

IS STUDYING LITERATURE WORTHWHILE?

*I cannot remember the books
I've read any more than the
meals I have eaten; even so,
they have made me*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I have chosen the quotation, for it could help me to define the track of my essay, as my views on books and reading are quite broad, and I can discuss this topic for hours. These are simple words, but for me they convey the essence of literature – like the food we consume affects the inner and outer states of our body, the books we read shape our philosophy and, therefore, contribute to every aspect of our daily life. Some argue that in today's world interpreting literature is a waste of time, since it has no practical application for the majority of occupations. However, I strongly believe that close reading and analysis of literary works, which are taught at school and University, do make a difference on our path, but indirectly, bringing small personal results which eventually grow into a strong foundation.

In my essay, I would like to go from some general points to those which are more particular in order to prove the diversity of opportunities literary studies give us.

Firstly, studying literature helps us to broaden our perspective and get new insights about the basic phenomena of life. For instance, one of my favourite novels "*The Financier*" by Theodore Dreiser presents not only the historical background of America in the late 19th century, but also very specifically illustrates the work of financial markets, how people get preoccupied with pursuing income and what this activity eventually leads to: both success and failure, despair and profound process of introspection. The same can be said about Leo Tolstoy's and Fyodor Dostoevsky's novels and many other masterpieces. In my opinion, these are valid illustrations of how a fundamental piece of literature gives us a detailed presentation of people's lives and, therefore, makes us understand the diversity of the world around us.

Another reason why I appreciate close reading classes is that they help me to improve my writing skills. I notice how an unstructured, poorly developed text bit by bit evolves into a good (I hope) academic essay with logic, and versatile vocabulary and grammar. This achievement I

ascribe primarily to hard intellectual work done in these classes. In addition, can writing skills be overestimated? I do not think so, because writing is a crucial channel of interpersonal communication, especially in our technologically developed society. From my personal experience, they help me to deliver my message laconically and precisely, irrespective of the field I am involved in.

The last but not the least point I'd like to mention is connected with the ability to analyze information. Although scrutinizing one text after another is a very time- and energy-consuming process, this activity builds strong analytical skills of sorting out necessary data from a huge flow. Personally, I believe that this can be applicable in our future jobs, no matter which path we will choose. For instance, the knowledge I receive from examining characters of different stories makes me interpret the behavior of people around me much better. That is to say, I learned to avoid ambiguity by making reliable deductions based on what really happens and not only on my personal perception. Besides, when I write academic papers, make some research or even work with numbers, I involuntarily choose the strategy, which we apply while working with classical stories, and it actually works! Given the fact that the ability to conduct profound analysis is valued by many academic programs as well as by the majority of employers, I am very thankful to these classes, because they allow me to obtain this professional asset.

In conclusion, reading is an extremely delicate issue, which can be looked upon from several angles: aesthetic, practical or scientific. For me, books are a precious source of inspiration and information, and I always notice, that every new book I read makes me another person, makes me consider my viewpoints and beliefs. In terms of close reading activity, it is sad that nowadays this subject takes a small place in University and school curriculum. I believe this is a sheer treasure to feel the sense of accomplishment after such an intellectually demanding process. When you manage to make a discovery and reveal the true author's message and the meaning of the passage, you feel like doing it over and over again in order to master the skill and get genuine satisfaction from the work.

Lisa Keshkova, 4th Year, 2LA

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Close reading class has been one of my favorite subjects this academic year. As soon as we were not supposed to learn extracts by heart any more I fell in love with those extracts. I started to trust my intuition, feelings, and deductions about the tiny details in the text which I would never even notice before. I started to taste, smell, hear, and see those undercurrent implications in the story which authors skillfully hide beneath. I learned how much one page could tell about the whole book. I never believed writing was such a deep psychological work. I never thought it could be so carefully thought out, in such a thorough and detailed way. I thought anyone can write – it's just a matter of an interesting story to tell. But it is not. The art of writing is in every single word, selected with passion and care. At the beginning I learned to notice them “according to the instruction”, but then I began to feel it, to sense how a peculiar pattern shows only a part of the whole picture and then how this part transforms into a solid canvas.

