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**r/books** • 8 yr. ago
omagoda

The benefits of fiction vs non-fiction

When listening to a successful person give advice, they quite often say "read more." I've heard this advice come from artists, business people, technologists, teachers, etc. I'm of the impression that it doesn't necessarily matter WHAT you read. Rather, the act of reading in any capacity will be beneficial. However, I'm wondering if anyone here has experienced some benefits coming more from fiction than non-fiction and vice versa. Does a non-fiction book on Mohammed Ali offer more to gain than novel about a fictional boxer? Would a "self-help" book on unlocking creative behaviors be more beneficial than a story about a successful poet? Does fiction inherently allow the reader to be more creative due to the characters and settings not existing IRL? Does non-fiction allow for a more direct and efficient learning process by reading about people and events that actually happened?

Does this make sense? What does [r/books](#) think are some of the benefits (if any) of fiction over non-fiction and vice versa?



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**NoSoundNoFury** • 8 yr. ago

Very simplified:

Non-fiction books will give you facts, insights, theories, stuff to talk about.

Fiction books will give you a perspective and let you in into someone else's head. They will not *tell*, but *show* you how what something's like.

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**amgov** • 8 yr. ago

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someone else's footsteps, and teaches me about human nature. I get satisfaction from feeling the space inside me expand, becoming more insightful, empathetic and imaginative.

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Duke_Paul • 8 yr. ago

I struggle with this issue as well! As an avid fiction reader, I'm often afraid I don't measure up to non-fiction readers. What I've come to conclude is the following, right or wrong as it may be:

Reading makes you smarter. It expands your vocabulary, exposes you to different scenarios and ideas, and forces you to think more than you otherwise would. Plus, it makes you a faster reader. To that extent, read the back of the cereal box for all it matters. Read everything.

Nonfiction is a good way to learn about facts and perspective on particular events or concepts, to gain insight into how the world works. Much of my non-fiction is geared towards learning about my field or potentially inspirational people.

Fiction has taught me how to think. By exposing me to different types of characters facing different kinds of challenges, it forced new perspectives and new modes of thought on me. I have learned more from fiction, and more important stuff at that, than I think I will ever learn from non-fiction.

Tldr read what you want.

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madmoneymcgee • 8 yr. ago

There's been some research done on the benefits of reading fiction specifically. One conclusion is that reading fiction helps you build empathy.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201401/reading-fiction-improves-brain-connectivity-and-function>

On a practical note, story telling is one of those things that make us human. It goes back to the cavemen. Of course that desire is still there.

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arch_maniac • 8 yr. ago

I read a tremendous amount of non-fiction when I was younger, but now I strongly prefer fiction. I mean, I used to read a balanced mix, but now mostly fiction since around age 40-45. I see it as things vs ideas (I know that is not a 100% division, though). I used to be more interested in cars, motorcycles, cameras, physics, mathematics, geography, etc. Now, I lean more toward stories, peoples' interactions, etc.

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snowylambeau • 8 yr. ago

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There is a nearly unlimited amount of reading to be done. I don't think the Read More maxim has any nuance towards either fiction or nonfiction. The best strategy is to read regularly and be thoughtful about what you read while you read. It's your human experience, and the books that reveal truths to you about it will come from a surprising variety of sources.

At least, that has been my human experience.



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[deleted] • 8 yr. ago

The beauty of fiction to me is the ability to learn outside the box and think "what if". Guns of the South, there was a book that immediately got my mind racing & think "wow". Non-fiction has its place for me in books like bob woodwards "state of denial" or "blood makes the grass grow green". However, sometime its nice to step back & have a bit of fun. The 2 must be balanced in the curriculum now instead of teachers just focusing of a reading list of "literary classics" (garbage in my opinion).



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MissBetroot • 8 yr. ago

I agree with most of the comments but I have a special place in my heart for non fiction. I am curious about many different subjects and reading good non fiction feels like having a conversation with a friend while exchanging ideas. It's like we are thinking together. I also read different books about the same subject and sort of cross ideas to have an understanding of different perspectives while trying to shape mine. I enjoy non fiction books with a lot of heart with a focus on introspection and self development but also philosophy, media studies and reflections on society in general. I could say that 1984 by George Orwell gave me the sort of perspective on society and what we can be/do in a more personal way than what a non fiction book about citizens privacy is able to do. But I think the learning process or the sense of having our worlds expanded depends on the quality of the book more and not too much if it is a fiction or non fiction. It also depends on what "speaks to you". You can learn a lot about anxiety through a self help or philosophy book or by reading a fiction story with a character that suffers from it, but the extension of your understanding is always personal and subjective.

I really enjoyed answering this:)



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LordOfRuinsOtherSelf • 8 yr. ago

I have heard that reading science fiction improves the readers lexicon the most.



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