

Finishers, Abandoners and Dippers

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Novelist Nilanjana Roy asks the question: ‘Should you always finish a book?’ She answers by asserting that there are broadly two kinds of readers – Finishers and Abandoners – and that they are baffled by each other’s reading habits.

When it comes to non-fiction I think we need to add Dippers – readers who dip into books for ideas, and may start at any page, including the last one and work backwards.

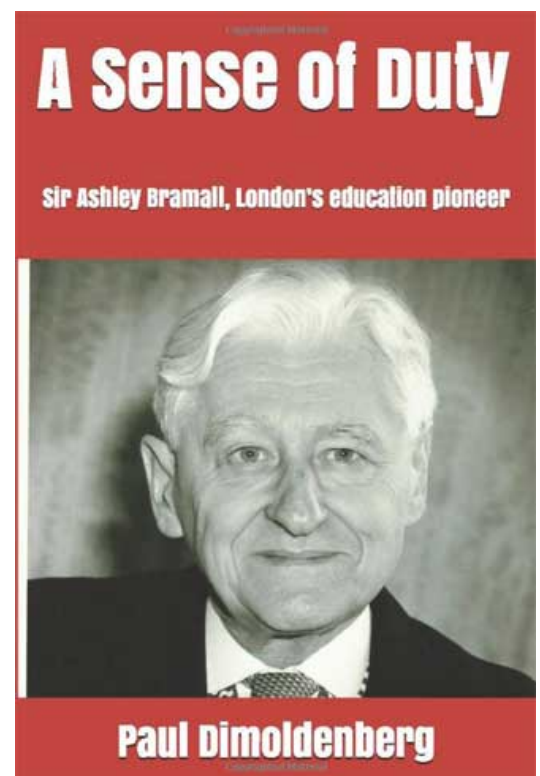
By way of recommending five books for summer reading, I’ll start with the two I read from cover to cover, then three to follow where I am still dipping in.

A Sense of Duty

Paul Dimoldenberg (2021)

‘Ashley Bramall was an inspirational Leader of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) from 1970 to 1981 where he was responsible for a raft of educational improvements, including the introduction of comprehensive education, the abolition of corporal punishment and the beginnings of multi-ethnic education – all of which were later to become mainstream education policies across the UK.’

Bramall was a local government figure on the national stage, and an inspiration to a generation of teachers who cut their teeth in the ILEA in the 1970s. The author laces together Bramall’s speeches and writings with wonderful detail from the archives, topped off with the words and memories of those who worked with him in politics, law and education. We shall not see the likes of Sir Ashley again, a true servant of Londoners young and old.

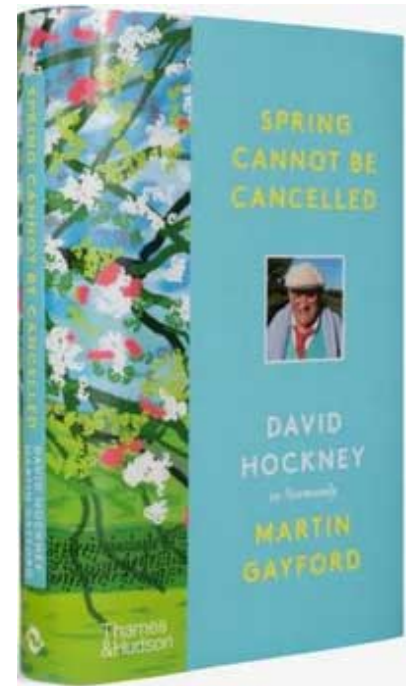


Spring Cannot Be Cancelled

Martin Gayford (2021)

'We have lost touch with nature, rather foolishly as we are a part of it, not outside it. This will in time be over and then what? What have we learned? The only real things in life are food and love, in that order.... and the source of art is love. I love life.'

Thus David Hockney as he isolated himself during lockdown in Normandy – and painted the Spring that could not be cancelled. Martin Gayford interviews Hockney about his vast output over seven decades. The book is a collage of quotes and analysis and quite stunning photos of Hockney's work and of those artists from Monet to Bruegel who have influenced Britain's greatest living artist.

