epic!

Read All About It

A Report on the State of Kids' Reading Habits and Interests During the Pandemic

2020 Proved That Family, Reading Are Key To Kids' Resiliency

INTRODUCTION

**50 million kids read 1 billion books on Epic in 2020.
1 billion books.**

This statement—no matter how many times we hear or say it—humbles and inspires us. As dads watching our own young children learning to read, we created Epic to make books accessible to every child. And to build a safe place for all of them to discover the joy and magic of reading in their own way.

We still have a long way to go before we can bring books to every child, but this tumultuous, unpredictable year has given us a silver lining; the opportunity to bring tens of thousands of books to millions of impressionable, curious and thoughtful children who turn to us for education, entertainment, escape, support and friendship every day.

As we continue to grow, we believe it is our responsibility to be transparent with trends and insights about the reading habits of kids, to help their grownups better understand how they are reading and learning. What are their (ever-changing) interests? What formats and genres keep kids reading longer? How are they using books and stories to understand, form opinions about and cope with the vast world around them? How does reading impact their behaviors and emotions?

In our first ever Epic report, we took a look at these questions and the answers surprised us. Our discoveries reinforced the real and lasting impact of books and stories on kids, their view of the world, their relationships and even their mental and emotional health—even more so during these unusual times.

We're hopeful that by sharing what we've learned, we can arm parents and educators with the tools they need to empower the next generation of readers. Key takeaways from this report, from practical tips to exclusive evidence-based insights on kids' interests and preferences, and the positive emotional impact of reading, are just the beginning.

Epic is in a position to make a real change in this world—and to help make this and future generations of kids educated, open-minded, resilient and kind.

Keep reading,
**Suren Markosian and Kevin Donahue
Epic co-founders & proud dads of curious Epic readers**

The 2021 Read All About It annual report uses the results of data from Epic, a digital reading platform for kids age 12 and under, and an Epic-commissioned parent survey by global data intelligence company Morning Consult, to offer a comprehensive look at the state of children's reading habits. The goal: to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the reading behaviors of children, and how those changes in behaviors affected their emotional wellbeing, attitudes and ability to cope with life changes.

The findings were positive and hopeful. Reading dramatically increased across all ages and improved children's wellbeing in a tumultuous year. Anonymous, aggregated data from Epic users offered a pleasant surprise for parents and educators: children actually read more than they thought, and children often used reading as a way to understand changes happening in their lives.

An important contributing factor, we believe, was choice. We've always known that choice is a key driver in building strong reading habits in kids. We've now seen that this was especially true during COVID-19, when for many children, choosing their books was one of the few aspects of their lives they could control amid a whirlwind of bewildering change. In fact, parents reported that 72% of kids read more when they had control over choosing the material.

We hope these findings inspire parents to encourage even more reading, knowing that it can improve their children's moods, boost their creativity and prompt them to ask more questions about the world around them.

50 Million:
The number of kids under the age of 12
who used Epic in 2020.*

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- **Reading increased by 89%.** Children spent their time at home reading, being read to and listening to audiobooks. When they were allowed to choose the reading materials, they read even more.

- **Kids read on mobile devices.** More than half—605 million to be exact—of the 1 billion books read on Epic in 2020 were read on a phone or tablet, a 98% increase from 2019.

- **Reading made kids happy.** Parents overwhelmingly saw reading as having a positive impact on their children, with about two-thirds saying it promoted happiness, confidence and relaxation while nearly three-quarters of parents reported kids were more self-confident and willing to try new things after reading.

- **Kids used reading to help understand their world and cope with challenges.** In 2020, children searched for books about friendship, emotions, coronavirus and even the word "strange," suggesting they were giving careful consideration to the changes going on around them.

- **Reading made kids more curious and led to family conversations.** The overwhelming majority (82%) of children showed an interest in talking to their parents about what they were reading once they put down the book.

REPORT METHODOLOGY

This report relies on two sources of information about children and their reading habits: a poll of parents and aggregated, anonymized user data from Epic, that provide insights on the reading habits of 50 million children age 12 and under.

