

∞ READING ROUND ∞

My Reading Habits

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‘IF YOU DON’T HAVE TIME TO READ, you don’t have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that.’ This quote by Stephen King keeps me motivated. Perhaps a little too much. The problem is I want to read ‘everything, everywhere, all at once’ to borrow from the title of the Oscar-nominated multiverse fantasy, bursting with fresh and rampant ideas. I also must confess that the majority of my reading is for work and not a great deal for pleasure. I tend to do the latter if I’m on holiday taking a short break, which, to be honest, is not often.

First of all, I am a news junkie. Journalism has been a large part of my life and I’ve not been able to break the habit of an early morning editorial briefing. On waking, I start by browsing news apps on my iPhone for the latest headlines. I mainly use *The Guardian* and *Times* apps. I specifically seek out opinion pages and features such as: thousands demonstrating in Berlin against giving weapons to Ukraine; foodbank volunteers living on the breadline; Matt Hancock calls Isabel Oakeshott WhatsApp message leak a ‘massive betrayal’; Chris Rock speaking about the Will Smith slap for the first time and so on. Then I’ll forage through broadcast apps like CNN or Sky News. If there’s time I’ll check to see what’s trending on Twitter. I like to know what people are talking about. Social media is a rabbit hole, so I try not to spend too long on this. I then feel guilty as I keep threatening to leave the reactionary chaos of Twitter behind. The morning reading is eclectic. I’m just open to the day’s political agenda. In the words of William Faulkner ‘Read, read, read. Read everything — trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as

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an apprentice and studies the master. Read! You'll absorb it. Then write it. If it's good, you'll find out. If it's not, throw it out of the window.'

After this, the day's reading routine is far more structured and built around my writing projects. Reading will involve such research, as several of my projects are historical. I need to imagine not just characters, but to conjure the vanished world they inhabit. I am currently reading *A Century of Female Revolution: From Peterloo to Parliament* by Glynis Cooper and *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari. I will often get the audible version of research books and listen while on the bus or out walking. Is that cheating? I do love audiobooks. They make life so much easier. I have downloaded quite a collection. I also have a ridiculous Kindle collection. But growing up, I always wanted my very own library and have several bookshelves stuffed with writers including Olivia Butler, James Baldwin, Graham Greene, Alice Walker, John Steinbeck, August Wilson and on and on.

In moments of snatched leisure time I am reading *The Collected Poems of June Jordan: Directed by Desire*; and *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead on Audible. What? It's still a book. I'm reading with my ears. Don't judge.