



## How Reading Fiction can Make You a Better Person

## 读小说可以让你成为一个更好的人

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463 Words

The capacity for **empathy** — to first **identify** and then understand and share in someone else's feelings — is largely held as a virtue these days. Yet, **philosophically** speaking, there is a bit of a knowledge problem that makes being naturally **empathetic** a struggle. Why? As poet John Keats put it, "Nothing ever becomes real until it is experienced."

共情能力——识别、理解并体会他人的感受——如今在很大程度上被视为一种优秀品质。然而，从哲学上讲，有一些知识问题导致人们很难自然而然地产生同理心。为什么呢？正如诗人约翰·济慈所言：“经历过的才是真的。”

So how can someone else's **perspective** and emotions ever become real enough for us to develop empathy? Reading **fiction** may provide an answer.

那么，别人的观点和情绪如何才能变得更真实，足以让我们产生同理心呢？阅读小说可能会是一个答案。

Studies, particularly the work of Natalie M. Phillips, show that when you read fiction, it not only activates the temporal lobe (the language processing center of the brain) but also increases global blood flow in the brain. It **revs** up the motor cortex (the part involved in physical movement) and areas of the brain linked to **sensory** experiences such as the **olfactory** bulb (your sense of smell).

研究（尤其是娜塔莉·M·菲利普斯的研究）表明，阅读小说不仅激活了颞叶（大脑的语言处理中心），还增加了大脑的整体血液流量。它使运动皮层（与身体运动相关的部分）和大脑中与感觉相关的区域变得活跃，如嗅球（与嗅觉相关）。

**empathy** ['empəθi] *n.* 同感，共鸣，同情

**identify** [aɪ'dentɪfaɪ] *v.* 认出，确认；找到，发现 | Scientists have identified a link between diet and cancer. 科学家发现了饮食与癌症之间的关联。

**philosophically** [fɪlə'sə:fɪkli] *adv.* 哲学上地 | This kind of evidence is philosophically unconvincing. 这类证据在哲学上是不足为信的。

**empathetic** [ˌempə'θetɪk] *adj.* 移情的，有同感的，能产生共鸣的

**perspective** [pə'spektɪv] *n.* 态度，观点，角度 | Try to see the issue from a different perspective. 试试以不同的角度看待这件事。

**fiction** ['fɪkʃn] *n.* 小说；虚构，捏造的事 | For years he managed to keep up the fiction that he was not married. 多年来他设法一直给人一种未婚的假象。

**rev** [rev] *v.* （使）快速运转 | The presidential candidates are now revving up their campaigns. 总统候选人们正加紧进行他们的竞选活动。

**sensory** ['sensəri] *adj.* 感觉的，感

In other words, reading fiction lights up the brain in ways that **mimic** the **neural** activities of the experience you're reading about. For example, if you read a well-written passage about a character hiking through the **wilderness**, your brain reacts as if you're on that hike.

换句话说，阅读小说会激活大脑，让大脑产生与你正阅读的故事类似的神经活动。例如，如果你阅读一篇描写一个人物在荒野中徒步旅行的佳作，大脑就会产生好像是你正在徒步旅行的反应。

Reading fiction may also **prime** your kinder side. For instance, one study found that people who were drawn in by a tale were more likely to pick up pens that a researcher “**accidentally**” dropped. Another study found that they were more likely to ask for additional information about a charity. Comparatively, participants given **nonfiction** to read — as well as those who were given fiction but reported not being deeply **engaged** — demonstrated such behaviors less.

阅读小说也可能激发你善良的一面。例如，一项研究发现，正为某个故事着迷的人更有可能捡起研究人员“不小心”掉下的笔。另一项研究发现，他们更有可能询问有关慈善机构的额外信息。相比之下，阅读纪实作品的参与者——以及阅读小说但没有深入阅读的参与者——表现出的这种行为为更少。

To really **cultivate** empathy, you need to be internally more aware of and connected to those around you. And again, reading fiction is associated with just such a skill.

