

## What Dr. Emily Hyde did on her sabbatical last year

Dr. Hyde spent the academic year 2022-2023 in rural New Hampshire reading Doris Lessing. That's an exaggeration, but not by much! I did indeed move to New Hampshire with my family—my kids enrolled in the local school, became awesome skiers, played pond hockey, and let me take them on long and buggy hikes. We got a puppy in the fall, and he spent the winter chasing snowballs and napping under my feet while I read everything Doris Lessing published between 1950, when her first novel appeared soon after she arrived in London from what is now Zimbabwe, and the mid-1960s, when she gave up on realist fiction and started to write what she called “space fiction.” A piece of advice: check your author's bibliography before you get started! She pretty much wrote a novel a year in this period, and many of them are preposterously long. At one point my 8 year old asked—scornfully—“Mommy, do you have any books that AREN'T by Doris Lessing?” I had no answer: I was deep into the 5-volume autobiographical series *The Children of Violence*. It's over 2,000 pages in total and ends in the future, long after the main character's death and well after the publication date of its final volume. Why, Doris Lessing, why? Needless to say, I now am equally annoyed with and enthralled by Lessing's work, her life story, and her odd position in literary history. She's a Nobel prize winner that doesn't fit the categories most English professors use to define their specialties and fields. In addition to Lessing, I worked on the other chapters in my book, which is tentatively titled *A Way of Seeing: Postcolonial Modernism and the Visual Book*, and enjoyed writing in the looser form of the “chapter” as opposed to the more rigid “article” or “conference paper.” And the puppy? He is slowly adjusting to city life, but buses and cats are downright terrifying. And his ears are still not symmetrical!

