

The Effects of Books

I wasn't always addicted to reading. It began in elementary school, when we could literally win prizes for reading. All you had to do was take a test on the book you read; the better you scored, the more points you received. Of course I leapt on this opportunity, and then it began. Once I started seriously reading, I couldn't stop. My childish chapter books rapidly progressed to full blown novels way above my reading level. But I soon discovered that this fabulous world had horrible side effects: I began experiencing strange emotional outbursts that had nothing to do with hormones and suffered many sleepless nights. Then I noticed that my friends, who hadn't read my current book obsession, were cut off from me, as though we were separated by an invisible barrier. That's when I realized I had Post Book Traumatic Stress; I was experiencing these strange symptoms at the hands of a paperback.

When I experienced my first "emotional outburst" it was not pleasant. It was then that I realized that books play with your emotions like they are a coin. Heads: you get to laugh and smile at the sweet story your reading. Tails: you get to weep like the book is your dead child, because the author is a cruel and brilliant person. It is not good to read these "playful" books in public; people look at you weird if you burst into tears or randomly start laughing, trust me (it happens a lot). Often book lovers feel misunderstood by those "normal" people around them; my own mother (for example) is simply at a loss when she (occasionally) finds me on my bed, sobbing. She doesn't understand. She will *never* understand. Booklovers all over know that brilliantly written books are powerful, awesome, and dangerous.

This strange condition causes sleepless nights, dulled reactions to those around you, and (in extreme cases) depression. I have spent many nights promising myself I will go to bed... after one more chapter. These sleepless nights are very problematic, especially when I have to wake up early the next morning. To those who know booklovers, do not try to converse with them if they are reading a book, especially if it's an important thing you're telling them. They may nod their head and say things like, 'Ok' or 'Yeah' but, they really aren't even listening to you. The only thing on their mind is: *What's going to happen on the next page?* That depression I mentioned? It's not the suicidal kind (otherwise we'd have a *whole* lot of dead Percy Jackson fans on our hands...). This depression comes when you are usually feeling too much for the character in the book. You understand what they are going through and therefore feel a painfully deep connection with them. This depression can also be caused when one of your favorite characters dies (*ahem*, Steven Moffat). Even though the character isn't "real", the reader has grown to love them like they were. That character has become their best friend and losing them is painful. Post Book Traumatic Stress is a very serious condition, and its symptoms are not to be taken lightly.

One of the most mysterious effects caused by Post Book Traumatic Stress is the barrier that seems to distance you from your friends, the friends who haven't read the book you are currently reading. It's not their fault, but at the same time it is, because this book is wonderful. It makes you sad that they haven't experienced it. The only reason you're drifting away from them is because you feel as though you have nothing in common with them. All those ties that bound you and friend together have been temporarily severed, all because of this book. There's a silence hanging in the air because all you want to talk about is this book. You want to discuss the characters, the underlying themes of the book, the amazing plot, and everything else wonderful

about it; but you know that they wouldn't have that deep connection, even if you explained the plot. You abandon your friends in the hopes that someone, *someone*, has read the book too. You adventure out into the realms of unknown people and begin randomly questioning them about the book. If worst come to worst and no one has read the book, then it's time to make your friends read the book and hope they enjoy it as much as you did. I hope that your invisible "wall" falls down soon.

Books are a blend of bitter and sweet, and are not for those with fragile emotions...or hearts. Even if books have odd effects, I hope you read them anyways, because they are wonderful. I can only hope that someday you will blossom into a booklover. People will look at you weird, you'll probably have sleepless nights, and your friends may drift away; but books make it all worthwhile. The hands of a paperback may seem frail, but you must never underestimate their power.