

The Magical Thing About Reading

If I was able to bottle up feelings, to keep them safe and release them whenever I wanted, there are a lot that I would try to capture. I would bottle the absolute contentment of eating mince pies and playing board games in front of my grandparents' log fire and the anticipation of something you've been looking forward to for ages. I'd stopper up the sensation that comes from the exhausted satisfaction of climbing to the top of a mountain and the peace and wonder at seeing the world stretched out around you.

A lot of my favourite feelings have something to do with books. On my shelves of bottles, you'd find the limitless possibility of walking into a bookshop with a book token in your hand, as well as knowing you've

chosen the perfect six-book selection from the library. But one of the most magical feelings for me is the split second just as you open up a brand new book – and for a moment, whatever book it is, there is the potential that it could be your favourite book in the whole world.

I will always be a reader before I'm a writer. Once, before I'd started writing my own books, I mentioned how much I love giving every book I read that moment to be my new favourite, and a friend who was a writer told me they thought it was the greatest gift that you could give a book. Now I write my own stories, I understand how true that is.

We never really know which books are going to be our favourites, even if we have authors and types of stories that we know we love. Often how books look, or what they say on the back, give us clues about what we might expect, but you never quite know when a book is going to feel like it was written just for you. When it's going to make you laugh or cry or think or change just when you need it most. And that's what puts the very real magic into reading.

So that moment of possibility, of excitement, of hope, *that* is my favourite feeling. And the best thing about this feeling is that you can have it whenever or wherever you like by picking up and reading a new book.

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