Morning Consult was commissioned to conduct the poll March 15-23, 2021, among a nationally representative sample of 1,000 parents in the U.S. with children ages 5 to 12 years old. The survey was conducted online and the data was weighted based on each child's gender, age, and region. Results have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points. The goal was to learn what impact parents believed reading had on their children during the pandemic.

Overall reading time went up by

89%

in 2020.*

*Source: Epic **Source: Morning Consult

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1billion: The number of books read on Epic in 2020.*

READING TIME WAS HAPPY TIME

Though it challenged adults and children alike, social distancing had the unintended—and positive—effect of giving families more togetherness. Nearly 70% of parents reported an uptick in the time they spent with their children. That may explain the increase in searches for "family" by kids seeking books in 2020. Despite the ongoing turmoil, **parents of kids who read regularly noted an increase in their children's confidence, excitement and happiness levels.**

According to parents, **almost 70% of children were happy after reading.** Only 10% of parents said that their kids demonstrated anxious, sad, or angry emotions after reading, which pales in comparison to other digital activities. After engaging in virtual or digital non-reading activities (like video games or watching TV), 29% of kids were anxious, 20% were sad, and 27% were angry, parents reported.

Here's what else we learned:

- Reading was important to parents—94% encouraged their children to choose reading over other activities.

- Most parents used search engines to determine whether certain books are appropriate for their children, followed by teacher recommendations and educational sites.

- Unsurprisingly, 84% of parents confessed to giving their children more screen time during 2020, with just 2% saying it decreased. It's unclear whether they counted time their children spent in remote classrooms as screen time.

- Most parents (45%) saw reading as a positive digital activity, with 37% feeling neutral about it.

Almost 70%
of parents said their children were happy after reading.**

READING FILLED A BIG HOLE

For many, pandemic-related closures created more time on their hands. Kids filled it with books. In 2020, the overall reading time on Epic increased 89% from the previous year. In fact, 1 out of 4 parents said their child read for fun every day in 2020, with about half reading for fun at least four times a week.

Reading is something kids enjoy, even more than playing video games. According to parents, reading is second only to watching TV as a favorite activity, more popular than going outside or playing sports. Kids overwhelmingly favor fiction over nonfiction, with humor, comics/graphic novels and adventure topping the list of their favorite genres. Others include science fiction, fantasy, fairy tales and mysteries.

Here's what else we learned:
- Parents took notice of their kids reading habits, with 86% of them reporting that their children read at least once a week.

- Epic was especially popular for emerging readers, with early-reader format books having the most significant change in ranking from 2019 to 2020.

- Overall kids couldn't put down fiction books: 86% of all books finished on Epic in 2020 were fiction.

1 Hour:
The average increase in time kids read each month in 2020.*

87%
The average increase in total reading time each week.*

KIDS READ ABOUT THE CHANGING WORLD AROUND THEM

Most 5- to 12-year-olds spent 2020 dealing with changes to the routines they previously found comforting, like going to school, playing with friends and visiting relatives. As they grappled with those changes, they turned to books for not just answers, but solace: 62% of parents said their children used books to cope with the events going on around them.

In fact, "strange" was one of the 10 most-searched topics on Epic in 2020, a new addition to the list since the previous year. "Friendship" was another popular topic that also made its first appearance on the top 10 list. A possible reason: in-person meetings with friends weren't happening as often— 55% of parents said their children's time with friends decreased—so kids sought them out in stories.

Here's what else we learned:

- "Emotions" emerged as a new topic for 3- to 5-year-olds. "Magic" was a new topic for 9- to 12-year-olds.

- "Coronavirus" was one of 100 most-searched topics by children, and 85% of parents said their children asked them questions about the pandemic.

- 36% of parents reported that their children asked questions about the presidential election, and 26% said they fielded questions about Black Lives Matter (BLM). While these topics were not among the 100 most searched terms by kids, following the murder of George Floyd, we did see a significant increase in searches by teachers on the topics of diversity, racism, and kindness.

