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Susan: Even the most devoted readers have trouble finishing a blog post, much less an entire book. And today, I'm talking with the Los Angeles Times book critic David Ulin. Welcome, David.

David: Thanks, Susan.

Susan: You've written a book titled "The Lost Art of Reading." There you mix book criticism with memoirs from your life. You're particularly looking at the modern, changing landscape of literature in the era of texts and tweets. Now, David, how does a book critic uh wind up writing a book about being too distracted to read books, about how all this changed reading habits?

David: The idea grew out of an essay I published in The L.A. Times. For months, I'd been having this trouble with distraction, y'know a lack of focus, sorta difficulties in concentrating. I was reluctant to confess this, yeah, but I was pushed by my editor, y'know. She said if I was having this problem, surely others were, too. The essay received an immense response, more than any other piece of writing I've ever published, with 98 percent of the people saying, "Thank you." It wasn't just me.

Susan: The book is framed around uh your son Noah's irritation at having to write comments on a novel for his high school teacher. Isn't there a computer application to do that?

David: Reading by nature is contemplative—you are immersed in story and language. Noah's concern about writing those comments was that it pulled him out of the story—another form of distraction. These things are always some sort of trade-off.

Susan: Mhmm, how does this new generation's relationship with books and reading differ from those before?

David: There's much more reliance on digital, even for reading. My kids rarely look at the actual newspaper. But it isn't like there was some "golden age of reading," when everyone was actually reading serious literature.

Susan: In an ever-more-distracted world, how do we pause?

David: For me, it is more about being conscious, whether consciously concentrating or being consciously distracted. I'm eminently distractible and always have been. Technology didn't make me distractible—it just offers me more ways to distract myself—as if that's what I needed!

Susan: Thanks for this interview, David. Let me wish you every success with this new book.