

Introduction

This support pack accompanies the magazine article:

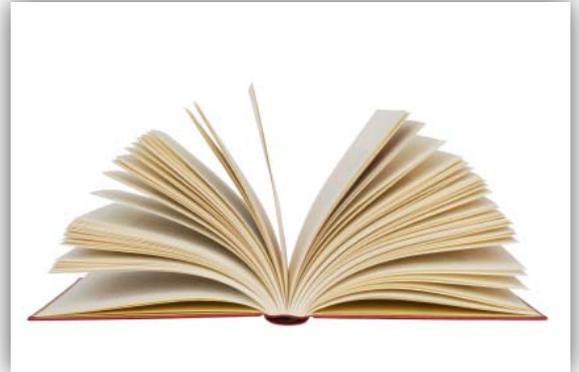
Ten years without books

To read or listen to the article online, go to:

<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/magazine/ten-years-without-books>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- a pre-reading vocabulary activity;
- the article;
- a comprehension task



Before you read / listen

Match the words and phrases in the table to their definitions.

1. adolescence	2. avid	3. circuit board	4. fateful
5. intellectual	6. pamphlet	7. peer	8. profound
9. rig up	10. scour	11. simultaneously	12. world-view

Definitions:

- a. A person who is the same age or has the same social position or the same abilities as other people in a group
- b. In a way that happens or is done at exactly the same time
- c. Very important because of its, often negative, effect on the future
- d. Period of a person's life between childhood and adulthood
- e. A small electronic circuit which consists of a lot of small parts made on a piece of semiconducting material
- f. Clear and deep (relates to a person's understanding)
- g. Extremely eager or interested
- h. To fix (a piece of equipment) in place
- i. To search (a place or thing) very carefully in order to try to find something
- j. A highly educated person whose interests are studying and other activities that involve careful thinking and mental effort
- k. A thin book with only a few pages which gives information or an opinion about something
- l. A way of looking at or considering the world

Article: Ten years without books by John Kuti

As I write this, I have half an eye on an old James Bond film that is showing on my computer. But this is a story about how I stopped watching TV and began reading again for pleasure, after ten years in which I hardly turned a page.

I suppose I was an avid reader of "literature" between the ages of nine and fourteen. I had enough time to be White Fang, Robinson Crusoe, and Bilbo Baggins and Jeeves. Of course there was room in the schoolboy's imagination for some real historical figures: Scott of the Antarctic, all of the Vikings, and Benjamin Franklin were good friends of mine.

Then, in adolescence, I began a long search for strange and radical ideas. I wanted to challenge my elders and betters, and stir up my peers with amazing points of view. Of course, the only place to look was in books. I hunted out the longest titles and the authors with the funniest names, I scoured the library for completely unread books. Then I found one which became my bible for the whole of 1982, it had a title composed of eleven long words and an author whose name I didn't know how to pronounce. It was really thick and looked dead serious. Even better, it put forward a whole world-view that would take days to explain. Perfect. I took it out of the library three times, proud to see the date-stamps lined up on the empty library insert.

Later, I went to university. Expecting to spend long evenings in learned discussion with clever people, I started reading philosophy. For some reason I never found the deep-thinking intellectuals I hoped to meet. Anyway, I was ready to impress with my profound knowledge of post-structuralism, existentialism and situationism. These things are usually explained in rather short books, but they take a long time

to get through. They were the end of my youthful reading.

Working life was hard to get used to after so much theory. It was the end of books for me. There didn't seem to be much in books that would actually get things done. To do things you had to answer the telephone and work a computer. You had to travel about and speak to people who weren't at all interested in philosophy. I didn't stop reading, you can't avoid that. I read all day. But no books came my way, only manuals and pamphlets and contracts and documents. Maybe most people satisfy their need for stories and ideas with TV and, to tell the truth, it was all I needed for ten years. In those days I only had a book "on the go" for the duration of aeroplane flights. At first I would come home and watch TV over dinner. Then, I moved the TV so I could watch it from bed. I even rigged up a switch so I could turn it off without getting out of bed. Then, one fateful day, my TV broke and my landlady took it away.

My new TV is an extra circuit board inside my computer. It's on a desk in front of a working chair and I can't see it from the bed. I still use it for the weather forecasts and it's nice to have it on while I'm typing this... but what to do last thing at night? Well, have another go with books.

Now, I just like books. I have a pile of nice ones by my bed and I'm reading about six simultaneously. I don't want to BE any of the characters. I don't care if a thousand people have already read them. I don't have to search through libraries. There are books everywhere and all of them have something to read in them. I have the strange feeling that they've been there all along, waiting for me to pick them up.

Comprehension task

Multiple Choice

Read the questions below and select the right answer.

1. The author probably read "Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Post-Industrial Society":
 - a. in 1972
 - b. in 1982
 - c. in 1992
 - d. in 1993
2. When he was a boy, the author:
 - a. avoided books
 - b. looked at books but didn't read them
 - c. preferred videos to books
 - d. read enthusiastically
3. Students at university used to spend the evenings:
 - a. discussing philosophy
 - b. reading short books
 - c. thinking deeply
 - d. the author doesn't say how they spent the evenings
4. At work, the author:
 - a. didn't have to read
 - b. didn't have to read books
 - c. didn't have to read manuals and pamphlets
 - d. didn't have to read contracts and documents
5. The author:
 - a. hardly read a book for ten years
 - b. doesn't read books
 - c. hasn't read a book for ten years
 - d. didn't read a book for ten years
6. Now the author:
 - a. doesn't have a TV
 - b. has a TV next to his bed
 - c. has a computer with a TV inside it
 - d. has a computer instead of a TV

Answers

Comprehension Task: 1 - b, 2 - d, 3 - d, 4 - b, 5 - a, 6 - c

Before you read: 1 - c, 2 - g, 3 - e, 4 - c, 5 - f, 6 - k, 7 - a, 8 - f, 9 - h, 10 - i, 11 - b, 12 - l