

# Read Aloud 2000

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by Jed Gaines

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## Reading loses ground to disinterest

While presenting at the International Reading Association annual conference in Indianapolis last April, I came across several excellent books published by that organization.

**Fostering the Love of Reading: The Affective Domain in Reading Education** is a collection of articles that represent the current thinking relating to reading motivation, edited by Eugene H. Cramer and Marrietta Castle. In the introduction, both writers commented on a very interesting point:

"While illiteracy is, without question, a very serious concern, *aliteracy* may be an even greater one. Aliteracy has been defined as a *lack of the reading habit; especially such a lack in capable readers who choose not to read.*

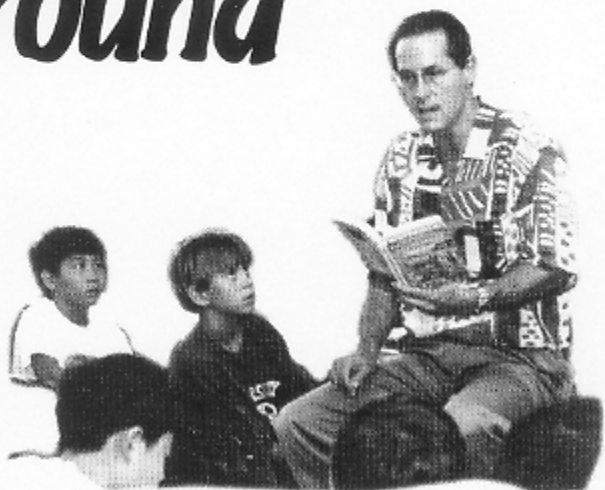
"Estimates of the number of illiterate persons in the United States vary widely, but seem to average about 1 in 5. That is, adults who cannot read well enough to use reading effectively in their daily

lives total about 20 percent of the population. Reliable estimates of the number of aliterates in the United States are more difficult to secure.

"Researchers suggest that only about 20 percent of the adults who are able to read do so voluntarily with any degree of regularity. That is to say, of the 4 out of 5 Americans who can read, only one actually does.

"Once out of school, nearly 60 percent of all adult Americans never read a single book, and most of the rest read only one book a year. After completing school, too many people do not voluntarily choose to read for their own personal pleasure or information. The student who can read, but chooses not to, is probably the most crucial concern confronting our educational institutions today. It is not illiteracy we are combating, but aliteracy."

As scholar R.M. Hutchins said: "We do not need to burn books to



Jed Gaines, the father of two public-school children, has been working with the read-aloud concept for the past 15 years. He conducts presentations for educators, parents and their Hawaii School communities. Send questions or a self-addressed 55¢ stamped envelope for his K-12 reading list to: **Read Aloud America**, 1937 Keeaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822. Call 531-1985, fax 531-1984 or email to: [readaloudamerica@lava.net](mailto:readaloudamerica@lava.net).

kill our civilization; we need only to leave them unread for a generation."

For these reasons, when I address audiences nationwide I never fail to mention that reading aloud wonderful books for pleasure is the great motivator. Such material is different from instructional material. It creates the desire to read.

Another scholar, S. Johnson said: "What is read with delight is commonly retained, because pleasure always secures attention, but the books which are consulted by necessity and perused with impatience seldom leave any traces on the mind."

**"It's easy to read aloud to anyone. Simply pick up a book and start!"**



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