

Read: My Life Through Books

By Brooke Privat

University Honors Program

Fall 2024

The Beginning

My name is Brooke Privat and I am going to tell you the story of my life. How am I going to do this? Through books and through a book, literally. I'm going for Deadpool-style breaking the fourth wall, but instead of unnecessary violence and raunchy humor, it's memoirs, sci-fi, and children's books. The method of writing from personal experience has actually been proven to enrich learning and facilitate a relationship between myself, the author, and you, the reader (Grindler Katonah et. al, 2023; Lieblich, 2013). Now why do you care? As a senior psychology student, I'm going to answer this question in the one way I know best: The literature. Professor McMaster at the University of Alberta explains that the importance of reading lies within the ability to see the world how others have seen it, through their writing (McMaster, 2013). Throughout my lifetime of reading, I've done this and now it's your turn.

Stories typically start at the beginning. According to Professor Cubillos, the beginning of a person's life as a reader starts with their parents' influence (Cubillos, 2023). She found that parents' reading motivation and frequency were significantly positively correlated with their children's reading motivation. Within my own story, I have seen this finding hold up. My mom has always been an avid reader. Throughout my time living under her roof, she was often reading whatever the popular book of the day was. Whether that was the *Twilight* books, the first of which came out a year after I was born, or more recently *Lessons in Chemistry* and *Fourth Wing*.

While I don't think my reading interests have turned out to be quite as trendy as hers, I inherited the sense that it is normal for people to read for fun outside of school or work. I have become an avid reader, especially in the last year during which I've read 40 books.

My parents also read to me. Not only did this develop my habit and interest in reading, but various researchers out of Boston University have found it may have also helped develop my beliefs (Haber et al., 2024). They conducted a study where three different books were given to groups of children, one emphasized a female scientist's achievement, one her effort, and the third control group did not have an emphasis. The researchers found the storybook highlighting effort was associated with persistence, a growth mindset, and attribution of success to hard work.

Several children's books I read had similar effects on me and my reading interests. Don't worry, we will explore even more on our adventure across the timeline that is my life but for now, I leave you with a preview through my love of *Good Night America*. My mom brought me back this children's book from one of her vacations and I still have it to this day. The book takes little readers to various locations across the country, many of which I have now been to, including the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty, Washington DC, and the Great Lakes. This little book may have been a big contributor to my love of travel and my belief that travel leads to an open-mindedness and knowledge of the diversity of the people and landscapes of our country. The impacts may also be contributing to one of my current reading interests of travel. I recently read and loved *Taste: My Life Through Food* (bet you can't figure out what inspired my title) in which actor Stanley Tucci takes you across the globe to different meals he's had. Stanley focuses on his experiences in New York City and Italy, both of which are two of my favorite places that I am grateful to have spent quite some time in.

The Science

The impact books can have on people's beliefs may seem of minimal importance when it relates to a sexy bald man's and a random college girl's love for the city of New York; however, it can change people's beliefs on critically important issues as well. Professor Schoor found students who had more positive beliefs about science and who had more knowledge about how science works, were more likely to select a trustworthy scientific source as opposed to a personal experience source (Schoor et al., 2024). Understanding science leads to a higher likelihood of a person truly examining facts for themselves and developing an understanding of scientific information, especially that which is controversial. In another study, Dr. Schoor found a trust in science was positively related to the perceived utility of science (Schoor, 2024). Thus, reading about science and its capabilities and usefulness is related to a trust that science is real. If people can understand what science is doing, they will be more likely to support that it is real, and this impacts people's beliefs and actions in many ways.

When I was a child, one of my favorite genres of books was non-fiction, specifically non-fiction about science. Growing up my dad was not as into reading physical books; however, he was very up-to-date with science and its interaction with politics. It only makes sense to me to associate my interests with what I was surrounded with. One book I picked out at the Scholastic Book Fair in the third or fourth grade and proceeded to reread many times was one about the Amazon Rainforest. It was definitely aimed at older kids, it had full pages worth of text and was approximately 80 pages long, but it had real pictures and different parts that would pop up or flip in different ways. This is one of the first interactions that I had with the reality of climate change, and it is still something I have a lot of passion for and like to think I am quite informed about. I don't read many books directly about the science of climate change (because of how quickly

information about it progresses), but I do read a lot of science news articles, and I am very interested in TV and movies that depict climate change. A couple of my recent favorites have been the TV show, *Extrapolations*, and the movie, *Reminiscence* (shameless Hugh Jackman plug).

