

George Does Not Read Novels

As he grew older, George read less fiction. In his teens and twenties, he devoured novels and short stories but by the time he reached sixty he had not read a novel in five years (since Stephen King's latest, which he finished because of the narrative drive.) George read, but for years now had read only nonfiction: the news or articles online.

He wondered why he no longer read novels.

Was it because they were a significant time commitment? He was now sixty-five, retired and reading time was not an issue. Nor was there a dearth of good novels. Yet it felt like he was wasting what time he had left. Novels took too long. For escapist entertainment, novels were too much work. You had to visualize while reading—even think. With far less effort George could watch a movie and eat popcorn.

Why should this matter to anyone? Even George?

This is a story, not an essay. Where is the story? The drama? The only fiction George wanted to read was under five hundred words, with a condensed plot and punchy end.

He stopped reading this halfway thru. No story.