

Classic Literature: a Useful Tool that Helps You Everyday

“What an astonishing thing a book is. It's a flat object made from a tree with flexible parts on which are imprinted lots of funny dark squiggles. But one glance at it and you're inside the mind of another person, maybe somebody dead for thousands of years. Across the millennia, an author is speaking clearly and silently inside your head, directly to you.” - Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*. Why do you think classic literature is so relevant today? It's because the wisdom inside the books gave them a purpose to stay in our list of useful things. But think of all the wisdom and life lessons they had to have to preserve them from the ever-growing need of knowledge! If we only reviewed them again from time to time, we might learn even more things that contribute to our growth! Reading classic literature could enhance our knowledge by lending us wisdom and life lessons. We should read more classic literature. First, I will tell you what is happening now with the lack of reading classic literature. Then, I will tell you what the issues are with the lack of reading these classics. Lastly, I will talk about what we can do on a larger scale along with a personal scale.

Right now, there is a major problem with the lack of reading classical literature, and it's affecting how we think and function. People are distracted by social media and their phones competing for their attention. When you get a digital interruption, it takes a long time to regain focus, and often you might just want to keep scrolling, but if we know the harms of being addicted to social media, why do we still do it? It's because when we check our phones, our brains release a small amount of dopamine. This dopamine encourages us to check our phones every time we hear a notification, thus leading to a cycle of addiction. Another reason why we do not read enough classic literature is because there's no time. We spend most of our day at work, school and extracurricular activities. Many people think that reading is unimportant, so they won't set time aside for it. This is the vicious cycle of a lack of reading.

There are issues with the lack of reading these classics. According to study author Irene Papanicolas, U.S. life expectancy has been declining in recent years. Reading makes people's lives longer by reducing stress, so naturally, if we don't read, our lives will be shorter. When we read, it reduces our stress, increases mental health, prevents cognitive decline, and much more! These things help us live longer because stress causes you to age faster, and having your brain in good condition is always a good thing. Studies show that people with mental health issues have more YPLL (Years of Potential Life Lost) than people without mental health problems. Reading classic literature helps us think cognitively and makes us better problem-solvers. When you read, the complexity of classic literature makes us stop for a moment and think about it. This makes you a better reader. When you read these classics, it often presents challenging concepts and those challenging concepts take careful consideration to understand them fully. By looking over these texts, we can become better problem-solvers and analyzers. Classic literature contains a lot of morals that can help us. In books like *The Great Gatsby*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and much more, there are plenty of morals and life lessons hidden within them. *The Great Gatsby*, for example, explores the destructive nature of greed and the pursuit of wealth at the expense of personal happiness or integrity. *The Scarlet Letter*'s characters wrestle with their moral choices and face the consequences of their actions, which illustrates the value of maintaining personal integrity and redemption. *Pride and Prejudice* reveals how social class, prejudice, and social

expectations shape individuals' lives and behaviors, which often calls attention to social injustice. These morals are excellent teachers of life lessons and they can also help you solve your own problems in the future.

There are things we can do on both a larger scale along with a personal scale. Now that I've listed all the benefits of classic literature above, please consider them seriously. They can bring endless joy and benefits to you. To refresh your memory, some benefits are: living longer, becoming a better problem solver, reducing stress, teaching you life lessons such as revealing how social class, social expectations and prejudice shape our lives and behavior, and the importance of maintaining personal integrity and redemption, etcetera. These books are not just for entertainment, but also help you in life and help you solve your problems. You should spread classics around. These books are like a window through which we can see the lives of others. We can make ourselves better by comparing the characters' good deeds and bad points and learning from them. Books like *Oliver Twist*, *Moby Dick*, 1984, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Animal Farm*, etcetera, can give us the opportunity to learn a lot from the characters in these novels. Through this method, we can essentially shape our personality and inner self with classic literature.

Now that you know what reading is capable of, you should try to read some of the books I mentioned, and maybe even get other people into them. They're packed to the brim with knowledge, morals, life lessons, solutions to your own problems, and plus, all of them are filled with witty humor, touching paragraphs, social insight, a steady mix of sadness, romance, mystery, happiness, and maybe an occasional sad ending. They are the lifeblood of our history, entertainment and human joy. To finish off, what better ending could there be than with the same quote that we started this speech with? "What an astonishing thing a book is. It's a flat object made from a tree with flexible parts on which are imprinted lots of funny dark squiggles. But one glance at it and you're inside the mind of another person, maybe somebody dead for thousands of years. Across the millennia, an author is speaking clearly and silently inside your head, directly to you." - Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*