Friendship 🔍

Strange 🔍

Family 🔍

Emotions 🔍

were some of the new words searched on Epic in 2020.*

READING LEADS TO BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Reading doesn't just positively impact kids in the moment, but sticks with them long after they've put down the book or device. Eight out of 10 parents said that after reading, their children were more likely to initiate a conversation around the story. And nearly three-fourths of parents said their kids behaviors reflected more creativity, curiosity, self confidence and willingness to try new things after reading.

The opposite was true for children after engaging in activities like video games or watching TV. Only 26% of parents reported more willingness in their kids to talk about school after non-reading digital activities, but 54% reported their kids behavior was more interested in those conversations after reading.

Here's what else we learned:

• After engaging in activities—online or off—the majority of kids wanted to discuss the stories or games they experienced. According to parents, 82% of kids were eager to discuss their books after reading, while 70% of kids, after playing a game or watching a TV show or movie, wanted to discuss those activities.

• It was important for parents to let children pick what they read: Parents reported that 72% of kids read more when they chose the material.

• 45% of parents ranked reading at #1 in terms of having a positive impact on their children, followed distantly by 15% of parents choosing time outdoors.

Parents reported that after reading they noticed their child's behavior to be more:**

Bar chart:
- creative: 79%
- curious: 72%
- self-confident: 71%
- willing to try new things: 71%
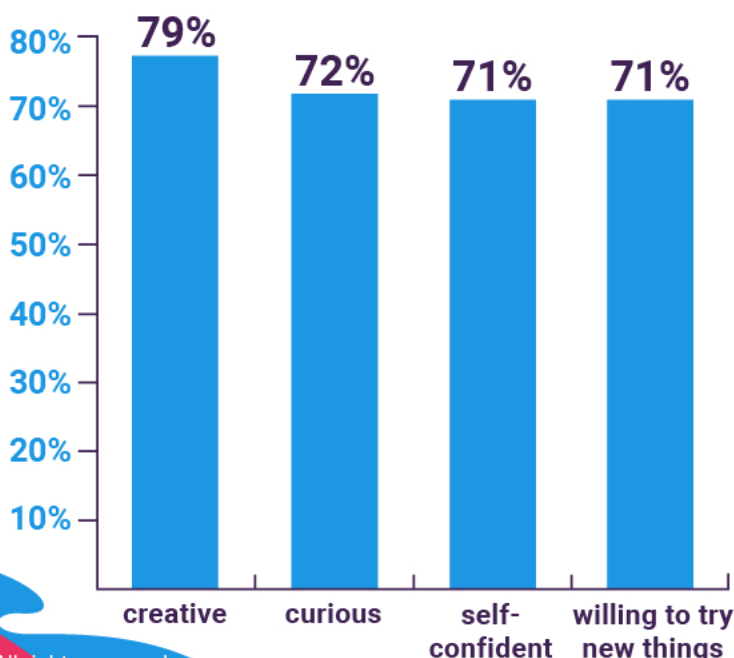
82% of parents reported an increase in their children wanting to talk about the book after they read it.**

READING TIME NEARLY DOUBLES

61% of parents surveyed believed that their children spent more time reading throughout this period of pandemic learning, and they were right! In fact, reading time on Epic increased 89% compared to the same period last year.

50 million children discovered and read 1 billion books on Epic in 2020, giving us unique insight into their interests and reading behaviors.

Here's what else we learned:

· What topics did children search for in 2020? The usual suspects: Big Nate, Minecraft, chapter books and nonfiction. We also learned that dogs trumped cats, LEGO blocks trumped slime and Weird But True never goes out of style.

· The parent survey showed that 40% of kids changed their favorite book genres from 2019 to 2020, with picture books (+8%) and science fiction (+4%) gaining the most ground.

· 63% of parents said their children intentionally chose books with diverse characters and points of view.