Project Hail Mary is one book I have recently read with climate change as a central theme. It also happens to be one of my favorite books of all time. The book (spoiler alert) is a science fiction novel in which the main character is taken from his comfortable job as a middle school science teacher to solve an impending climate disaster. He wakes up alone (or is he?) on a spaceship in another solar system to find the answers to save all of Earth. *Project Hail Mary*, in addition to being a pretty great metaphor for our real-life climate change issue, is the most amazing friendship love story I've ever read.

The Dinosaurs

Now at this point, you might be thinking, "Wow, this girl has really analyzed her interest in the environment." This is correct, however, you're about to be feeling that times ten because... I. Love. Dinosaurs. Like a ridiculous amount. I can't even fully explain in words this strange obsession, but certainly will try. I'm going to start by telling the story that is my earliest memory involving these prehistoric creatures.

For many years, the house I grew up in was next to an empty field that was gradually having houses built on it. It was the summer before fourth grade when a family moved into the house directly on the other side of the field (that was now only one house wide and was covered by a massive dirt hill we would play on). As I mentioned, I was in fourth grade and my little sister, Laney, was in second grade. The family that moved in had three children, all girls. The

little one was in preschool and two older girls were the same ages as my sister and me. The oldest girl, Carly, happened to be put into the same class as me that year, so we became best friends, and our sisters also became best friends.

Now this sounds like a perfect scenario, but I think my parents saw from the beginning where some problems might arise. This family was very devout Christian, even for the small Kansas town I grew up in. The dad was a pastor. One time he got angry at 8-year-old Laney who probably had no idea what was going on, for singing the Ke\$ha song that goes, “I brush my teeth with a bottle of Jack.” He also wouldn’t let their kids watch Disney Channel’s Good Luck Charlie because one episode happened to have a family with two moms. (“Brooke, I thought this was a story about dinosaurs...ohhh.”)

So short story long, Carly and I were in the library together about eight months after becoming friends when I checked out a book about dinosaurs. She comes over to me and says, “Dinosaurs aren’t real.” Um, what? I was so confused, so I said, “No, dinosaurs are real.” At this point, Carly starts to explain that her parents told her that the Bible says dinosaurs never existed and are made up. My heart was pounding a little bit. I responded, “But there are skeletons of dinosaurs that I’ve seen in real life. They aren’t just made up.” Honestly, it might not have been that well said, I was only 10.

The discussion got so heated that a teacher had to split us up and said, “Okay girls, let’s not talk about that here.” (Is this a school or not?) I went home to my parents that day to explain the situation and they told me, “Yes, Brooke, you’re right. Dinosaurs are real. Carly’s family just has some beliefs that are telling them things that are not scientifically accurate.” Our friendship never really recovered, and Carly’s family moved away the summer after they arrived.

That precarious situation did not stop me from reading that book or many others about dinosaurs. In August of 2023, I challenged myself to attempt to read as many books as I could in the following year. The tenth book I completed was *The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs* by Steve Brusatte. I would describe the over 400 pages of dense writing as half dinosaur biography and half paleontologist's memoir.

I decided in that year I wanted to read a lengthy, challenging nonfiction book. Strangely the inspiration to do this came from Chelsea Handler's Instagram page where she mentioned finishing *Cuba: An American History* by Ada Ferrer, which won a Pulitzer Prize. My first idea of what to read was Barack Obama's 800-page-long *A Promised Land*, but decided it was probably better to become excessively invested in ancient species than political candidates. After almost a month, I finished *The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs* and was very proud of that accomplishment. I learned in this book more about dinosaurs, evolution, climate change, paleontology, and the passion a person can have for a career than I have in anything else I've read. One quote that has stayed with me which I believe best sums up the book is, "Absence of evidence is not always evidence of absence" (Brusatte, 2018, p. 59).