I'm very grateful to the freedom of expression and thought given to us in this class. After all those “you are meant to think this and that way” it was like a breath of fresh air. We discovered things by ourselves. We were happy to hear some additions to our own thoughts because we were often blind to details or misled by common way of thinking. This way of thinking is what I used to share before, when every new book was just a magazine with entertaining story. Some were more colorful, some less, but they were shallow to me because my attention was focused on the surface.

When I read now I feel that I have developed a new ability – to see and understand things deeper than an ordinary reader. Now I have a special ticket to the under-book-world, where I can talk eye-to-eye with the author, sympathize with his feelings and listen attentively to his message. I get much closer to the writer. His personality, his ideas, his outlook become of a very high interest and importance to me. I find my own features in his soul and learn from him to view the world from different perspectives. I realize that he can also be torn by feelings or hesitate about his characters' fates, he can hate or love or glorify his own ideals and beliefs. He is only a human being, even though an outstanding one. This “touch” of the author, this personal communication full of life lessons is a real treasure I receive from literature.

As well as any new skill, close reading has to be trained. It was trained, of course, through inner resistance, laziness, tiredness, and disagreement. A lot depends on the teacher. I wouldn't feel anything but annoyance and irritation towards analyzing a text if it wasn't for open-minded

atmosphere at the lessons, for an opportunity to say what I think and what I feel about the text and what connections I notice. So to me reading literature is definitely worthwhile. It is worthwhile discovering a whole new world where I used to see only plain pages, it is worthwhile having an intimate conversation with the person whom I admire – the author, it is worthwhile learning how to delve deep into the text leaving all the worries and thoughts behind in order to discover an unexpected emotion or useful understanding, carefully laid under the simple words and letters, it is worthwhile learning that I can trust myself in what I feel about the text and daring to enrich my own perception – just by giving the text a closer look.

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To tell the truth, reading as speech activity hadn't been very interesting for me till I got acquainted with the subject "close reading". With each lesson, the process of reading began more and more interesting for me. Yet, it's not the only reason why I consider reading literature to be a very important subject. Learning how to read thoroughly and closely, understanding deeply every tiny passage, can efficiently help us to be familiar with the nature of reading. At the same time, we should admit that as far as we, people, have different points of view we can perceive novels and short stories differently. We should also appreciate close reading because there are a lot of different writers with their masterpieces which may help us understand, without exaggeration, almost any kind of writing, British and American, and, what is also of great importance, learn about the history of Great Britain and the USA and their literature. Thanks to reading we can live through the lives of characters from novels and short stories again and again, gain some knowledge about these people, with their life experience. Therefore, literature is also important for every person, me too, who would like to expand his or her horizon or range of vision. And as long as time never stays the same, style of writing also changes as any language does. That's why reading literature is significant for developing speaking skills!

Narmin Imamaliyeva, 4th Year, 1LA

Is Reading Literature Worthwhile?

What a beautiful world we live in if we have so many things to learn. But why study Literature?! In fact, students frankly admit that they do not see much use in literature and do not like to read. To tell you the truth, when I was at school I did not like to read. Once when I read “The Hero of Our Time” by Mikhail Lermontov it struck me that if I didn’t read books I could face the situation the main character, Bela, did: I was afraid of being dull, not interesting. It was then when I decided I should have a wide scope of reading.

Every novel, poem, play, or, story communicate certain ideas about of life and human experience. Reading develops our personality. What is more important, reading develops abstract thinking and imagination, and consciousness and abstract thinking is what distinguishes man from animal. Thanks to literature we develop compassion by putting ourselves into the characters' shoes. Sympathy is what helps people interact, communicate, and behave the right way. The ability to understand and see why characters of the story act the way they do means you can understand why people act this way or other in real life.

Also, literature has a power to take us, readers, where we have never been and to wake up our senses. Choosing 'words in their best order' writers are able to make us addicted to their stories, because we want to turn the pages over to know what happens next. This desire to know how the story is going to come out makes you learn new words and to think in a new, different way.

