages of my books or crease the edges, my heart contracts into a near panic attack. I must remind myself “Don't touch that kid!”
- Do you find yourself getting defensive about what you read? My reading taste is diverse; don't tell me it shouldn't be. Why should I have to defend myself that I want to read my child's Lemony Snicket books or Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent* or Anne Rice's novels (all of them) or such diverse writers as Walter Mosley, Ernest Gaines, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Umberto Eco. I'm an eclectic book fanatic, and I'm proud of it.

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