About nine months later and not having read anything super scientific since, I found myself in my favorite bookstore, Rizzoli Bookstore, in midtown Manhattan. This brings me to the experience of picking out or buying books, which is almost as interesting to me as the process of reading them. This summer my mom, sister, and I took a trip to New York City on our way to my sister's Northeastern University orientation in Boston. My mom had never been, so we took her around to some of our favorite places and saw some new attractions as well. (I've added a list of my New York City travel recommendations at the end, since I'm sure I have convinced you at this point that it's worth a visit, or twelve.)

On our first day of the trip, my mom and sister decided at around 4:00 pm it was naptime. Excuse me, vacations are not the time for relaxation. I decided I would not be sleeping and instead took the opportunity to go out in NYC by myself for the first time, against the recommendation of my fellow travelers. (Sidenote: *Fellow Travelers* by Thomas Mallon is on my Want to Read list.) We were staying at the Broadway Plaza Hotel and from having stayed there a few months before I knew it was literally a 300-foot walk out of the lobby to Rizzoli's. Surely, my 20-year-old self could do this without any drama. Wrong.

I get to the store and decide I need to buy something to commemorate my first solo New York experience. I look at the descriptions of probably 50 books over the course of a half hour. I am trying to find a book that somehow relates to the city. I think I have finally decided on Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*, about a serial killer in Manhattan, when all of a sudden, I see it. *The Last Days of the Dinosaurs: An Asteroid, Extinction, and the Beginning of Our World* by Riley Black. Of course, that's what I bought. What can I say, I'm predictable. It ended up being interestingly organized with the first chapter being the first hour after the asteroid hit Earth, then the first day, year, thousand years, etc. to now, being 66 million years later.

I left the bookstore and sat at an outdoor seating area between the store and my hotel to start reading my book. I'm only a couple of pages in when an early 20s business major-looking kid comes up to me. "Hey, excuse me, I just moved here and was wondering if you could point me in the direction of Madison Square Garden." STRANGER DANGER! My brain could not compute. Do I make something up? Do I say I'm not from here? That doesn't seem smart. Does he know how to get there, and he just thinks I'm cute? Is he trying to abduct me? I land on, "Oh, I'm not sure actually. I'm just visiting with my family."

After what felt like four more minutes of talking (that was probably only 20 seconds) he walks away. I wait until he is out of sight and run back into the hotel. Can a girl not read in peace these days? Also, has the guy never heard of Siri? Instead of learning about the violent deaths of Triceratops and T-Rex amongst the hustle and bustle of the Midtown natives, I did so with my phone flashlight perched on the toilet, so as not to wake my sleeping relatives.

The Psychology

Reading has clearly helped inform my personal beliefs and interests, but it has also likely shaped my professional self. Researchers led by author Margaret McAllister explained the importance of reading memoirs depicting psychological disorders, specifically eating disorders, for psychology students (McAllister et al., 2014). They found that reading first-hand accounts of psychological struggles can improve the empathy and guidance of future clinicians. I want to become a clinical psychologist and naturally have found that one of my favorite genres of books is memoirs and autobiographies. In the last year, I have read many memoirs written by people experiencing psychological disorders or unique life struggles. In these books, I have seen the different ways people choose to frame their lives for other people to experience.

One of my favorite memoirs is *Open* by professional tennis player Andre Agassi. In the book, Andre describes how he grew to hate the sport of tennis, but still had a need to play and win. These struggles led him to engage in progressively concerning behaviors and eventually use crystal meth. Before reading this book, I had little understanding of some of the darker realities of fame and professional sports.

In the book *Forward*, professional soccer player Abby Wambach explains how the physical and mental stress of her career led her to develop drug and alcohol problems and she

eventually got arrested for a DUI. I've read several books where other people from a variety of backgrounds develop similar problems or experience stress related to their careers or achievements.

Through his case study of memoir writers, Professor Moradi, like myself, found that all memoirs demonstrate the universality of the experiences of being human (Moradi, 2016).

Whether I am reading about someone's experience in a concentration camp (*Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl), starring on Saturday Night Live (*Bossypants* by Tina Fey), or working as a sex worker (*King Kong Theory* by Virginie Despentes), I have never struggled to find something about a person's story that I can personally connect with. In terms of my future career, I find comfort in knowing that no matter how different I think I am from another person there has to be something we have in common. I think this understanding allows me to be more empathetic towards people, which has helped me academically and in life.

