

7 Benefits Of Reading Literary Fiction You May Not Know

“Books are the ultimate Dumpees: put them down and they’ll wait for you forever; pay attention to them and they always love you back.”

– John Green

What happened to literary fiction?

Reality television, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook have taken all our time away from where our hearts once begged to be – in the middle of an incredible story. We fervently turned each page while missing breakfast, lunch, and sometimes even dinner just to see what would happen next.

Now it’s hard for us to even open a book.

Maybe it’s our attention span.

[Recent research](#) showed that the average human attention span has decreased from 12 seconds in 2000, to eight seconds. We can’t sit still enough to read books. Instead, we pick up a book only to then take out our phones and endlessly scroll. When we stop scrolling, we forget why we picked up the book in the first place.

We’ve forgotten the special memories that come from reading literary fiction: when we stayed in bed on a beautiful day just to finish a book, went late to class because of a chapter that just had to be finished, and

the moments we escaped from our unsettling moods to jump into an unexpected journey.

The beautiful stories that lie in literary fiction are awaiting us; we just need to realize that they never left. It starts with understanding the reasons we should start picking up great literary fiction books again.

To give you the motivation to lose yourself in a beautiful story once again, here are seven benefits of reading literary fiction:

1. Amplifies your creativity

Your imagination thrives off art. Literary fiction is an awe-inspiring example of art because it allows significant room for interpretation. Simply put: You're given a direction, but you create the path. With expanded creativity, you find new ideas that can take any project to the next level.

2. Discover your hero

In most fiction stories, there's a protagonist who overcomes obstacles against all odds to become a hero. In fact, these stories enable us to feel like we're experiencing the journey in the shoes of the characters. As a result, they give us the courage to become our own heroes whether that means helping our family or chasing a startup vision.

A [2011 study](#) published in the Annual Review of Psychology, analyzing fMRI brain scans, showed that when participants read about an

experience, they exhibit stimulation within the same neurological regions as when they live through that experience themselves.

3. Helps you empathize

Empathy is one of the must-needed qualities for leaders and entrepreneurs. In 2013, an [influential study](#) published in Science found that reading literary fiction improved participants' results on tests that measured social perception and empathy.

When we read stories, we're free from peer judgment when responding to what happens to the invented characters. Correspondingly, we tend to show more real emotion. This exhibit of emotion is not lost but retained and slowly worked into our everyday lives making us increasingly genuine.

4. Helps you find yourself

Since our real emotions are clouded under peer pressure, we find ourselves not only discovering our true emotions when reading but wants and needs. When we read, the chains of social pressure are released, and we find ourselves looking at life in the perspective we've always believed to be true but hid from ourselves and others. This helps us realize our most important priorities including goals for success.

It's time to set ourselves free.

5. Learn how to approach new obstacles

As characters learn how to approach and overcome obstacles, they share that experience with us. So, when we face similar challenges in our lives we know how rise above these challenges already.

Taking a new and more effective approach to the obstacles found in our everyday lives is powerful. Inspired by the famous work of Paulo Coelho's, *The Alchemist*, many people changed the way they perceive obstacles and the journey of life.

A more notable quote from the book,

“When we love, we always strive to become better than we are. When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.”

6. Learn to have superior focus

If we can sit down and work for a half hour, that's considered focused in today's ADD world. Now, we need to be hyper focused to achieve success and to create incredible works of art. There are countless focus-improving tools, but they don't mean much if we can't realize the benefits.

We need to practice. It starts with reading, specifically literary fiction because it moves us in different directions. Unlike regular fiction books, literary fiction involves more ideas, prose, and emotion from the writer,

tending to create a narrative with few bounds. Mainstream fiction is more clearly structured making it less beneficial because it's easier to concentrate, ride the ups and downs of the plot, and follow the protagonist with each page flip.

If you can learn to focus while reading literary fiction books, then your productivity will never be chained to social media, texting, and negativity.

7. Gives you inner peace

Reading can give you a sense of calm in just minutes. A [2009 study](#) by the University of Sussex showed that reading for six minutes can reduce stress levels by up to 68%. The best part is that literary fiction concentrates less on developing a plot, letting your mind wander and relax.

Regular readers also sleep better, have lower stress levels, higher self-esteem, and lower rates of depression than non-readers.

“...by losing yourself in a thoroughly engrossing book you can escape from the worries and stresses of the everyday world and spend a while exploring the domain of the author’s imagination,” cognitive neuropsychologist David Lewis told [The Telegraph](#).

Even though reading has many benefits, it does come down to whether the individual reader takes advantage of them.

In Suzanne Keen's 2007 book, *Empathy and the Novel*, she notes, "Books can't make change by themselves—and not everyone feels certain that they ought to." She continues to write, "As any bookworm knows, readers can also seem antisocial and indolent."

If you're ready to bring the remarkable effects of reading literary fiction into your life, then you need to begin reading now because the hardest part is starting.

So, at first, focus on completing just one book, and you'll notice the incredible benefits that will result in the momentum to eventually becoming an avid reader.