

1. Is literature still a popular subject choice for university-level students in your country? If there has been a decline in the uptake of literature studies, what would you attribute it to?

Read article here: [Literature As Communication Reading](#)

2. Were you surprised that today's students are 40% less empathetic than previous generations, and that this fall in empathy correlates to the drop in numbers of those studying literature?

3. Can you think of any book-reading friends? Do they seem more empathetic than non-book-reading friends?

4. What is the stereotypical image of someone who can be classed as a 'bookworm'? Does 'empathetic' fit their description?

5. The article makes use of an MRI study that showed increased blood flow to the brain while reading literature - it's unlikely that you can feel the increased blood flow, but have you noticed any tangible effects while reading? Improved mood, increased equanimity? What were you reading at the time?

6. Which of these two statements do you agree with most?

a) Literature describes human experience, and it is this which stimulates empathy.

b) Literature demands close reading, and it is this which stimulates empathy. I could close-read a supermarket catalogue and get increased empathy.

7. Could the findings of the study lead to any 'downstream' treatments, do you think? Could psychiatrists/doctors prescribe a reading list to patients who are mildly depressed? Could close reading be used in treating brain injury?

8. Could/should universities make use of this research in promoting humanities courses? Could it lead to a renaissance in literature studies?

9. What books should world leaders have read before becoming eligible for power?

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Situation

You are an admissions officer for the English department at your local university. You are talking to the parent of a potential student, who is looking to enrol his son at the best-choice university. He thinks that engineering would be the best choice for his son. Convince him of the benefits of taking literature as a subject.

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Discuss quotes

“When we read great literature, something changes in us that stays changed. Literature remembered becomes material to think with.”

--- Donald Hall

“In a very real sense, people who have read good literature have lived more than people who cannot or will not read. . . .

It is not true that we have only one life to live; if we can read, we can live as many more lives and as many kinds of lives as we wish.”

--- S. I. Hayakawa

“We read to know we are not alone.”

---- C. S. Lewis