

10 tips to get yourself out of a reading slump

If you can't settle on a book, try one of these suggestions

By Laurie Hertzell
Star Tribune

It might be the weather — sultry, lush and ripe. It might be the season — late summer, golden days to relish before the imminent big freeze. Or it might be that I sort of OD'd on books when I was on vacation, reading three normal-sized novels plus the entirety of "Bleak House."

But whatever the reason, I have been having a hard time lately settling on something to read.

This happens to all of us from time to time. I wrote about this five years ago, and it occurred to me the other day that the tips I came up with then might be useful to revisit.

So I revisited my reading slump avoidance tips, and they weren't bad. But they did need some tweaks. Here they are, updated and tweaked and hopefully more practical than ever.

1. If you can't get into something long, try reading something short. Stories from a collection, maybe. Or a poem. At the moment I am reading the essays in Charles Baxter's "Wonderlands." It's not a book to race through. Read one, walk away for a few days, think.

2. Reread an old favorite. Every summer, I revisit a book from my childhood. I

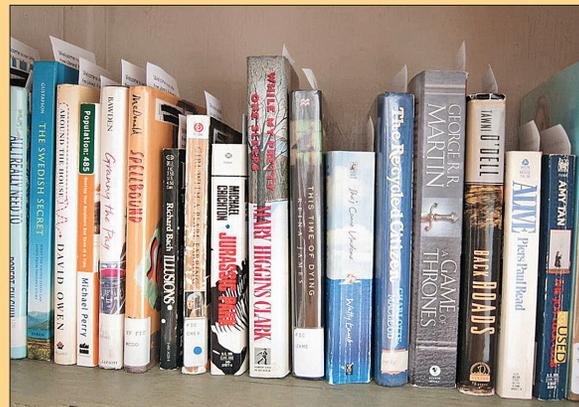
'IONA IVERSON'S RULES FOR COMMUTING'

I was delighted to see Clare Pooley's novel "Iona Iverson's Rules for Commuting" in these suggestions. I gave up on a book recently, and picked up Pooley's book from my embarrassingly tall stack of library books (all of my holds came in at once). This novel is mostly set on a train, where perfect strangers ride the same route day after day but never interact — until one of them chokes on a grape, and a group is united by the crisis.

They begin learning about each other's lives, and discover their preconceived notions weren't accurate at all.

I've never commuted by train. I've never commuted at all, unless the one mile trip from home to office counts (and even that disappears when I work from home). This novel is a fun look into a different type of life, and a reminder that sometimes we can change a life by a simple smile or word that shows we care.

— Lisa Britton, Go! editor



Laurie Hertzell/Minneapolis Star Tribune/TNS
Tons of books, but nothing to read?

spent a recent Saturday with Sally Watson's "Witch of the Glens," a fine YA book set in Scotland in 1644, even though I know it so well by now I have sections memorized.

3. Put away the book that you are obligated to read — for work, for school, for book club — and indulge in something

for pleasure. Me, I just read "The Hero of This Book," the new novel by Elizabeth McCracken (it pubs in October). Just because I wanted to.

4. Browse your shelves. You have books you bought and haven't yet gotten to — surely something will tempt you. (You might even think about culling a bit

while you're browsing. But that, of course, is a different problem.)

5. Visit a library or a bookstore. See if you are tempted by displays, staff recommendations, stacks of the latest bestsellers.

6. Binge on something else — crossword puzzles, or Scrabble, or episodes of "Ted Lasso" until you are so sick of whatever it is that you become desperate to get back to books. (In retrospect, I am not sure I agree with this tip. What if you start bingeing on television — and never get back to books?)

7. Watch a movie version of a book. Any excuse, really, to rewatch "Persuasion" with Ciaran Hinds.

8. Read something light. Don't be ashamed to read a book that is purely entertaining. We all need to laugh. How about "Iona Iverson's Rules for Commuting"? Great fun.

9. Listen to an audiobook. This is advice I have not yet taken myself. One of these days I'm going to figure out the public library Libby app, I swear.

10. When all else fails, give in to the slump and go ride your bike. You're a reader, and eventually your desire to read will return.

Maybe you have better ideas. (You almost certainly have better ideas.) Write me at books@startribune.com and help a girl out. I'll run your suggestions in a future column.

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