In addition to psychology and reading being related through the author's written experiences, I also believe books can connect their readers. Books we are currently reading are often a topic of conversation with my family members, as well as a few of my friends. Reading books is not dead, people.

I worked as a camp counselor this summer and read a thick book about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad to a couple of the campers. I do not believe anything else I could have done with them would have shown how much I cared than to put my full attention into reading to them. Also during my summer vacation, I attended my mom's book club. There I saw a diverse group of women, the youngest in high school, the oldest, Alfie, an 80-something author herself, connect over *Keep it in the Family* by John Marrs, a book about a family of multigenerational serial killers. Who would have thought?

To test the strength of my hypothesis that books connect their readers, last fall I founded a book club called Books for the Ages. The members included me and my mom, whom I would of course never reveal her age (she's 51). The rest of the members were senior citizens including my grandma, my great-aunts, and some of my other older relatives and family friends. At one point, there were nine women on the group text, seven of whom were over the age of 65. None of these people live in Colorado, so the meetings were held over Zoom. This was an absolute debacle and part of the reason I've contributed to the club only lasting about four months. I know this is a project about learning, but I'm convinced technology falls into the category of "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Our first book was *Where'd You Go Bernadette* by Maria Semple. I thought this was a good choice, considering my mom's name is ironically Bernadette, but also because it is a book about a family, focusing on the eccentric mother, and could be described as PG-13 at best. I loved this book and highly recommend it to this day. It was also made into a great movie starring Cate Blanchett, which earned the prestigious designation of #33 on my Favorite Movies of All Time list.

Our second book was picked by the "Boomers" as we named them. They chose *Don't Make Me Pull Over!: An Informal History of the Family Road Trip* by Richard Ratay. This book was slow. Honestly, I only made it about 70 pages in, and it is still the only book on my list that I haven't finished.

I spent most of that book club meeting asking them about their road trips "back in the day" to cover up the fact that I did not read the majority of their proposed piece of literature. At this meeting, my mom asked the group what types of books everyone enjoyed reading, to see if we could come up with something that everyone might enjoy. One of my great aunts said her

favorite genre was Amish books, so that's what I was working with. Did this mean non-fiction about Amish, Amish romance, books written for Amish people? I never figured it out.

After that month, I decided this club needed a book that took place in the 20th century and selfishly felt more applicable to my, at the time, 19-year-old life. Spoiler alert: I did not choose an Amish book. My mom suggested *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle, and my spirits were immediately lifted. This is one of my favorite memoirs and it is about real people living in the present day. I remembered it also had some quite feminist, progressive themes that I thought the group could benefit from. I immediately endorsed this choice and informed the club. After I started re-reading the book, I remembered it did in fact have descriptions of lesbian sex. Several of the Boomers had already procured the book or started reading and I decided there was no going back. We never had that meeting. I killed book club. I guess there are certain topics that even books can't connect people over.

The Development

Now that I have supported my claims with the literature in order to “meet the rigorous standards” of the Colorado State University Honors Program, I can get even more into the nitty gritty of my own observations and experiences with reading, still with science as its foundation.

In analyzing the trends that my reading choices have followed I have noticed several associations worth investigating. The topics and themes of books typically read at certain ages seem to be related to that specific developmental period. In the field of psychology, Erik Erikson's stages of development, which outline different relational periods of people's lives, are widely studied and supported (Kropf and Green, 2009). For example, books read in elementary school often have one young narrator who tackles relatively simple struggles in their own lives.

The revolving characters are often family members or occasionally friends. However, the friendships are usually not very complex. Erikson's stage of industry vs. inferiority addresses the development of elementary-aged children through their pride in their interactions and abilities.

When I was in elementary school, one of my favorite book series was *The Magic Treehouse* by Mary Pope Osborne. The series is about an eight-year-old boy and his seven-year-old sister who go on adventures to historical events in their time-traveling treehouse. The stories revolve very closely around the sibling relationship, which is obviously a very important relationship for children at this point in their lives. Other similar children's book series also focus closely on sibling and family relationships being the most important part of a young kid's development at the time.

