

Portrait of a Super Reader

by NAWAL QAROONI



All four of my kids love to read, even the two youngest who glean information from pictures alone, but Ehsan strikes me as an especially Super Reader. He reminds me of myself at eight, when I would tote books everywhere and become irate if I didn't have my stories with me.

He is the very same. Last May when we traveled to Florida—our first trip after not leaving our house in two years—he lugged a stack of hefty Rick Riordan fantasy novels downstairs.

“Buddy, what about clothes?” I asked. “You’re just bringing books?”

“I don’t really need anything else,” he replied.

“We’re only going for four days azizam, you really think you’ll read a book a day?”

In the end, I convinced him to take only two, but when he finished them beachside he started to cry actual tears.

“You are the one who told me not to bring the next one in the series,” he agonized. So I googled the closest book store and hightailed it to Barnes and Noble, where I had him call ahead of time to ensure they had the next in his series. I understood this kid. I was the very same. What’s better than being completely lost in a story? Like his mama, he too became friends with book characters. I would tell him about how much I missed different personalities when stories ended; he’d nod his head knowingly.

At home in Chicago, he won’t leave home without a book. It doesn’t matter where he’s going or if he will even have time to read; he never wants to get stuck. He puts holds on my library card and tells me when they’re ready, begging me to pull over at the Logan Square branch on our way home from school. He’ll run in without the rest of the family to grab what he needs, devour them then leave them in a neat stack by the kitchen door for drop off when he’s done.



Last year as an end of year gift, when Amazon had a sale, I bought him a Kindle. He reads interchangeably between modes but tells me he much prefers analog because of the way the book feels in his hand. He loves fantasy and graphic novels but really, voraciously reads everything. He's not too discriminating. He reads, undistracted, while kids play around him. He digs nonfiction about animals and appreciates non-story informational texts about Lego or Pokemon. And he especially loves reading aloud to his friends.

Perhaps more heart-warming than anything else is his adoration of the main public library branch in downtown Chicago, the Harold Washington.

"We haven't been there in sooooo long," he whined in the car the other day, adding that the building's gargoyles are cool. "When can we go again? I need you to mark the calendar."

"Ok Ehsan, I promise we'll go soon," I told him. "You've asked a dozen times."

"I like the wiggly chairs there, and they have ALL the books I want," he said, smiling. "You should know Mom, aren't you a literacy coach or something?"

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