

July 1994

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### Recommended Citation

Hoffman, Robert (1994) "To Christopher–My Son," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 27 : Iss. 4 , Article 11.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol27/iss4/11>

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# To Christopher — My Son



COMMENTARY BY **ROBERT HOFFMAN**

Last night, as the day's activities were drawing to a close, he came to me snuggled tightly in his 'jamas and ready to face his world of dreams. There was a look of anticipation on his face. As I turned from my writing, I noticed he had a large book in his hand. A simple book. You know the kind: large print, colorful pictures, and well-worn from many little hands handling it. Just a simple book.

He asked me if *he* could read a book to me. I turned and smiled, sure he meant some jest. The look in his eyes told of no joke. His eyes were fierce with concentration as he examined the letters. These symbols from another world. This shorthand of adulthood. Symbols as mysterious as any ancient runes and just as difficult to decipher. He read the title of the book and opened it carefully. He mouthed each letter and gave it a sound. From the sounds he gave the letters, he formed words. Then he giggled nervously. (As if I would laugh at him.)

I offered the desk for him to place his book. He squealed with delight, slammed the book shut, and hopped up on my lap. I moved the keyboard out of

the way and he opened the book, found his place, and began. Every word wasn't perfect, but I doubt they could be improved on. Even though his reading was faltering at first, I smiled as he gained confidence. His mouth, normally drawn to a smile, was chiseled in granite from the concentration. But he did it! He read a book!

What does this mean to me? Everything. Reading is the way we learn. Reading is what we do for enjoyment. Reading is life. So, not quite through kindergarten, my son read to me. I doubt I could feel more pride in any accomplishment. He has opened the gateway to the possibilities of life. He has begun the journey I hope he never ends. Trails, pathways, and highways loom before him, beckoning him onward. *My son read to me!*

*The father of two sons, Robert Hoffman is a fourth grade teacher with Muskegon Heights Public Schools. He has written a computer text and is working on his fifth novel.*