

In general, I like brand-new things. I have never liked second hand furniture or second hand clothes. I don't want to wear something that someone already wore. The very thought kind of disgusts me. As for second hand furniture, I like my house to be well decorated with new, shiny things. I do not want some worn, weathered couch in my living room. One thing I have always liked used, however, is books. I cannot get enough of used bookstores, and visit them whenever I get the chance.

Some of my friends would consider these to be second hand books, but I consider them antiques. What is great about second hand book stores is that you can find interesting reads that are long out of print. Publishing decisions are not based on the quality of book but on the ability to sell. At second hand bookshops, you might be able to find something that, in its day, was quite a classic but has fallen by the wayside amidst the millions and millions of books that have been printed over the years. I have found some amazing second hand books in my time. I found, for example, an illustrated Encyclopedia of the ancient world from the turn of the century. It was fascinating because it detailed the prevailing views of science at the time, views which now we see as quaint and outdated, but which back then were the cutting edge. The best used books can be a window into the past, allowing us to see the way people saw themselves and their world at a certain point in time.

Another great thing about second hand books is that they make such great decorative additions to your house. I know this is shallow of me, but in my living room the books do not serve merely as scholastic function. I like people to know that I am intelligent and well read, and having a wide variety of books on different subjects conveys this impression admirably. Modern books are printed in a fairly standard and uniform way, but with old antique books, there were many different conventions. Some of them are printed on fancy paper with handcrafted, uneven edges. Other ones are of unusual sizes or shapes. Every once in awhile, I even find second hand books filled with illuminated pages. They make such varied and colorful eye candy that I just cannot resist the temptation. Even if it is years before I read a book, I will still enjoy having it in my shelf.