Books traditionally aimed at middle school audiences often move away from the focus on family and begin looking at friendships much more in-depth. I went to a middle school that was fifth through eighth grade and in early middle school, many people were reading the *Harry Potter* books by J.K. Rowling. I never hopped on this bandwagon but eventually watched the movies. I also recently read a few to see what I had missed out on.

In the first book, the characters are eleven years old and go off to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, away from their families. They build strong friendships when they have to band together to fend off Voldemort (So sorry, He Who Shall Not Be Named). Throughout the books, they experience friendship struggles and eventually start having early relationships.

In sixth grade, I became obsessed with the *Divergent* series by Veronica Roth. This series also involved the main character leaving her brother and parents and joining a different "faction". Her friends would become the most important people for her development and

survival. For middle school, this makes appropriate developmental sense because kids are starting to become much more of an individual and rely less on their family for their sense of self. Even books we read as part of the classroom curriculum had similar themes, for example, *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton about a friend group of young teenage boys.

These observations to this point might seem very predictable. “Brooke, of course, people read books that relate to what they are experiencing at the time.” However, in high school, this completely changes. All of a sudden students are not reading books with characters similar to them, they are reading stories about people who have completely different experiences. Stories so vastly different from their own that the reader may have never considered or imagined what it would be like to be in someone’s situation so removed from their own. Instead of using books to develop the reader’s view of themselves, they are now used to develop a sense of the world outside of themselves. Considering that during Erikson’s stage of identity vs. confusion, high schoolers develop their sense of self through values and beliefs, this genre makes perfect developmental sense.

When I read *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee in my freshman year of high school, I don’t even think I fully knew what rape was and suddenly I was able to attempt to visualize what that might be like for someone and feel empathy for those people (of course in this specific book it was a racist false accusation, but I think it was still meaningful for me to apply to other situations). It was also the first time that I had read anything where a human being was connected to the horrible injustices that black people experienced and still experience.

When I was a sophomore, we read *Night* by Elie Wiesel. I had never before been faced with the deeper understanding that the Holocaust actually happened to real people and more importantly that it would have been just as likely for me to have been in his situation. Books

became a way to be introduced to diverse perspectives in such a vivid way that the reader could imagine what it was like to be the character or author.

Now that I'm an adult and all of the reading I do is fully on my own accord, I feel like I have come full circle. I take pride in the variety of books I've engaged with. I now read to develop my understanding of myself and my understanding of people different from myself. I'd credit my growth as a reader that this can now sometimes even occur all in one book. I can recognize and appreciate a person's differences, but also see our similarities and how I can incorporate what they learned.

One of the first books I read since really getting into reading was *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. It was an examination of his experience in a concentration camp and also an outline of the psychotherapy method he developed from what he saw. I obviously will never be able to fully comprehend what it was like to experience the Holocaust, but I do want to listen to those who do. On the other hand, I hope to become a psychologist someday and I have a very good understanding of how therapy works and the different orientations that clinicians can practice.

I hope to continue to fully experience everything reading has to offer. Whether that is learning about others' experiences or learning about myself, my career, and random side interests I happen to come across, or just for the entertainment of a good story. I find it inspiring when I think of the number of books I have read in the last year and everything I have learned from them and then I think about how many that could become if I continue reading throughout my life. I do not want to waste all of that knowledge I have the potential to acquire.

The Honorable Mentions

Throughout my story, I have managed to incorporate the titles of 24 books, however, this does not begin to scratch the surface of the books I have read throughout my life or really even in the last year. Not all books that people read fit perfectly into some greater trajectory of their lives. This is perfectly fine, preferred even. Books can be a great way to develop a broad understanding of a variety of topics in addition to becoming a little expert in specific interest areas. Some of my favorite books and the ones I have gotten the most out of have been about topics or in a format I wouldn't typically gravitate towards or that I couldn't directly relate to some other part of my life or education.

I had read zero classic literature outside of school required reading when I was recommended *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. I ended up giving it a try since it was only 100 pages long. I loved it. It is one of the books that I think about most often. Nothing necessarily reminds me of it, and it doesn't relate directly to anything in my daily life, but it pops into my mind whenever I think about books that impacted me. A book that leaves the reader thinking for no reason other than wanting to understand more has done something really special.

