Photo of the Day |



University of Connecticut student stops outside of Lizzie's Curbside food truck on Whitney Road to pet their well-known golden retriever. Students have frequently passed by the food truck during their walks to and from class. PHOTO BY KALI REED, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

For the sake of reading

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I sit in the passenger seat of my family's black 2006 Honda Odyssey, balancing last week's stack of books on my lap as my mom makes the weekly trip to my 9-year-old self's favorite destination: Valley Ranch Public Library. For a child spending his summer in the blistering heat of Texas, an air-conditioned building filled with books is a compelling respite.

Many of my fond childhood memories in Texas live in that weekly trip and routine: returning my old stack of books, thumbing through the shelves searching for my next fix for the week, checking them out and going for a stroll with my mom by the canalside.

Despite my personal love for the library, I always knew that reading was not for everybody. Some people do not get that kind of enjoyment out of reading for the sake of it. But sometime between then and high school, reading has become something that people go out of their way to avoid.

In high school, classmates immediately turned to SparkNotes, recaps and artificial intelligence summaries whenever a reading or book was assigned. Hundreds of pages become just a few paragraphs of plot — enough to answer questions and get through discussions without ever turning a page.

To some extent, I understand why. Not every assigned reading is particularly riveting and with other more important assignments it feels like an easy way to save time. But knowing what happens in a book is not the same as reading it.

You cannot understand the depth of characters, the tone and diction of a book or how it makes the reader feel at every point. Besides, why is simply reading a book a "waste" of time in the first place? Just because it takes time does not make it wasted.

Reading cannot become something we need to justify.

In 2024, American 12th graders recorded their lowest average reading score in the history of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. While these results could reflect many factors, they make a culture of avoiding sustained reading particularly alarming.

But valuing reading cannot stop at telling people to read more. It also means valuing the institutions that make reading accessible. Libraries give us somewhere to develop our attitudes toward reading. They provide research assistance, internet access and literacy programs alongside the simple opportunity to pick up something unfamiliar. For children and students, the accessibility of libraries means that their curiosity and desire to learn are not dependent on what they can afford or get at home.

In April 2025, federal funding uncertainty prompted Texas' state library agency to direct current grant recipients and interlibrary loan participants to pause activities and avoid additional financial commitments. How we support the institutions that make reading free and accessible should reflect how much we value it. And funding is not the only thing putting pressure on that access.

While students are getting used to skipping books, adults are narrowing what they can read in the first place.

PEN America recorded 1,781 instances of book bans in Texas public schools during the 2024-25 school year, placing the state second nationally. A 2025 Texas law also prohibited school library materials containing "indecent" or "profane" content.

Asking someone to just buy a banned book ignores why access to libraries matters. Reading is something worth making time for, and access to it should not depend on a student's ability to buy the books their library can no longer provide.

Ironically, the technology students increasingly turn to instead of reading depends on books.

A June 2025 court ruling described how Anthropic — the company behind Claude — purchased millions of print books, had their bindings stripped, pages scanned and discarded the physical copies. The resulting digital collection supplied material for AI training. The court found the conversion of purchased books into digital library copies to be fair use under those circumstances.

The contradiction is striking. Books are treated as raw materials for machines people increasingly use to summarize the same texts they do not want to spend time reading. Their words are valuable enough to be acquired by the millions, but spending some of our own time reading them is an inconvenience.

Do your assigned readings. Go to the Homer Babbidge Library. Pick up a book for the sake of it. You do not need an assignment to find something compelling and learn something.

When I moved across the country to UConn, I brought just two suitcases. And in that space to pack up my entire life, I fit in two books: my copy of "Life of Pi" and an AP Stylebook. One to remind me of my love for reading and one to help me keep writing things (like this!) for readers.

Years after my trips to Valley Ranch, I am still finding room for books. They are worth my time — and I am sure there are ones worth yours.