I owe it all to Mrs. Turnipseed. I learned of her Dickensian surname after she encouraged students to join her fledgling Library Club, which I did with great joy.

For a bookish third-grader like myself, the idea of spending time before and after school shuffling books at the Adams Elementary School Library in Davenport, Iowa, was a free pass to fantasy land. As a bonus, we got a piece of candy, mostly Brach's hard sour balls, for each shift. Since I was a hard worker, I'd occasionally snag two or three from the decorative tin in her bottom drawer.

Every day after school (except Wednesday), I would dart to the library shelves to see what had come in. My time spent filing books allowed me to learn and read perhaps more than would be considered healthy for most children.

The aforementioned obsession continued into adulthood. In the fall, I'll be teaching high school students the pleasures, escapes and joys of novels in an English class.

Almost everyone says they don't have time to read anymore, to which I politely reply, "Hogwash." I suggest there are at least 30 minutes a day that you could make some page time, and the rewards are manifold — for your well-being, your brain and even your family. With this in mind, I offer the following "Thinking Person's Library," a quick list of some good, often controversial, places to start your reading.

**TOO BUSY TO READ? HOGWASH. HERE ARE SOME CHOICES THAT CAN START YOUR READING RENAISSANCE**

**BY MARK LUCE**

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My *Antonia*, by Willa Cather. A gem about the land, space, sunsets and character of the Midwest.

*Light in August*, by William Faulkner. A tale of alienation far more accessible than Faulkner's thicker works.

*The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemingway. Bullfights and bitterness.

*Jesus' Son*, by Denis Johnson. An unbelievable, raw collection of stories centered around a drifter.

To *Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee. Plenty of lessons still to be learned today.

The *Unbearable Lightness of Being*, by Milan Kundera. A political, philosophical and erotic delight.

*Lolita*, by Vladimir Nabokov. Best opening paragraph of all time — and it gets even better.

Blood *Meridian*, by Cormac McCarthy. A bloodbath of a novel, but the best novel by our contemporary answer to Faulkner.

*The Intuitionist*, by Colson Whitehead. You'll never feel the same way about being on an elevator.

*Tomato Red*, by Daniel Woodrell. Lean and mean in the Ozarks. Woodrell's novels are tougher than a three-legged coon dog.

Here are some others worth checking out: *Where I Am Calling From*, by Raymond Carver; *The Amazing Adventures of Katavler and Clay*, by Michael Chabon; *The Hours*, by Michael Cunningham; *Libra*, by Don DeLillo; *The Trial*, by Franz Kafka; *Mr. Phillips*, by John Lanchester; and *White Teeth*, by Zadie Smith.

Remember, 20 pages a day keeps the blues away.

Mark Luce wiles away hours reading in his den in Kansas City, Mo.