

# In Search Of: Readers

My apologies to you in advance, Dear Reader, for the copious amount of statistics sewn into the fabric of the following WebEssay. If there was another way to make my point, I would have taken that route.

Compared to a hundred years ago, writers today are at a huge disadvantage. Sure, a hundred years ago 20% of the U.S. population couldn't read or write – an alarming number when you think about it. But those who did read back then had far less distraction than what we have today.

For the modern writer, it's a long, tortuous, uphill battle even before a single word is written. Let's say you're a writer writing a book today (the following schedule is based on my own personal experience and is used for generalization only), you're going to spend a significant amount of time creating the characters, assembling elements of the story, outlining then tweaking the story, then doing whatever research you need to do to make the story believable - let's go with 3-6 months. The actual writing of the first draft will take somewhere from 6-12 months. You put the first draft away for 3-6 months so you can come at it again with fresh eyes. The second draft takes you 1 month. If a third draft is necessary, add on another month. Adding up the time it takes to get to a final draft that you're comfortable sending out to publishers, comes out to approximately two years, two months.

Now that the manuscript is at the publisher, the wait for a positive or negative response (for the purpose of this WebEssay, let's stick with a positive response throughout this procedure) could take anywhere from 1-3 months. If you've noticed, I don't even mention the time it takes to search for an agent because it's a complete waste of time – but that's a subject for another WebEssay. OK, now that the publisher has bought your novel, the real fun begins – the actual professional editing of the manuscript. If you stay on it, it shouldn't take you more than 3 months. Once that's done, a book cover is created then approved – 1 month. A publishing date is set – 3-6 months. Now the marketing begins, calls and emails to newspapers and other media outlets, interviews, etc. – 1-3 months. Once the book is published, book signings and other personal appearances – 1 month.

So, in total, if you're lucky and work hard, from beginning to end the process of getting a novel into the public's hands takes approximately 3 years, 7 months (which is the reason why it's a good idea to start writing another novel during this time). And what does the writer have to face after all this time and hard work?

*Total percentage of the U.S. population that has a specific reading disorder? 15%*

*Total percentage of U.S. adults who are unable to read an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level book? 50%*

*Total percentage of U.S. high school students who will never read a book after high school? 33%*

*Total percentage of U.S. college students who will never read a book after graduation? 42%*

*Total percentage of U.S. families who did not buy a book this year? 80%*

*Total percentage of U.S. adults who have not been in a book store in the past 5 years? 70%*

*Total percentage of books that aren't read to completion? 57%*

I found these grim statistics on a website called [statisticbrain.com](http://statisticbrain.com) so I assume these numbers are true. From my own experience, they sure ring true. But, wait – there's more!

Writers also have to compete with outside distractions such as video games, movies, 300 channel cable TV systems, sports events, cell phone apps, partying, listening to music and dancing in clubs, exercising, laziness, eating, sleeping, having sex, showering, work, school, walking the dog, mowing the lawn plus other assorted yard chores, shopping and finally, breathing.

This is why I'm so honored and grateful when someone buys one of my books and actually reads it, even if it's just a single amazing, intelligent and willing reader. It somehow makes all the time and work I spent creating memorable characters and awesome worlds worthwhile; it wasn't for nothing. The truth is, real writers will write even if there's no market for it and no one to read it, because it's in him/her and it just has to come out. I've had books nag at me for years to be written and, in the end, I always listen to that mind voice. That's the difference between someone who wants to write a book and someone who actually does.

Believe it or not, there was a time in the 1700's when novels became more prominent and society grew increasingly concerned that young people spent way too much time reading books.

Whaaaaat? They went so far as naming this malady: "Reading Rage," "Reading Fever," "Reading Mania," or "Reading Lust!" What a wonderful problem to have! I can imagine dark and smoky reading dens in the bad part of town where teenagers gathered in circles, reading aloud their favorite passages, enjoying the buzz that came afterwards, never realizing that they're hopelessly addicted to the written word. I can imagine Reading Rehab Hospitals sprouting up everywhere populated with doctors and nurses who try to wane those hopelessly addicted teenage readers off of books by teaching them how to smoke or break into houses! Ha! I can only hope that maybe someday this Reading Rage will happen again (there I go, the eternal optimist).

Anyway, trust me on this, having someone read what I've written is the icing on the cake. Having someone enjoy what you've written is the flavor of that icing on the cake and I never get tired of tasting it.

Where are you, Dear Readers?

Thanks for your time,  
GC Rosenquist