Teaching Literature is a job of high responsibility and challenge since it has to do with educating people. If a teacher can teach students to understand the text, to feel the beauty of the language, to analyze plot, characters and other aspects of the story, they will be able to acquire critical thinking skills and taste for reading. In its turn, this will contribute to the development of personality. That’s why I think reading is a must! It’s worth it!

Vika Kovaleva, 4th Year, 2LA

Is Reading Literature Worthwhile?

During my university studies I was always puzzled with a question: why all the subjects, those which are directly connected with the language and its structure (such as grammar or phonetics) alter in our timetable every year and finish as a result, and only one, that is literature, stays without any changes? Why do we have to study different pieces of writing year by year? Probably, it could be more beneficial for students to replace it with, for example, extra culturology or psychology courses? All things considered, I found out many points FOR studying literature and finally cleared up the reasons for having literature course during all four years.

The first (and perhaps the most crucial one) is that studying literature is not just reading and discussing – it is much deeper, actually. In my opinion, this is a “thick solution” of different subjects and issues – all in one. While reading, we understand some peculiarities and details of human characters and relationships – so, isn’t it psychology? The only thing is that we study it without all those scientific terms and theory. Literature provides us an opportunity to work as a practicing psychoanalyst. Moreover, through reading we see not only everyday life, but also get acquainted with the most important social and historical events of countries the language of which we study. So, there is something very close to culturology, too. In addition, of course, reading and discussing help us to enrich our vocabulary and give us a wide variety of impressive language constructions, those which make our speech sound fine and really “educated”. It is impossible to say that literature has nothing to do with language practice, as well as with many other subjects. From the practical point of view, such a blending helps us to save time and effort.

But there is also another point of view – the esthetical one. I believe that it is literature that makes one a really educated person. It inoculates us with a sense of beauty and gives its answers to all kinds of our personal inner questions. It teaches to sort out what is wrong and what is right, to see the meaning and connections of even the smallest things – literature makes us attentive and careful.

As for me, the important thing is not to take studying literature as “studying” at all. It is much better to regard it as an absorbing pastime or even a kind of a rather complicated game. Many of us keep asking one and the same question: did the author really think about all these hundreds of details? Probably not – authors do it not intentionally, but their brain is so special, that they can’t but enclose sense in every word. And it is not boring or meaningless to reveal it – it is exciting,

even thrilling. When you make some conclusions or predictions, summing up all the clues, then read the story up to the end and find out how right you are in your thoughts – you can literally feel your self-development and satisfaction. Or when you make a mistake – you wonder, how unpredictable and boundless the world of literature is.

In conclusion I can say that for me there is no doubt that literature and reading are worth studying. It gives us not only practical benefits, but also sheer joy and pleasure.

Maria Knyazeva, 4th year, 2LA

Is Reading Literature Worthwhile?

At first sight it seems quite irrational of course. Why study unnecessary stuff that we never use in real life? Where should we use the skills of analyzing texts? We analyze literature only at school and university, and when we grow up we are rarely faced with such tasks unless we are teachers ourselves and need to teach others how to analyze fiction.

But as a subject at school or at the university its worth studying. At school pupils just develop their own view on the world, they learn to think by themselves. Literature helps them to grow up and be independent people with their own point of view. Pupils begin to analyze literary texts in class and suddenly find out that they see the beauty and ugliness of the world in some telling details, and that stylistic devices are not just things that make the text tangled, but it's the author's vision of the world. Either in their native or foreign language, they learn to get to the gist of things, and this ability can be definitely helpful in real life. This is an activity that we start to learn at school and continue at the university.

When we grow up and become students, analytical reading makes us feel the soul of the text, all the processes that are taking place within it, the unique style of the author of this particular text. In this case, analytical reading is an instrument to make us value the role of literature, the work of writers and the role of us, readers. For us, this is a means of classifying information in the text, and this skill is crucial not only when we reading fiction at the university but also when we read some reports and business stuff. This ability to classify and systematize the information can come in handy for people who work with loads of new information, so that they could distinguish one thing from another.