According to parents, when kids pick the books they:**

72%	read more
21%	read about the same
7%	read less
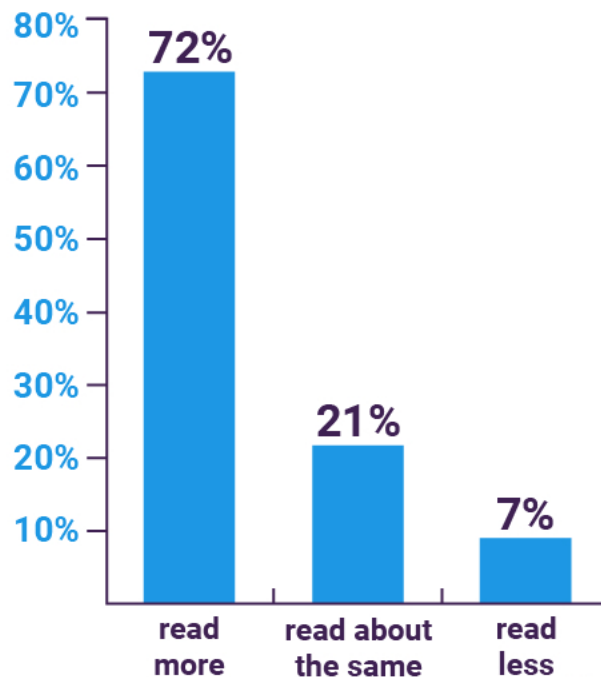
100: The number of minutes a kid read each week in 2020.*

IN A NUTSHELL: YOUNG READERS IN 2020

Based on our research, the typical reader was a child who read made-up stories about funny animals for over 20 minutes a day. **Here's how that breaks down:**

What they read: Epic users definitely preferred fiction, which represented 86% of the books kids finished reading in 2020. The older the reader, the more likely they were to choose nonfiction. Humor was the favorite genre for kids of all age groups, with dogs, cats, sharks and other animals ranking high on their lists of search terms. 9- to 12-year-olds, who read slightly more nonfiction, were also more likely to select biographies than younger kids.

How much they read: Quite a bit, it turns out. The average Epic user read for more than 20 minutes a day (the amount recommended by educational experts) for an average of 2-3 times a week, coming to an average total of 100 minutes a month in 2020. They also read substantially more in 2020 than during the previous year: daily reading increased by 52% and weekly by 87%. The gains added up to a **full hour more of reading each month in 2020.**

When they read: Most kids used Epic between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. (local time) on weekdays. There was also significant usage from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., but only half as much as the peak morning and early afternoon hours. While reading declined on the weekends, kids read the most in June and July—which was unusual, since children typically read the least during summer months. In 2020, they read the least in January and February, right before many cities went into a lockdown.

How they read: Children are reading on mobile devices: more than half— 605 million to be exact— of the 1 billion books read on Epic in 2020 were read on a phone or tablet. Thirty-eight percent of parents said their children typically read books on a tablet, 27% said their children typically read books on an eReader, 23% said their children typically read books on a computer, and 18% said their children typically read books on a mobile phone.

Here's what else we learned:
• Children of all ages read on mobile phones: according to parents, 18% of 5-7 year olds, 19% of 8-10 year olds and 14% of 11-12 year olds typically read books on a mobile phone.

• Based on parent reports, younger children did more tablet-based reading than older children: 41% of 5-7 year olds and 42% of 8-10 year olds typically read on a tablet, compared to 28% of 11-12 year olds.

These results underscore that while the COVID-19 pandemic has represented a disruption to the daily lives of families around the globe, there is at least one group that benefited in unexpected ways: kids. Reading increased dramatically, as millions of children turned to books to cope with challenges and change, entertain and explore through stories, bond with family members, satisfy curiosity, understand their worlds and of course, learn.

ABOUT EPIC

Designed for unlimited discovery and unmatched safety, Epic is the leading digital reading platform for kids. Built on a collection of 40,000+ popular, high-quality books, audiobooks and videos from 250+ of the world's best publishers, Epic reaches more than 50 million kids in homes and classrooms and safely fuels curiosity and reading confidence. Epic has made access free to educators and more than 1 million teachers use it in the classroom. To learn more, visit getepic.com, or follow Epic on Facebook and Twitter.

Epic commissioned global research firm, Morning Consult, to conduct independent research on this topic. Morning Consult is a global data intelligence company delivering insights on what people think in real time.

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