About midway through my summer break, I hit a period where I had no motivation to read. I didn't read for at least a month straight and no books on my shelf were really calling my name. When back at college, my friend Nina and I went to In-N-Out Burger in Loveland, Colorado when I decided it was time to get out of my slump. We ended up at a Barnes and Noble and I decided I was going to get an exciting book to kickstart my habit. You have to understand this was a big deal for me because I rarely buy full-price books. I almost always find them in thrift shops or used online. As soon as we walked into the front of the store there was a shelf that said buy one get one half off non-fiction. On it was a book called *The New Guys: The Historic Class of Astronauts That Broke Barriers and Changed the Face of Space Travel* by Meredith

Bagby. The book is about the eighth class of astronauts at NASA, which was the first to accept non-military applicants and thus, women and minorities.

I bought *The New Guys* and started reading it the next day. It is a brick of a book, citations and all it's over 500 pages. I find reading a giant book can take the pressure off the quantity I want to be reading and allow me to just focus on the time I'm spending. It only took me a week to finish, which for me is speedy. This book might be the best non-fiction book I've read. Maybe not my favorite, but certainly the most well-written. *The New Guys* was a very comprehensive description of the first six women, one Asian American, and three African American astronaut's careers from before they were hired to when they retired. There was also a lot of information about their personal lives and childhoods, which I enjoyed.

Before *The New Guys*, I had never read any non-fiction about space travel, and boy, did I have a lot of misconceptions. For starters, these space shuttles were going to space and then coming back to Earth and landing, to be flown over and over. I, no joke, thought they all had parachutes and were crashing in the ocean never to be flown again. I also realized how little I knew about the Challenger disaster. People alive at the time assume everyone must know about it, but my born-in-2004 self did not. I thought it was the Challenger's first flight. Nope, tenth. I also thought the entire spacecraft exploded in the air which is not true. About a month after the crash, the crew cabin was recovered from the ocean intact. This is why people need to read about topics they know nothing about or else we go around with a bunch of misinformation.

Another interesting thing about the Challenger in terms of its relationship to my life is that my stepmom actually saw it explode from the playground of her Florida elementary school. I learned this about four years into knowing her. I'm sorry, but if that were me it would be the first thing I told people when I needed an interesting fact.

After deeply examining what people can learn from reading and its impact on the psyche, I need a break. What should I do on my break? Well, did you know people can also read for fun? Sometimes I forget, but reading for entertainment can be just as important as for any other purpose. So, I am going to leave you with a book I read strictly for fun.

The year was 2020. It was dark; it was cold; it was raining. Just kidding, but we were in the beginning of a global pandemic that ended my sophomore year of high school. After I had watched just about every movie on every streaming platform, my celebrity crush, Charlize Theron, posted on Instagram that her new movie called *The Old Guard* had come out on Netflix. I watched it with my family and then proceeded to watch it about eight more times by the end of the week. Okay, that might be a bit of an exaggeration.

To this day, it is still #1 on Brooke Privat's Favorite Movies of All Time List. Not kidding, I might be able to recite the entire script. "I've been here before. Over and over, and each time the same question. Is this it? Or will this time be the one? And each time the same answer. I'm just so tired of it." See. I know I could have looked that up but trust me, I did not.

The Old Guard is about a group of immortal mercenaries whose powers are being hunted by a pharmaceutical CEO. While the group is trying to find the CEO to seal their secret, a US marine gains immortality and joins their group. From the description, it might sound like a superhero movie, but I would place it more in the genre of military action.

After watching the film, I learned it was based on a graphic novel series called *The Old Guard* by Greg Rucka. I never took the time to read them because I thought I wouldn't like graphic novels. Earlier this year, however, I was falling behind on the number of books I wanted to read, so decided to give them a try. I ended up loving them. They are super easy and fast to read because the page is 90% image. There are a couple of lessons that could be learned from

these books, but I do not think immortal people exist, so I read these completely for the entertainment value. Occasionally incorporating a non-serious book can help me take pressure off myself feeling I need to read some intelligent piece of literature, which I often do feel.