Anyway, I am for studying analytical reading at schools and universities. I speak about the peculiarities of some particular text, the discussion of this text and writing essays after. Yet I am against, within the framework of this subject, focusing only on studying vocabulary of the given text, and learning tons of new words. The latter is useless for us, because the vocabulary of different texts also differs. We should just focus only on these words and discuss stylistic devices and expressive means in terms of how they characterize the author's style and idiom. This is essential to get through the author's manner of writing, and so to say his or her soul. We need also to compare styles of different authors – from one time, country or who are writing about the same things, because to be critical and observant is a special feature of wise and mature person.

IS STUDYING LITERATURE WORTHWHILE?

Reading for me was something that my mother, being a librarian, had taught me to like in my childhood. It was a long long time ago, in my Kindergarten age. I could find a great pleasure in getting acquainted with magic worlds, brave heroes, and genuine friends in that completeness and rate that no film could afford since no means of technology can ever replace imagination, especially of a child. I was an avid reader and hardly managed to put aside the book I had just finished reading to take another one.

As juvenility came, I lost my passion for reading. Computer and TV became my new passion and white sheets with exciting worlds and characters once adorable thanks to school courses of literature turned into burden. I was doing time for eleven years, reading books from the reading lists and showing artificial interest to them to get a good mark. If I read anything for pleasure at that time, it was rather an exception.

I became a student. Nothing remained from my love for books and I did nothing to revive it; this became a norm of life. Then we got Foreign Literature Studies, Analytical Reading, and Close Reading. That's where I felt need for rehabilitation. There was hardly any book discussed in class that I had read before. Moreover, it was a wonder if I had just heard about it. That's where I felt my deficiency, which was a wound to my self-appraisal. From then on, I decided to return my self-respect. Narrow-mindedness is not the characteristics of me which I would like to promote. Perceiving the problem was the first step to my revival of reading. It took a long time to make another step – just to begin reading anything. Actually, to continue reading as I have never lost this interest – it was just dormant deep inside.

Only a year ago I fulfilled my intention, and it's one of the most delightful sources of pride I have ever had. Although I was always good at writing compositions and analyzing texts – as I am patient enough to see the "reverse side" of the text and brave enough to suggest the most daring interpretations – only with my consolation of reading I found the complete interest for literature-like subjects. Now I do not just read and analyze extracts from literary works I would never even have looked at only a year ago, but I do it with clear understanding evaluating it critically from the point of view whether I am fascinated enough to read the whole book myself. Now I have a pious attitude to my pastime and books I read: the more I read, the more delicate taste I develop; I can look at a book, with reading experience at hand. The more we analyze

literary works, the more profound knowledge I obtain which can be applied in my everyday life when I compare one book with another from different angles: fullness of imagery a setting provides, amplex or economy of characterization (and the writer's motives for that), ways of producing an effect on me as a reader. This is the most important ability I have acquired – a more scientific understanding, in terms of linguistics and literary criticism, why I like or dislike this or that piece of writing.

Thanks to subjects dealing with literature and my erudite group mates, I first shamed myself because of lack of knowledge and skills and then worked at self-improvement in this sphere, which has resulted in my improving as a personality and feeling satisfied with myself for making efforts and filling the lacuna in my life, the one which is responsible for versatility, imagination, and mental development.

Speaking on the subject of the essay, I would say that I can not judge for others. Some students may find reading tiresome and the choice of books for it stupid. Moreover, I agree with those who think that sometimes (I am speaking about analytical reading) we scrutinize the text too long concocting hidden meaning in every sentence. However, one thing outweighs all possible demerits – now I like reading again – that's why it is worthwhile for me.

Tatiana Maiorova, 4th Year, 1LA

IS STUDYING LITERATURE WORTHWHILE?

Analytical reading within the university program is really worthwhile. In this course, we have studied a lot of different authors and their literary works, many of which were unfamiliar to us. Due to the course we got to know more about the style of authors, plot, and meaning and message of their stories. We analyzed every word, searched for connotations, symbols; looking for hints in a small passage we tried to figure out how they foreshadow the outcome of the story. It was useful for the perfection of our observation skills, for mastering speaking skills, and, of course, it enriched our vocabulary with useful words.

