

Reading Fiction Makes Us Understand Others Better

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Bookworm (Noun) /'bʊk,wɜ:rm/ a person who enjoys reading very much
Example: My aunt is a bookworm and has her own library at home.
2. Aspect (Noun) /'æspɛkt/ a part or feature
Example: There are different aspects that we need to look at before we make our final decision.
3. Richness (Noun) /'rɪtʃnəs/ the state of having a lot of something that is desirable
Example: Japan is such a wonderful place loved by many for its richness in culture.
4. Wisdom (Noun) /'wɪzdəm/ the quality of having a lot of experience and knowledge
Example: Never question the wisdom of the elderly for they are right most of the time.
5. Perspective (Noun) /pər'spektɪv/ understanding of how important things are in relation to each other
Example: We have to look at the matter from the perspective of an outsider..
6. Empathy (Noun) /'ɛmpəθi:/ the ability to understand another person's feelings, experiences, etc.
Example: Great customer service knows how to provide empathy.



Were you a bookworm at school? Well, according to recent research from the US, reading fiction at a young age could give us a more complex view of the world, and allow us to better understand other people's lives. This is particularly true for literary fiction, which is generally considered "serious" stories that don't fit into specific categories like romance or science fiction. Literary fiction usually focuses on people's lives and the social and political issues that may affect them.

The researchers based their conclusions on four surveys of adults in the US. In all four studies, participants were asked about the type of reading they do, as well as about a different aspect of the way in which they see the world and see themselves. The first study found that

among more than 350 Americans, increased reading of literary fiction when growing up was connected with greater "psychological richness." This might mean having an open mind and trying to gain wisdom in life.

In the second study, the researchers said that among around 2,200 university students, those who read literary fiction were less likely to simply accept authority. The third study found that reading any fiction as a young person gave people a sense of perspective and empathy. Around 1,500 participants were involved in this one. Finally, based on results from the fourth study — of around 1,000 people — the researchers concluded that people who read literary fiction early in life were more likely to have a complex worldview.

Whether or not participants reported that they were currently reading literary fiction did not affect how complex their worldview was. This suggests that reading as a young person has more of an impact. The authors said that fiction is a useful tool for understanding that the world is a complex place, full of differences. They believe it could even provide us with skills to live in democracies that include all sorts of different people.

DISCUSSION

1. What books do students typically study in high school in your country?
2. What classic novels from your country have you read?
3. What English-language classics would you like to read someday?
4. Do you know anyone who dislikes reading?
5. A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies ... The man who never reads lives only one. — George R.R. Martin. What are your thoughts on this statement?