



Making Other Arrangements

Stories for a sustainable future

serve until it is 150, about forty times the useful life span of the all-powerful iMac on which I am, alas, writing these words. It takes trees to make books, sure, but so what? Americans use 67 million tons of paper yearly, but less than 2 percent of that goes to the U.S. book industry. We blow at least three times more on junk mail, almost ten times more on newsprint. Since there are libraries everywhere and millions of used books available both online and off, there's no call to buy even as many new books as we do.

Diverse, curious reading, alone or aloud, links us first of all to the community of mind, the centuries-spanning heritage of the human race insofar as it exists in print. Reading aloud, in particular, builds community directly between friends, relatives, spouses—whoever happens to be in the room. It is also one of the sweetest, cheapest, richest pleasures that any adult can share with any kid.

I would hate to be like that guy I read about in the *Onion* who kept repeating, "Have I mentioned yet that I don't have a TV?" but as a matter of fact, we don't have a TV. If we did, we'd do a lot less reading aloud. I know because I'm like most other people when I'm tired and there's a TV handy: I turn it on and my EEG goes flat. Reading is never quite so effortless. But

"BURN LESS WORLD"

I leer, snarl, mock, threaten, simmer, and sob. I am drunk, murderous, and maudlin. My wife watches from the couch, delighted. I am reading *Our Mutual Friend* aloud.

Reading aloud is the ultimate alternative cultural arrangement—self-sufficient but people-connecting, low-power but high-impact. The Dickens volume I've got on my lap is 80 years old and could easily

commercial TV only exists, is only economical, because it is such an effective way to pump our souls full of expensive discontents. Banishing TV has endless, ramifying benefits—one spends less money, burns less world, absorbs fewer lies about sexuality, focuses more on real people. Have I mentioned yet that we don't have a TV?

Reading aloud is cheap, fun, and green as all get-out. It brings people together, builds vocabulary, and is a good bet to survive the end of oil. So snuggle up, turn a page, and save the world.

LARRY GILMAN
Norwich, Vermont

In the face of climate change, energy scarcity, and other urgent challenges of our time, what steps are you taking to forge healthy and durable lives and communities? Send your submissions—five hundred words or fewer—to *Orion*, 187 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230, or to moa@orionsociety.org.