Before, I personally used to have a very different opinion on the works of many authors who were of little interest for me and whose works I was not impressed by. Due to thorough analysis of excerpts and revealing their hidden meaning you have a completely different perspective on the text. Moreover, reading another work of literature you start thinking why the author uses this or that word or other language unit and you are sure to have a deeper understanding of it. But it happened that after looking closely at the style of the author I realized that it was not to my taste. When I read Fitzgerald, for example, I liked the themes he writes about and his plot, but I couldn't understand why reading his works didn't impress me. When we analyzed some of his stories I came to a conclusion that his style is too sickly-sweet for me. That's a matter of taste, of course. But analytical reading within the program is still valuable because you are given the texts you would not take to read for pleasure and hence you would not get acquainted with something new or broaden your mind.

We got acquainted with texts belonging to different literary movements: realism, modernism, symbolism, and psychological prose. And all of them formed a better understanding of literature and developed our taste. As Maxim Gorky said, "All the good in me I owe to books..." I like this statement because the quantity of books, read and analyzed, transforms into quality: you raise a greater awareness of reality, things around, human psychology and you learn to reflect about your own actions, too. I believe that for each student, me included, this course was useful and effective, and we learned a lot.

Is Reading Literature Worthwhile?

It is hard to question the significance of literature in our life. We may not notice it, but this is one of those things which follow us since very childhood when parents read bedtime stories for us.

As for literature as a subject at universities, I suppose it is out of the question, that it should be included in curriculum, as it is now, for prospective linguists, translators, journalists, copywriters, i.e. for those people whose profession has something to do with language, literature, and writing. Surely, in this case literature shouldn't be akin to a school subject, but depending on peculiarities of each of these occupations it should be taught not only as a kind of art, but used as a tool for developing professional skills as well.

In addition, it is essential for people who have something to do with any kind of art to study literature. First of all, it is directly connected with theatre, so actors should know and, what is more important, understand literary works very well to be able to get into characters and show it to the audience. As for other creative professions, musicians, singers, dancers, artists, photographers, designers, etc., although what they do isn't closely connected with literature, I think they still should study it. Being another kind of art, literature lets these people look at the world from another perspective, broaden their horizons and get some inspiration for their own works.

The most difficult situation with literature as a subject is among all the other professions, especially technical, economic and other applied fields. It is commonly believed that people who are interested in such things, so-called "techies", don't care about literature and consider it to be an absolutely unnecessary subject which can't be used practically in life. From the point of view of people who want to focus only on their profession and put all their effort in developing professional skills it may be right. This is what higher education is supposed to do. The same thing happens when people who are more into humanities have to study science, they are sure they just don't need it. However, I tend to think that even if one's profession isn't connected with literature they still should study it, at least some minimum which should be put in curriculum.

Maybe, they even mustn't necessarily read whole books and know them from cover to cover, but they should be aware of some famous authors, peculiarities of their style and most significant works. If students are interested they will certainly continue their acquaintance with this or that writer by reading his/her books. Of course, it is a teacher's task to awake students' interest in literature and show them that it is not as senseless as they used to think. A teacher should be

ready for students being skeptical about literature and prepared for presenting material as interesting as possible.

So, in my opinion, literature should be included in curriculum even of those specialties which are not directly connected with it, as reading books expands our horizons, improves our analytical skills and helps us to understand life better, which we can't always learn at school and university.

Nastya Mamontova, 4th year, 2BA

Is Studying Literature Worthwhile?

Some people wonder whether studying literature is actually worthwhile. Do all their efforts bring fruitful results? In this essay I would like to prove that nothing could be more rewarding than studying and understanding this subject.

The first thing I would like to start with is that by studying literature the reader is getting acquainted with the culture and history of the country which is described in the book or where the action takes place. No time machine or any kind of transport is needed because literature enables the reader to travel through time and to an endless number of places just with one turning of the page. Getting an extended and clear view on history, the reader can find some intriguing facts or look at some events from a different angle.