The End

“Or should I say the beginning, of your future?” Wait, is this not Epcot’s Spaceship Earth ride? I know, I know, I just had to include one Disney World reference. (Shout out to Walt.) But seriously, this is not the conclusion of my life story or of yours. I plan to continue reading, traveling, learning, obsessing over famous people, and encountering strange men in New York (actually, hopefully not that last one). There is no perfect way to conclude a story that is ongoing, so instead, I will try by writing that I hope there is something in my story you can take on your own adventure.

As researched by Professor Moriarty, incorporating prior life experiences into writing can help students better engage in the learning process (Moriarty et al., 2019). This was certainly the case for me. Writing my own miniature memoir helped me to gain insight into my own experiences and values. To anyone inspired by my life through books, I highly recommend doing a bit of storytelling of your own. If nothing else, I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to re-live some of my favorite life stories thus far and get some practice for when I write my New York Times Bestseller, *Did I Leave the Stove On? How Memory Really Works*, coming to a bookstore near you in 2044.

About the Author

My name is Brooke Privat and I'm a senior at Colorado State University studying clinical/counseling psychology. I am currently applying to doctoral programs and intend to pursue a career administering clinical psychological assessments specifically for Alzheimer's disease and Dementia. I am the president of the Multifaith/Belief Student Council and a facilitator for Food for Thought at CSU. Outside of school, I enjoy CrossFit, pickleball, spending time with friends and family, traveling, watching TV and movies, and of course, reading.

Acknowledgments

First, I'd like to thank my family for supporting me and hearing me talk about this project for the last year. Stanley Tucci, for inspiring my title (I'm sure he's reading this). Ana Wallace Johnson, my go-to book YouTuber, for countless book recommendations (She is too). And lastly, thank you to my thesis advisor, Dr. Tracy Richards, and my thesis committee member, Dr. Kate Hebert, for guiding me and taking the time to read my crazy story.

References

- Cubillos, M. (2023). A chip off the old block: Do reading-motivated parents raise reading-motivated children? *Reading Research Quarterly*.
- Grindler Katonah, D., Grafanaki, S., Krycka, K. C., & McDonald, M. V. (2023). Transformational focusing experiences: A thematic analysis of memoirs. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 63(3), 381–409.
- Haber, A. S., Kumar, S. C., Leech, K. A., & Corriveau, K. H. (2024). How does caregiver–child conversation during a scientific storybook reading impact children’s mindset beliefs and persistence? *Child Development*.
- Kropf, N. P., & Greene, R. R. (2009). Erikson’s eight stages of development: Different lenses. In R. R. Greene & N. Kropf (Eds.), *Human behavior theory: A diversity framework*, 2nd rev. ed. (pp. 77–99).
- Lieblich, A. (2013). Healing Plots. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(1), 46–52.
- McAllister, M., Brien, D. L., Flynn, T., & Alexander, J. (2014). Things you can learn from books: exploring the therapeutic potential of eating disorder memoirs. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 23(6), 553–560.
- McMaster, J. (2013). Why Read? *English Studies in Canada*, 39(2/3), 43–61.
- Moriarty, J., & Adamson, R. (2019). “Storying the self”: Autobiography as pedagogy in undergraduate creative writing teaching. *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 12(1/2), 91–107.
- Moradi, R. (2016). Why write memoirs? *Psychological Perspectives*, 59(4), 473–477.

Schoor, C. (2024). University students' beliefs about science and their relationship with knowledge about science. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 39(2), 1093–1117.

Schoor, C., Rouet, J.-F., & Britt, M. A. (2024). Reading for university or for myself? Effects of context and beliefs about science on college students' document selection. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 116(3), 317–345.

Books Referenced

Agassi, A. (2009). *Open: An Autobiography*. Harper Collins.

Bagby, M. (2023). *The New Guys: The Historic Class of Astronauts That Broke Barriers and Changed the Face of Space Travel*. Harper Collins.

Black, R. (2022). *The Last Days of the Dinosaurs: An Asteroid, Extinction, and the Beginning of Our World*. St. Martin's Press.

Brusatte, S. (2018). *The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs: A New History of a Lost World*. Mariner Books.

Despentès, V. (2006). *King Kong Theory*.

Doyle, G. (2020). *Untamed*. The Dial Press.

Ferrer, A. (2021). *Cuba: An American History*. Simon & Schuster.

