Have a lover, have friends, or read books?

恋爱，交友，还是阅读？

The understanding that literature can comfort, console, and heal has been around since ancient Greek and Roman times. It is no coincidence that the ancient Greek god Apollo was the god of medicine as well as poetry.

文学作品的安抚、慰藉和疗愈功效，早在古希腊和古罗马时代就为人所知了。 难怪古希腊太阳神阿波罗同时是医药之神和诗歌之神。

One of the greatest arguments for using literature as therapy was proposed by Michel de Montaigne, who believed there were three possible cures for loneliness: have a lover, have friends, and read books. But he argued that love was too fleeting and betrayal too common, and while friendship was better it always ended with death. Therefore, the only therapy that could endure through life was the companionship of literature.

米歇尔・德・蒙田曾提出了将文学作品作为疗愈方法的伟大论断。蒙田认为，治愈孤独有三种方法可选：恋爱、交友和读书。 但他认为，爱情转瞬即逝，背叛也是司空见惯；相比之下，友情更佳，却会随着其中一方的死亡戛然而止。 因此，唯一能伴随终生的疗法就是与文学为伴。

Why were the ancient Greeks and Romans right to suppose literature heals the soul? Why did Montaigne trust we could endure loneliness through a lifelong relationship with books? Why, despite all the distractions of modern life, do books still get published and writers' festival events get sold out? The answer lies in the power of stories.

为何古希腊人和古罗马人认为文学能疗愈灵魂的观点是正确的？ 为何蒙田相信如果我们终身与书为伴，便能忍受孤独？ 为何在纷纷扰扰的现代生活中，书籍依旧在出版，作家节活动的门票依旧有人买？ 答案都在于故事的力量。

Stories have been around since time began. They tell us what it is to be human, giving us a context for the past and an insight towards the future. A narrator's voice replaces our stressed, internal monologue and takes us out of our life and into the world of a story. Paradoxically, we think we are escaping ourselves but the best stories take us back deeper into our interior worlds. It is difficult to access emotional language and this is why we have writers. They remind us of the universality and timelessness of emotions, helping us better understand our own.

自有时间以来，就有故事。 故事告诉我们何为人性，教我们了解过去、洞见未来。 叙述者的声音取代了我们焦虑的内心独白，让我们跳出当下的生活，进入故事的世界。 矛盾的是，我们以为阅读让我们逃避自我，但最好的故事却让我们更深入自己的内心世界。 想要掌握情感语言着实困难，所以才有了作家。 他们提醒我们情感的普遍性与不朽性，帮助我们更深刻地了解自己的情感。

What stories have shaped you? It's a question worth reflecting on, as this shaping is often subconscious. The act of making it conscious will allow your future reading to perhaps have a different effect; you will be "reading" your life from now on, allowing you to live it more fully and understand it better.

哪些故事塑造了你？ 这一问题值得审慎思考，因为此类塑造通常是在潜意识中进行的。 使这种塑造变成有意识的行为，可能会让你未来的阅读产生不同的效果；从今往后，你就是在“阅读”自己的人生，这会让你更充实地度过自己的一生，并且更好地了解自己的人生。

Recently, more studies are telling us what the ancient Greeks and Romans already knew: Reading improves our mental health. In 2009, research at the University of Sussex found reading could reduce stress levels by 68 percent, working better at calming nerves than listening to music, going for walks, or having a cup of tea. Subjects only had to read silently for six minutes to slow down their heart rate and ease tension in their muscles.

近来，越来越多的研究表明，阅读能改善我们的心理健康，对于这一点，古希腊人和古罗马人早已知道。 2009年，萨塞克斯大学的一项研究发现，阅读能减少68%的压力，在镇静安神方面比听音乐、散步或喝茶更有效。 研究对象只需安静阅读六分钟，就能降低心率、缓解肌肉紧张。

A 2013 study found reading literary fiction can help us become more empathetic, by giving us the experience of being emotionally transported to other places and relating to new characters. Other studies have shown reading can improve sleep quality and ease mild symptoms of depression and anxiety.

2013年的一项研究表明，阅读文学作品能提高我们的移情能力，因为在阅读过程中，我们体验到我们的情感转移至别处，并与作品中新的人物产生联系。 其他研究则显示，阅读能改善睡眠质量，缓解轻度抑郁和焦虑症状。

As a bibliotherapist, I am continually reminded that all forms of literature can help people in all sorts of ways. A person who is grieving may need a predictable plot and an ordered fictional world; a man searching for direction or coming to terms with retirement may need a novel that reflects and explores the transience of life; a mother of young children may reach for a novel that illustrates the curve of life and reminds her that although her life is messy and tiring, she is in just one chapter for now.

作为一名阅读治疗专家，我时刻被提醒，不同类型的文学作品能以不同的方式给予人们帮助。 一个深陷悲痛的人可能需要沉浸在一个情节老套、井然有序的小说世界里；一个正在寻找人生方向或勉强接受退休这一现实的人也许需要读一本展现、探究生命稍纵即逝的小说；一位年幼孩子的妈妈或许需要一本阐明人生轨迹的小说，以此来提醒自己，当前的生活虽是一团乱麻，让人心力交瘁，但她只是处于人生的一个阶段。

Sometimes it is not the content of the stories themselves but just knowing you have control by choosing to read or listen that provides the calming effect. All stories offer a safe, calm world with a beginning, middle, and end. We have the power to start or stop and choose how long we stay in the story's world.

有时候，并非是故事的内容，而是你对于阅读或聆听的掌控感，给了你镇静的效果。 所有故事都为读者提供了一个安全平静的世界，那里有开篇、主体和结局。 我们可以自己决定阅读何时开始，何时结束，以及在故事世界里徜徉多久。

Time spent listening to authors talk about their work and their own understanding of the power of literature also allows us, as readers, to reflect on stories that have shaped us.

花时间聆听作家讲述自己的作品以及他们对文学力量的理解，也能让作为读者的我们反观那些影响过自己的故事。

"Why do stories matter so terribly to us, that we will offer ourselves up to, and later be grateful for, an experience that we know is going to fill us with grief and despair?" questions Helen Garner in her collection, Everywhere I Look.

作家海伦・加纳在她的作品集《我目光所及之处》中问道：“为什么故事对我们如此重要，以至于我们明知它会让我们充满悲伤和绝望，仍要全身心投入其中，并在以后的日子里对此满怀感激呢？”

Robert Dessaix, in his memoir What Days Are For, explores narrative as an "optimistic form": "Is that why I'm reading a novel in the first place? … It's optimistic in the sense that you keep turning the pages, one after the other … in the hope of something transforming happening. Isn't that it? In the hope of a transforming answer to your particular questions."

罗伯特・德塞在他的回忆录《何为岁月》中探讨了叙事这一“乐观主义形式”：“那不就是我看小说的初衷吗？之所以说它是‘乐观的’，是因为你一页接一页地翻下去，希望转机发生。期待自己的特定问题会有柳暗花明的答案，那不就是乐观主义吗？”

Both authors are exploring their identity as readers and the impact reading can have. The writers' festivals are more than an event celebrating authors; they also celebrate the power of literature and the power of you, the reader.

两位作家都在书中探索自己的读者身份，探索阅读对人的影响。 作家节并不只是为作家举办的节日，它同时还是向文学的力量致意，向作为读者的你的力量致敬。