Another thing that is great about studying literature is that the reader gets an access to the other people's mind and acquires some psychological knowledge about their nature. While reading a book, the reader has an opportunity to examine some problems which he can face in the future. Furthermore the book offers some reasonable and sensible solutions and provides the readers with a fresh and creative outlook on the situation and on life in whole. Also, going through some serious feelings and worries with the characters and examining their train of thoughts, the reader can finally discover himself. Literature sets on the right path, helps to set goals in life and gives answers to the innermost and most wanted questions. The reader gets closer to understanding of what he should value, respect, protect or avoid.

Moreover literature inevitably has a great impact on the reader's language, enriching it with elaborate idioms, witty oxymoron, endless epithets and other tropes. With every book read, the reader appreciates and applies the acquired knowledge, and therefore masters his speech, making it expressive and vivid, as well as improves his writing skills. What is more, he is developing his literature taste and with time he can unmistakably define whether a book that rests in his hands is worth reading or not.

Giving a profound insight into the world, literature expands the reader's mind and broadens the horizons of his comprehension. Having his own opinion on variety of things and being able to speak on majority of subjects, the reader can keep the ball of conversation rolling. Literature teaches him about the joy and grief, about friendship and treachery, about hopes and disappointment. It can evoke certain emotions and feelings as well as warn us against many human faults. It can attempt to disprove other ideas or attempt to find truth. Literature teaches to compare and analyze, summarize and draw analogies. And eventually the reader is taught to think, which is one of the greatest things people can do.

Viktoria Mankova, 4th Year, 2BA

Is Studying Literature Worthwhile?

Today we pay less and less attention to literature. Indeed, why read books if we can see their adaptations or listen to audio books? Many will ask, "What does literature give to us? What can we learn from it?"

Those who sent books on the shelf forever are robbing themselves. Modern man is a rationalist and a pragmatist: doing only what is beneficial, raises the status in society. People want to live a bright life, and the world is full of diverse and relatively accessible pleasures. Do such pleasures feed the soul? At first glance yes, because you experience strong emotions. But such pleasures do not affect the true feelings hidden in the soul of every person.

Life today is primarily a constant motion, the achievement of specific goals. It has less and less space for philosophical reflection over the mysteries of consciousness and being, human relationships. The world is changing rapidly, the progress gives incredible opportunities. But like thousands of years ago, the human soul is in need of love, suffering, looking for the meaning of life. And no surrogates or false values can fill that void.

Literature is able to open the door to our own inner world. It is one of those gifts that evokes real feelings, helps us to find answers to the most important questions of life, gives us one more wonderful opportunity - to plunge into the past, to travel back in time to see the world through the eyes of people who lived many years ago.

Alexandra Mineeva, 4th year, 2BA

Is Studying Literature Worthwhile?

The issue of studying literature as a part of curriculum is quite disputable nowadays. The heart of the predominant part of modern society belongs to whatever spheres of human activities but literature. However, this fact shouldn't be taken for granted and, obviously, some essential measures are being implemented: educational institutions still stick to the idea that studying literature is of vital importance for younger generations, and bookworms throughout the world serve as a perfect example of authentic devotion to pencraft. So, why are there still those who won't neglect a good book even if its marvelous why-do-people-need-to-read-the-original screen version exists?

As Mr. Keating, the teacher of literature in "Dead Poets Society", said once, "In my class, you will learn to think for yourselves again. You will learn to savor words and languages. No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world." In three laconic yet full of wisdom sentences the character reveals the genuine aim of literature itself.

Firstly, when reading a novel or a short story, one is overwhelmed with the events which take place there. That's how you penetrate into characters' inner struggle, and more than that, witness some external conflicts which have been bothering people of all times and places: human and nature, the good and the evil, power and sensibility, etc. The thing is that even the novel which at first sight seems useless and facile to you, in most cases it turns out to be quintessence of knowledge and wisdom. My Granny keeps telling me, "You never know when experience of the character of this very novel will do you a service." That's how it works. Once you find yourself cornered in the same dismal or simply complicated circumstances, desperately seeking for a way out, and the only solution is to rely on the people who experienced all this on the pages of immortal stories long time before you.