要真正培养同理心，你需要从内心更多地体察周围的人，并与他们建立联系。同样，阅读小说也与这种技能有关。

One study compared readers' scores on the classic “Reading the Mind in the Eyes” (MIE) assessment. This test **assesses** one's ability to determine someone else's emotions based on their facial expression alone. The results showed that fiction readers scored higher than non-readers and readers of nonfiction. The researchers **hypothesized** that reading fiction

官的

**olfactory** [oʊl'fæktəri] *adj.* 嗅觉的 | the olfactory cells in the nose 鼻腔内的嗅觉细胞

**mimic** ['mɪmɪk] *v.* 模仿；像，似 | He could mimic all the teachers' accents. 他能模仿所有老师的口音。

**neural** ['nɔrəl] *adj.* 神经的，神经系统的

**wilderness** ['wɪldərnəs] *n.* 荒野，荒漠，原野 | The Antarctic is the world's last great wilderness. 南极洲是世界上最后一个大荒原。

**prime** [praɪm] *v.* 使启动，使准备好 *adj.* 主要的，首要的 | She had been well primed about what to say to the press. 她已经准备好对新闻界怎么说了。

**accidentally** [ˌæksɪ'dentli] *adv.* 偶然地，意外地 | He accidentally sliced through his finger. 他不小心把指头割破了。

**nonfiction** [ˌnɒːn'fɪkʃən] *n.* 非小说类文学作品，写实作品

**engaged** [ɪn'ɡeɪdʒd] *adj.* 忙于……的，从事于……的；订婚的 | He is now engaged on his second novel. 他正埋头写他的第二部小说。

**cultivate** ['kʌltɪveɪt] *v.* 种植，栽培；逐渐形成，培养；建立友谊 | The company has been successful in cultivating a very professional image. 公司成功地树立了一个非

allows you to practice taking on someone else's perspective and thus improves your social awareness. Even outside of the MIE test, research suggests that reading literary fiction improves one's theory of mind and emotional intelligence.

一项研究比较了读者在经典的“眼神读心测验”(MIE)中的得分。这项测试评估的是一个人仅凭面部表情判断他人情绪的能力。结果显示,小说读者的得分高于不阅读的人和非小说读者。研究人员假设,阅读小说可以让你练习站在别人的角度看问题,从而提高你的社会意识。即使在“眼神读心测验”之外,研究也表明,阅读文学小说可以提高一个人的心智和情商。

The **takeaway** lesson is simple: If you want to build empathy in your life and relationships, try reading more fiction, more often — especially fiction by and about people whose experiences are different from your own. While you can't directly share in someone else's experience, you can, as **postmodern** author Samuel Beckett said, “**fail better**” at the goal of understanding their experiences, since establishing a habit of reading fiction can increase your empathy and emotional intelligence.

启示很简单:如果你想在生活中和人际关系中培养同理心,那就试着多读小说,经常读——尤其是那些与你经历不同的人写的或有关的小。虽然你不能直接分享别人的体验,但正如后现代作家塞缪尔·贝克特所说,你可以在理解他人经历的目标上“更好地失败”,因为养成阅读小说的习惯可以提高你的同理心和情商。

常专业的形象。

**assess** [ə'ses] v. 评估, 评定 | It's difficult to assess the effects of these changes. 这些变化带来的效果难以评估。

**hypothesize** [haɪ'pɑ:θesaɪz] v. 假设, 假定 | Scientists hypothesize that the dinosaurs were killed by a giant meteor. 科学家假设恐龙灭绝的原因是一颗巨大的流星撞击了地球。

**takeaway** ['teɪkə,weɪ] adj. 外买食品; 外卖餐馆

**postmodern** [ˌpoʊst'mɑ:dəm] adj. 后现代主义的, 受后现代主义影响的

**fail better** 出自爱尔兰作家塞缪尔·贝克特, 全句为: Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better. (尝试过, 失败过, 无妨。再次尝试, 再次失败, 却是以更好的方式失败。)

## ► 脉络梳理

Para. 1-2 引出话题：阅读小说有助于培养同理心

### Para. 3-7 介绍相关研究发现

Para. 8 总结全文，提出建议：通过多读小说提高同理心和情商

### ► 长难句拆解

In other words, reading fiction lights up the brain

状语                      主句

方式状语                      定语从句，修饰 ways                      定语从句，修饰 experience

in ways that mimic the neural activities of the experience you're reading about.