

Reading as Power

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A Reflection from ESL 005 Intensive Reading

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What does it mean to truly learn something? For me, the answer began to take shape inside a classroom — through books.

In ESL 005 Intensive Reading, students were asked to read and present multiple chapter books or ESL readers each week — 16 books over two months. When I first heard this, I felt overwhelmed. It seemed impossible. But as the weeks passed, that fear gave way to something I hadn't expected: enjoyment, confidence, and a quiet sense of accomplishment.

Looking back, I would describe the experience as building a kind of power — rooted in three qualities.

The first is courage. Growth requires the willingness to move past fear and self-doubt. Completing this intensive reading schedule taught me that challenges that seem impossible often become manageable — even meaningful — with persistence. One book in particular, “Invented by Mistake,” brought this home for me. It tells the story of how many innovations we take for granted today exist because someone had the courage to trust an unconventional idea and see it through.

The second quality is the willingness to try. Progress stalls when we let fear of failure keep us from

taking risks. Through weekly presentations and class discussions, I discovered that effort and risk-taking are not obstacles to learning — they are the path. Reading invites us into unfamiliar ideas and perspectives, and in doing so, it stretches us beyond what we thought we were capable of.

The third quality is open-mindedness. Reading is not about judging what we encounter on the page — it is about understanding it. When we approach a text with genuine curiosity, we allow new knowledge to reshape our thinking. That reshaping is where real growth happens.

I have come to believe that reading is one of the most complete forms of learning available to us. Focusing only on speaking may not develop writing; focusing only on writing may not strengthen reading. But reading, done well and done consistently, quietly supports all three. It builds vocabulary, sharpens comprehension, and gives us something to say — and the confidence to say it.

The 16 books I once thought impossible turned out to be a gift. I carry them with me — not just as titles I completed, but as evidence that the seemingly impossible has a way of becoming ordinary, once you begin.



From the Classroom to the Parish

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Fr. Antoine will continue his missionary journey in the United States, serving at a parish in the South.

His experience in the Intensive English Language Institute strengthened his ability to listen, learn, and communicate across cultures — skills he now brings into parish ministry. As he moves into pastoral service, he carries forward the same openness and commitment to growth that shaped his time at DWC, continuing the mission of being sent to serve.