

“The Death of the Book”

Ursula LeGuin

Ursula LeGuin was born in 1929, and spent the majority of her life writing. While she was most well-known for her fantasy and science fiction, she also published children’s books, short stories, poetry, and essays. Here LeGuin challenges the claim that books are a dying medium.

Vocabulary...

eschatological (adj)

vast (adj)

prevalence (n)

lament (n)

bluster (v)

omitted (v)

abridgments (n)

inexorably (adv)

scatological (adj)

acquisition (n)

gravitate (v)

typography (n)

canny (adj)

intermittent (adj)

entropy (n)

garble (v)

cataclysmic (adj)

obsolete (adj)

bellowing (v)

agonize (v)

encyclopedia (n)

obscurely (adj)

archives (n)

obstinate (adj)

Reading Questions...

1. Does LeGuin think that reading is more or less important now, than it was before technology was so popular? Why? What examples does she use to support this idea?
2. According to LeGuin, is “the book” dead? Why?

Discussion Questions...

1. Do you agree with LeGuin when she asks “isn’t an awful lot of what people do with computers either word-processing (writing) or processing words (reading)?” How do you spend your time on the computer? What about on a tablet and/or smartphone?
2. Do you read differently when something is on a screen vs. when it is printed out? What is the difference? Is one way better than the other? Is it dependent on what you are reading?

Activities and Assignments...

1. In recent years, the “Millennial Generation” has been blamed for the death of many things. Do some internet research to find examples. Then compare those “deaths” to LeGuin’s explanation about “The Death of the Book”.
2. Technology can be tricky when it comes to accessibility--sometimes it makes things easier for everyone, while other times it makes socioeconomic divisions even greater. Do some research and write a short argumentative essay about whether technology is a great equalizer or a great divider.