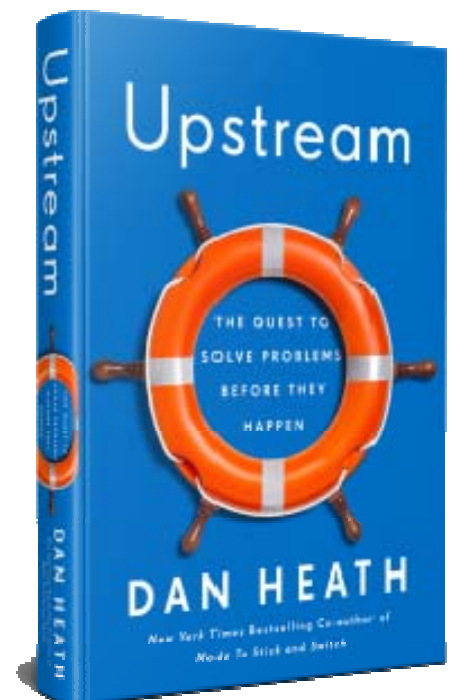


Upstream

Dan Heath (2020)

'I'm defining upstream efforts as those intended to prevent problems before they happen or, alternatively, to systematically reduce the harm caused by those problems.... I prefer the word *upstream* to *preventive* or *proactive* because I like the way the stream metaphor prods us to expand our thinking about solutions.'

American writer and researcher Heath ranges widely – from Expedia to the American Heart Association to Chicago Public Schools to Hurricane Katrina – to offer solutions to Upstream Leaders: how can they, in any walk of life, unite the right people, change the system, avoid doing harm? Witty, accessible and quotable.

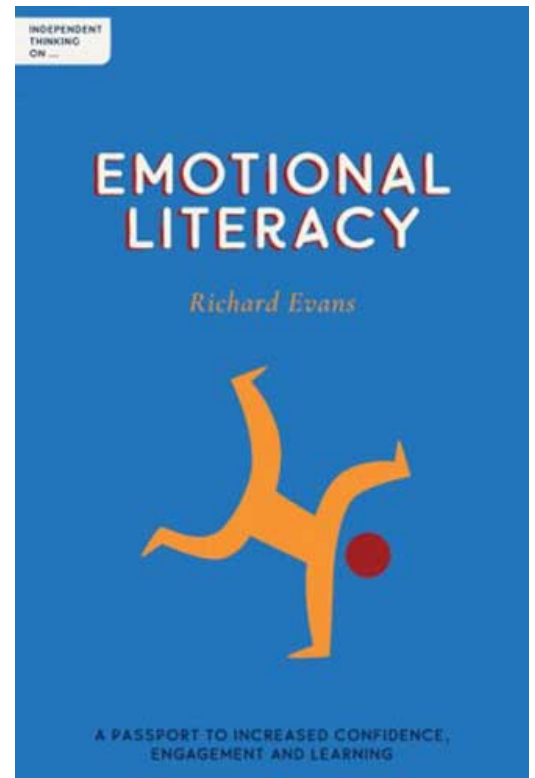


Emotional Literacy

Richard Evans (2020)

'How do you even start to master school when you can barely master yourself? When you've not yet worked out how to look after a worksheet. When you're still trying to remember to bring in your lunch. When you're always tired at school because you can't sleep at night. When you can't remember to take in your homework.'

Richard Evans is a teacher with a professional passion for those students who struggle in school and with a rare intuition to climb inside those mindsets and help them figure out how to thrive in classrooms. The text is a super compendium of students' voices and tips and recipes for supporting students with their confidence, attitude to learning, self-organisation and presentation. A Passport for emotional literacy.



Thinking Reading

James and Dianne Murphy (2018)

'Where the world is awash with information and new technologies, nearly everything is underpinned by being able to read, and to read well: exercising a wide-ranging vocabulary, a subtle grasp of syntax, a critical eye for bias, and wide background knowledge.'

The Murphy partnership prides itself on a deep research understanding of how children learn to read and the obstacles which many have to overcome if they are to thrive in school. The sub-title of the book is: *What every secondary teacher needs to know about reading*. Given 2020-21 academic year is set to be one in which Ofsted takes a forensic look at reading in secondary schools, it's worth school leaders turning these thoughtfully worded and highly readable pages. Indeed, worth both dipping into and finishing.

