



This year consider
the gift of reading

Description

Let's support our local bookshops this holiday season

By Irwin Rapoport

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Christmas will soon be here and many of us are in the midst of holiday shopping, experiencing the joy of the season, and being out and about, visiting stores and shops we had not been in since COVID-19 hit us. Of course, many merchants who struggled to get through the restrictions of the pandemic are pleased to meet and greet long-standing customers and welcome new ones. The Christmas season is a wonderful one and should be fully enjoyed.

When we buy a gift for a family member or a friend, we do so for many reasons. I do so, less out of obligation, but as a token of them being there for me and how much I value their presence, company, and support in good and bad times.

Whether one is shopping for Christmas, Hanukkah, [Saturnalia](#) or Kwanza gifts, might I suggest the gift of reading. For many years, I have been giving books to friends and family, and I like to think that I have started some excellent personal libraries or added to them. I have a pretty good idea of what they like to read and what I believe they will enjoy because that novel or history gave me great joy and improved my knowledge and understanding of the world.

My holiday and birthday book purchases range from young children to adults. I do my best to inspire a life-long passion for reading to increase their knowledge as well as to amuse and bring a smile to their faces.

I tend to read more non-fiction, especially histories, but I also delve into novels and short stories. Via literature, we have the age-old question – does art imitate life, or does life imitate art? At this point, the answer is that lines that separate the two have now meshed and are entwined forever.

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passion for reading to increase their knowledge as well as to amuse and bring a smile to their faces. One friend, George Ducic, had a great-grandfather who served in the Austro-Hungarian Army in World War One. He very much appreciated the tome I found on the history of that empire's army, as well as a rare book on aircraft carriers that participated in The Great War.

I have introduced several children to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and the world of *Harry Potter*, and the works of Shakespeare, Dickens, Poe, and Robert Graves to young adults and experienced readers. I like to think that I expanded the literary world of many, acting as their personal librarian.

Alas, COVID has dealt a death blow to many stores and that includes bookshops. We have lost many local booksellers, English and French, and that, like many others, saddens me greatly. A community without a bookshop is bereft of an important institution. Montreal has many excellent local bookshops deserving of our support, be they for new or used books, and we have those from regional and national chains. They can use your support and when you purchase books this holiday season, be they as gifts for others or yourself, visit them and help them get through these tough times.

'When it comes to books and authors, the world is your oyster. Dive in and partake. You may have seen the film or the television mini-series, but have you read the book?'

You may have an idea of which books you want to purchase, which is great, but if you don't know what to buy or need advice, don't hesitate to speak with the bookshop owner or the staff. They would be glad to lead you to the right section for a specific book, offer their advice, talk about books they have read and enjoyed, and tell you what is best for a young or life-long reader.

Here is a clip from *The West Wing*, where President Bartlett is purchasing books for his family and staff at a Washington, D.C. bookshop. When I first saw that scene, it was etched on my mind. Let it inspire you.

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So, please consider books as holiday presents and help our local bookshops so that they will be with us for many years to come. At the same time, many public schools can use help to stock their libraries. One can purchase a book or two for schools in one's neighbourhood, and donate books in good shape to schools and organizations that help families in need – no household should be without books.

It is also the time of year when many community groups, churches and synagogues, and charitable organizations are seeking donations of food, money and winter clothing to help families and individuals in need. We who are fortunate can also help out on this front.

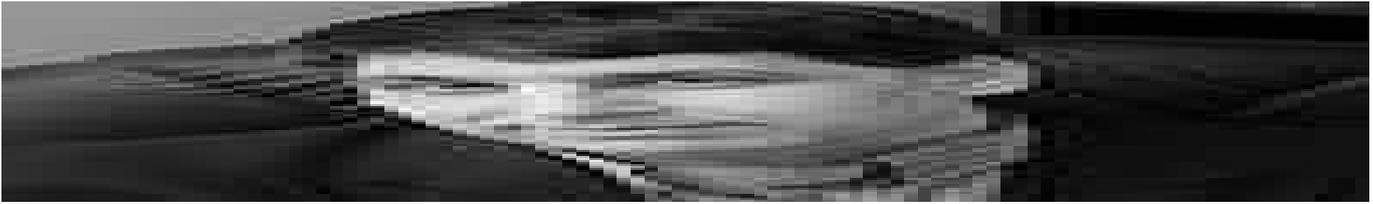
For many of us, the holiday season is a time of great joy but, for others, it is one of sadness and despair. We can all make a difference to make it a positive experience for all.

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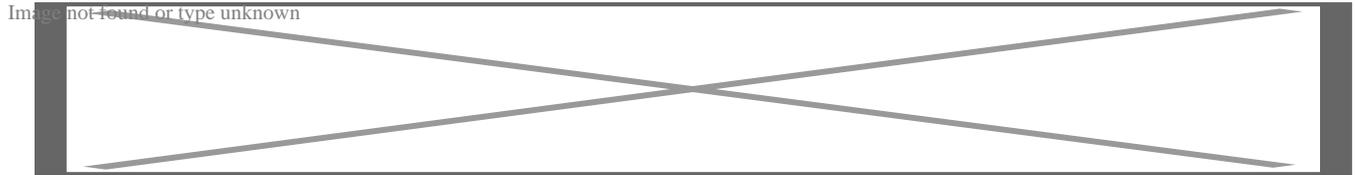
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Irwin Rapoport is a freelance journalist.

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