
Primary Revelation

By Sarah Howe

My youngest is what is known in educational circles as a 'late reader.' He showed little to no interest in learning to read before the age of ten or eleven.

When I offered periodically to teach him to read or to find him a tutor he declined saying, "Mom, if I wanted to learn to read I could. I'm just not interested right now."

So I waited and watched what was happening. He spent his first decade rising in the morning and slipping out doors where he roamed and played barefoot in all seasons. He played, climbed trees, built contraptions and puppets. He listened to stories and lived his own stories through dress up and imaginative play. He interacted with others through play.

His life is well grounded in what Thomas Berry refers to as the Primary Revelation.

On the few occasions of his childhood when he was sick, he slowed down enough to study reading. The rest of his first decade of life on Earth, he spent in motion connecting with his body in this world. When he did begin to read I mourned the passing of an era. I rejoiced in the decade he had lived immune to advertisements on the side of the road, free to travel with his own thoughts uninterrupted by the written words that surround our lives. (Can you drive past a street sign without reading it?)

As he grows I welcome his reading as it assists him in negotiating his way through our literate world. And I continue to relish his freedom and comfort with the natural world and his imagination.

Sarah Howe, potter and home school mother of four, lives and works in Durham, NC, with her husband, Randy Best. Her youngest son continues to grow and learn, following his interests in puppetry, music, community, games, and the great outdoors. He assures his mother, "I can read anything I want. I just don't like to because I am so slow and I'd rather do other things." Sarah Howe can be reached at sarah@houseofclay.net.