

460 Blaisdell Drive  
Claremont, California 91711  
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To the Young People  
Who Use the Troy Public Library:

You are lucky to have a public library where you can take out books without paying a penny -- unless you keep a book too long, which I am sure you won't do. The library has all kinds of books: exciting books, funny books, books that tell you whatever you want to know about animals and trees and the stars and great men and women who lived long ago. I must confess that I don't like to lend anybody my books, but librarians seem happy to lend books to boys and girls who have a library card. Librarians are just about my favorite people. My son is a librarian -- and I suggested that he become one.

I am sixty-four years old, probably as old as your grandparents, but I am still learning. I learn from traveling and talking with people, but mostly I learn from reading books. Much of what I learn from books I put into the books I write. For instance I read many books about prehistoric animals to write my A Dozen Dinosaurs and Odd Old Mammals, and many books about primates to write All Sizes and Shapes of Monkeys and Apes, and many books about animals and insects that live in holes to write Who's in Holes? (a book to come out in a few months). I use four libraries, two of them public libraries and two of them college libraries, when I am writing a book of history such as It All Started with Columbus or a book of literature such as Twisted Tales from Shakespeare. I have written more than forty books, and I have no idea how many hundreds, even thousands, of books I have read to be able to write them.

Librarians are a great help to me in suggesting books and in finding books. They will help you too. But you will also learn to use reference books that tell you where to find what you are looking for. I have used libraries so long that sometimes I find something that even the librarians couldn't find. This pleases me very much, and I brag about it for several days.

Books are precious things. Between their covers are facts and ideas and imaginings put into words by the most sensitive and imaginative and creative people who ever lived. It is a wonderful thing to go to the library and get a book and take it home and read it and have the experience of traveling to a distant land or meeting a person who lived many centuries ago or living through an exciting or a funny experience. When you open a book you open a treasure chest.

If you think I love books, you are right. I hope you do too. I hope you will read, read, read.

Richard Cernow