

Fiction vs. nonfiction

I've been reading for over 70 years, ever since I tackled my first book, which, as I recall, was *Wee Mouse*. I collect books faster than I can read them. I scribble down recommendations for books faster than I can act on them. I now realize that I will not be able to read everything I want to read. I have to be selective.

So what are the priorities? In my house full of books, the den, with the most shelves, has fiction A - T; the rest is in my upstairs office. The double-level bookcase in our bedroom has religious nonfiction; other nonfiction is on the shelves in the upstairs hallway. A few years ago, as I was going through some of the books in the bedroom, it struck me that most of them were so dated. Books that seemed really important in the sixties, seventies and eighties seemed not worth rereading. I wondered whether I should even keep them.

But the novels in the den – that was another story. Literally! Good fiction never seems dated. I can read a novel written a century and a half ago, like *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo, and find insights about life and reality that are just as true today as when they were written.

So for me the choice is clear. I still read nonfiction, but almost always my first choice is a good novel.