The Big Book Companion

A slow-read journal for very long novels - pace it, track everyone in it, and still know who is who in month eight

Free sample - three real pages from the journal: The Slow Read Method (p.3), The Pace Calculator (p.6) and the Weekly Spread's Week Open page (p.11). Enough to work out your own book's finish date tonight and open your first week. Print at 100% on US Letter or A4.

The Slow Read Method - How This Journal Works (journal p.3)

The whole system on one page.

1. **Set a pace you can keep on your worst week, not your best.** Use the Pace Calculator (p.6). Chapter-a-day, pages-a-week, and finish-by-a-date are all honourable paces. The Method's only demand: the pace must survive a busy fortnight, because the book will meet several.
2. **Read in sittings, log in seconds.** After each sitting, one line in the Chapter Log (pp.27-32): where you stopped, one sentence on what happened, one name you might forget. Thirty seconds. This line is what makes a three-week gap recoverable.
3. **Close every week on one spread.** The Weekly Spread (pp.11-26) takes ten minutes: what happened, who moved, which thread tightened, one passage worth keeping. Eight spreads are printed; the pair of pages reprints freely for a year-long read.
4. **Reckon every month, renegotiate without guilt.** The Monthly Reckoning (pp.39-42) asks what the book is becoming - and gives you a printed, honourable way to change the pace, take a sanctioned pause, or declare a catch-up week. Changing pace is the Method working, not the reader failing.
5. **When you return from a gap, do the Return Drill (p.37) before you read a single new page.** Ten minutes with your own notes, in the order printed there, and the book is yours again.
6. **Finish properly.** The last pages of this journal (pp.43-48) exist because the end of a big book is an event in a reader's life and should be recorded like one.

My chosen mode (tick one): [ ] Chapter-a-day [ ] Pages-a-week [ ] Finish-by-a-date [ ] Two-sittings-a-week

My one non-negotiable (e.g. "never in bed," "always with tea," "Sundays only, but always"):

The rule that governs everything after this page: the pace serves the reader; the reader never serves the pace.

The Pace Calculator (journal p.6)

Do the sum three ways, then choose the pace that survives your worst week. All three use the same honest adjustments: subtract two weeks a year for holidays, illness and life (they are coming whether you plan them or not), and round your pace down, never up - a pace you beat feels like winning; a pace you chase feels like debt.

Mode 1 - Chapter-a-day: Total chapters _____ / 1 per day = _____ days. Add rest days (1 per week = +_____) and the 2-week life allowance (+14) = finish date _____.

Too slow or too fast? Try 2 chapters on weekend days: new finish date _____.
Mode 2 - Pages-a-week: Total pages _____ / my honest weekly pages _____ = _____ weeks. +2 life weeks = finish date _____.

Mode 3 - Finish-by-a-date: My date (a birthday, a trip, New Year's Day): _____. Weeks available: _____. Pages / weeks = pages per week I must average: _____. Chapters / weeks = chapters per week: _____.

Sane? [ ] Yes [ ] No - renegotiated date:

My chosen pace, written as a sentence I can keep ("One chapter with morning coffee; two on Sundays"):

My floor pace - the smallest week that still counts as a reading week (e.g. 10 pages):

My catch-up rule (what I do after a lost week - e.g. "one double Sunday, then forgive the rest"):

Weekly Spread - Week Open, Spread 1 (journal p.11)

Page A of the two-page Weekly Spread (pp.11-26: eight identical spreads are printed, and the pair reprints freely for a year-long read).

Week number: _____ Dates: _____ to _____ I am on page _____ of _____ (_____ % - write the percentage; watching it move is fuel)

This week's target (from my pace, p.6): chapters _____ to _____ / pages _____ to _____

Where the story stands, in two sentences, written before I read another page (this is the single most valuable habit in the journal - it is your future self's rescue line):

Who I expect to meet this week:

The thread I most want to advance:

One question I am carrying into the week (about a character, a mystery, a promise the author made):

Sittings plan: my reading sits this week will be (days/times):

Distraction audit (tick if true last week): [ ] Phone in the room [ ] Reading too late [ ] Wrong chair - one fix for this week:

This free sample holds three real pages of The Big Book Companion (48 pages: the Slow Read Method, Book Dossier, Pace Calculator, Edition & Translation Notes, Cast Web, Households Families & Factions, Map & Places, 8 Weekly Spreads, 6 Chapter Log pages, Character Trackers, Plot Threads & Promises, Who Is Who Again, the Return Drill, Names Words & Pronunciations, 4 Monthly Reckonings, the Last Sitting, the Verdict, Big Book Honours and the Next Big Book - US Letter, A4 and tablet editions). All live at pagelyra.vercel.app