



# COUPLES TURN READING INTO A JOINT VENTURE

**Reading aloud brings shared pleasure, companionship, and intellectual stimulation.**

In Fullerton, Calif., Kirk and Marianne Sullivan are reading the Bible aloud. "My job is to get us through the 'begatting,' the long lists of 'and Jacob begat Horeb, and Horeb begat whomever,' " Mr. Sullivan says. "If my wife could, she'd just skip over the begatting sections and get to the Gospel. I make sure the begats get read."

Reading the first four Harry Potter books brought enjoyment to Karen and Andrew Page of New York. "We found it equally as pleasurable to be the reader, with the feeling of nurturing it instilled, as the 'readee,' with the comfort we received from that," Mrs. Page says. She adds that when they listened to one of the later Potter books on DVD during a long drive, "it didn't make the same connection."

Poetry remains the reading-aloud choice for Betsy Storm and her husband, Jack Kavanagh, in Chicago. They especially like a set of poetry anthologies edited by Roger Housden, bearing titles such as "Ten Poems to Last a Lifetime."

"Poetry seems to be one of the best types of literature to read aloud because of its experiential, evocative impact," Ms. Storm says. "Also, poetry offers a great springboard for discussion."

Discussion is a word that comes up again and again as couples describe the joys of reading together. Echoing other enthusiasts, Carol Tiffin James of Hancock, Maine, notes that she and her husband, Ed, have "wonderful discussions" on everything they read.

In 2006 the couple sold a three-story Victorian house and built a small ranch "out in the sticks" to simplify their lives. That has given them time to sit by their wood stove in the winter as Mrs. James reads to her husband. Before that, they read in the car as they traveled to visit their adult children. He drove, she read.

The Jameses read only nonfiction. A biography of President John Adams helped to pass the time on a road trip from Maine to Tennessee last year. They're currently reading a biography of Benjamin Franklin. Their list has included books about theology, English history, and the slow-food movement, such as "The \$64 Tomato." The couple also enjoyed "What the Bleep Do We Know?" She describes it as "a fascinating book about the string theory, quantum physics, written for lay people."

Describing herself as a speed reader when she reads silently, Mrs. James says, "Reading aloud has forced me to stop and pay attention so I don't miss so much. The books really come alive for us." They no longer watch TV, finding that reading aloud offers "a much more satisfying and peaceful lifestyle."

At a time when busy couples can sometimes feel like proverbial ships passing in the night, the prospect of 20 or 30 minutes together, companionship with each other and the printed page, carries strong appeal. In a wired age, reading aloud offers a comforting reminder that it's still possible to carve out time for such simple, low-tech pleasures as another log on the fire, another chapter in a book, and another literary discussion *à deux*.