

Sharing the Gift of Reading by Mrs. P.

A few years ago, a friend gave me a nightgown for my birthday that was so large I wound up using it as an emergency parachute in case I ever had to jump out of my second-floor bedroom. Last Christmas, I received a pair of red socks from my cousin that were so small I wound up using them as ear warmers for my cat.

There is, however, one gift I enjoy receiving even when it doesn't fit. Sometimes especially when it doesn't fit. That gift is a book.

Getting a book that doesn't "fit" can open up your world in ways you never imagined. "Why I never showed the slightest interest in Ancient Egypt," you think. "Why would someone give me a book about *that*?" Then you read it and are transported back to a world so amazing and compelling, you read three more books about it simply because you don't want to leave.

"Why would someone give *me* a book about a racehorse? I've rarely gone to the races and have no special interest in horses." But then you read [Seabiscuit: An American Legend](#) by Laura Hillenbrand and are hypnotized; swept away against your will by the evocative writing and astonishing story.

Sometimes, I enjoy wandering through a library or bookstore and letting serendipity direct me to my next book. And if it's the last thing I ever thought I'd read, odds are it's going to be a fulfilling experience.

On my free website, www.MrsP.com, I sit in a cozy chair by the fire and read classic stories to kids. It's one of my favorite ways to share the gift of reading. My website features a library with dozens of tales, from the hilarious to the scary. I encourage kids to not just choose the stories that immediately strike their fancy, but to give others a try too. For some reason, those often turn out to be the stories that stick with you – and even change your life.

Or course, I realize it's not always easy to persuade kids to read *anything* if they haven't developed a love and appreciation of books. To help parents with a child needing a bit of encouragement, and to celebrate Share a Story, Shape a Future, I've created a new, [free](#) activity on my website.

It offers fun ideas about how you can – with very little time and money – [create magical, handmade books](#) out of stories created by your child. And when a child sees a story woven out of thin air from her or his imagination turned into a *real book* – well, I guarantee, that child will be a lot closer to understanding the power of books and the wonders of reading.