Fey, T. (2011). *Bossypants*. Little, Brown and Company.

Frankl, V. (1946). *Man's Search for Meaning*.

Gamble, A. (2006). *Good Night America*. Good Night Books.

Garmus, B. (2022). *Lessons in Chemistry*. Doubleday Publishing Group.

Hinton, S. E. (1967). *The Outsiders*. Viking Press.

- Lee, H. (1960). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Harper Collins.
- Mallon, T. (2008). *Fellow Travelers*. Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Meyer, S. (2005). *Twilight*. Hachette Book Group.
- Obama, B. (2020). *A Promised Land*. Crown Publishing Group.
- Orwell, G. (1945). *Animal Farm*. Secker & Warburg.
- Osborne, M. P. (1992). *Magic Treehouse*. Random House
- Privat, B. (2044). *Did I Leave the Stove On? How Memory Really Works*.
- Ratay, R. (2018). *Don't Make Me Pull Over!: An Informal History of the Family Road Trip*.
Simon & Schuster.
- Roth, V. (2011). *Divergent*. Harper Collins.
- Rowling, J. K. (1997). *Harry Potter*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Rucka, G. (2017). *The Old Guard*. Image Comics.
- Semple, M. (2012). *Where'd You Go Bernadette*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Tucci, S. (2021). *Taste: My Life Through Food*. Gallery Books.
- Wambach, A. (2017). *Forward: A Memoir*. Dey Street Books.
- Wiesel, E. (1955). *Night*.
- Yarros, R. (2023). *Fourth Wing*. Entangled Publishing.

Full List of Books I've Read Since August 2023

- The Happiness Project*, Gretchen Rubin
- Where'd You Go Bernadette*, Maria Semple
- Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl
- You Are a Badass*, Jen Sincero

Bossypants, Tina Fey

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Frederick Douglass

Forward: A Memoir, Abby Wambach

Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk, David Sedaris

The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs: A New History of a Lost World, Steve Brusatte

Don't Make Me Pull Over!: An Informal History of the Family Road Trip, Richard Ratay

Letters to a Young Therapist, Mary Pipher

In Therapy: The Unfolding Story, Susie Orbach

Life Will Be the Death of Me: ... and you too!, Chelsea Handler

Untamed, Glennon Doyle

One Life, Megan Rapinoe

Uganda Be Kidding Me, Chelsea Handler

The One, John Marrs

The Art of Memoir, Mary Karr

Wolfpack, Abby Wambach

Open, Andre Agassi

Taylor Swift, Katy Sprinkel

Famous Father Girl: A Memoir of Growing Up Bernstein, Jamie Bernstein

Carry On, Warrior, Glennon Doyle

King Kong Theory, Virginie Despentes

Animal Farm, George Orwell

Project Hail Mary, Andy Weir

Molly's Game: From Hollywood's Elite to Wall Street Billionaire Boys Club, My High-Stakes

Adventure in the World of Underground Poker, Molly Bloom

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, J.K. Rowling

Andy Warhol, Robert Shore

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, J.K. Rowling

The Old Guard Vol. 1: Opening Fire, Greg Rucka

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, J.K. Rowling

The Old Guard Vol. 2: Force Multiplied, Greg Rucka

The Old Guard: Tales Through Time, Vol. 1, Greg Rucka

The Scarlett Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne

Keep it in the Family, John Marrs

Taste: My Life Through Food, Stanley Tucci

What I Talk About When I Talk About Running, Haruki Murakami

The Last Days of the Dinosaurs: An Asteroid, Extinction, and the Beginning of Our World, Riley

Black

The New Guys: The Historic Class of Astronauts That Broke Barriers and Changed the Face of

Space Travel, Meredith Bagby

Big Little Lies, Liane Moriarty

Drift, Rachel Maddow

What I Ate in One Year (And Related Thoughts), Stanley Tucci

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck

Shit Cassandra Saw, Gwen E. Kirby

My New York City Recommendations

One World Observatory

Any skyscraper at night

MoMA

Broadway (My favorite musicals are Hamilton, And Juliet, Six, and The Book of Mormon)

Anita's Gelato

Traditas Pizza

Rizzoli Bookstore

Statue of Liberty lookout

American Museum of Natural History