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The Joys of Reading

I WAS FORTUNATE to have a sister three years older than I. She helped me to read long before I entered primary school, and as soon as possible I joined the small children's library in my neighbourhood. At that stage in life, I liked reading fairy stories and fables about heroes, giants, witches and wizards. The "goodies" were always the heroes who won, and the "baddies" always lost in the end. In this way we later learned to differentiate between good and bad in real life.

By the time I went to secondary school, I had read every story-book in the small junior library. However, secondary school kept me too busy to read much, because we had to learn many new subjects. It was not like primary school where we concentrated on the 3 R's: reading, writing and (a)rithmetic. At secondary school we studied science, history, geography and French, Latin and other subjects. Of course that meant – as you may guess – tests and examinations. I enjoyed secondary school, though we studied only "set books" by famous writers. These had to be studied very deeply, so we had little time to read just for pleasure. Nowadays, students are encouraged to widen their minds by reading outside the school syllabus. Personally, I think reading comics, cartoons or playing computer games, though exciting, cannot broaden our education much. We should read

stories about real life.

I found a great deal of pleasure as a teenager in reading the works of writers like Charles Dickens. His stories are exciting, sometimes funny, but they also appeal to our consciences. In those days the poor were badly treated, as Dickens himself had experienced in his youth. His books greatly influenced the social attitudes of the people of his day. I remember taking my chair into a shady corner of the living room so that no one would see me weeping as I read "Oliver Twist", "David Copperfield", "The Old Curiosity Shop" and others. They made me socially conscious for life.

I also enjoyed Shakespeare, whose dramas taught me to love poetry, nature, and philosophy. I know that there are also many Chinese books that inspire Chinese readers. Take advantage of every opportunity to read good books, and you will remember them for life, because they will teach you how to live happily, what dangers to avoid, and they will help you to understand the meaning of life. Moreover, they are also enjoyable.