

## HOW I FEEL ABOUT BOOKS

Essay by author Laura Aimee Garn

When I was a little girl in the 1950s, my mother worked as a children's book editor at Grosset & Dunlap. Today many women combine having a family and a career, but, for that era and for her generation, my mother was unusual in her choice to work full time.

I remember being with her in the early evening, when she came home from the office. She often brought me picture books, and read them aloud, sitting with me in an armchair in her bedroom. I remember loving those Wonder Books—*Three Mice and a Cat*, *The Surprise Doll*, and *Just Like Mommy, Just Like Daddy*. I still have my copies, a little worn, but as special to me now as they were then.

I learned to read in the first grade, as children did in those days. (We had spent nursery school and kindergarten playing.) I still remember my favorite picture books: *Caps for Sale*, *Madeleine*, *The Little Engine That Could*, *Crow Boy*, the *Eloise* books. Once I was able to read on my own, I raced through the series books (*Honey Bunch*, *The Bobbsey Twins*, *Nancy Drew*, *The Dana Girls*, *Cherry Ames*), then on to *Pippi Longstocking*, *The Five Little Peppers And How They Grew*, *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle*, *Misty of Chincoteague*, and dozens of biographies for children. Soon I was able to read the works of Louisa May Alcott, and I had a good start on a lifelong love of reading and literature.

When I had my own daughters, reading to them became the same kind of special time I remembered from my childhood. One night my older daughter, Louisa, then about three years old, held her book open to a picture of a story book town—vivid, picturesque, and inviting. She put her feet squarely on the pages and looked at me, puzzled.

"I want to go in there," she said, looking around the book and trying to figure out how to do it. Exactly!

I explained that the beautiful candy-colored town was a picture on paper. As much as the world inside beckoned to us, we could only enter in our imagination. But Louisa had the right idea about books: they are worlds that we can enter and explore, and we return to our everyday lives enriched and inspired.



Laura Aimee Garn