Secondly, literature gives you a priceless opportunity to cognize the refined beauty of the word. Once you read Oscar Wilde you will never forget the taste of his sweet but subtle prefaces and witty but sharp remarks. And there are thousands of authors worth reading: William Golding, Ernest Hemingway, Edgar Allan Poe, Jerome David Salinger, George Orwell – the list is endless! Just imagine, they all can't wait to meet you!

Thirdly, studying literature serves as one of the foremost sources of mastering the language. When improving one's skills, a person would not refuse to work with the perfect examples of

using a great variety of lexical or syntactical stylistic devices. It's terrific how masterfully the authors operate the language. Taken out of context, one single extract may turn out to be enough to grasp the main conflict of the novel or its characters' motives. Even the ending of the story can be foreshadowed if the reader is focused not only on the sequence of events but on such things as setting, its role in the extract, the protagonist's disposition, the way people are described, etc.

I strongly believe that studying some foreign language doesn't boil down to only constant drilling. You must experience it, cognize all its forms and appearances. And coming back to Mr. Keating's quote, with the help of literature you gain your own voice and a powerful weapon of changing the world.

Julia Nosova, 4th year, 2BA

Is Studying Literature Worthwhile?

Due to the conditionals of modern education that tends to increase gaining more practical skills studying literature is considered to possess little pragmatic value. However, I firmly believe that when given the right directions in this subject, students may evolve those critical abilities which form the basis of successful education.

Studying literature includes such activities as reading texts of various genres, critical thinking, discussing, and writing. An objective of university programs and courses specializing in the Arts consists in stimulating these skills so that students would be able to cultivate them and display. Close reading helps students to expand their vocabulary and master their verbal refinement that can be useful in different subjects. They are taught to think critically about what they read. Thus, students who are trained to comprehend imaginative literature writing can transfer their abilities to other genres, such as newspaper article, reports, and essays. They are given an opportunity to express their opinions, thoughts and deductions during classroom discussions. All those ideas that are expressed and heard in class need to be organized in writing. That's why teachers may ask their students to sum up, which results in improving writing skills. All things considered, it seems reasonable to assume that studying literature is a practice-oriented subject.

Furthermore, apart from utilitarian value, literature serves as a source of knowledge about humanity. Only unlike studying history and anthropology when a person learns about other peoples' cultures and beliefs 'ready-made', literature encourages you to discover them by yourselves, from inside. And so students raise their awareness of the world cultural heritage.

By virtue of literature we evolve our capacity to appreciate individuals the way they are. Each person presents a unique mixture of views, opinions and knowledge. We broaden our horizon, taking a chance to live through the experience of others; we enhance our ability to comprehend the complexity of human nature. Due to this we may get a better understanding in other branches of human knowledge, for instance, sociology and psychology.

All these things taken into consideration, it seems pertinent to emphasize that the most appreciated value of studying literature consists in stimulating the power of imagination, freeing the mind of personal bias. It encourages us to question widely accepted facts and set on the path of independent pursuit of the truth.

IS STUDYING LITERATURE WORTHWHILE?

Nowadays talks about reading make people feel awkward. There are few people who really derive pleasure from the process of reading while the majority of others has hardly ever taken a book in their hands.

Of course, there are many factors which have led to this outcome, starting from engrossing addiction to modern gadgets up to simple, prosaic laziness. In addition, it is obvious that people tend to be driven by something. Magazines, news, Internet have control over people's thoughts or decisions; they designate the particular ways of people's behavior in various situations in order not to lose the connection with the world in progress. The examples of these impacts can be numerous quotes that people use. Some of them are taken from quite abstruse books but the meanings of quotations are often misunderstood. Occasionally I see young people sitting with a book in the subway and suddenly I am seized with the idea whether they read it because they are fond of it or it is a new trend.

Of course, the main reason is disappearing of reading culture. Since childhood, all sorts of technical innovations surround children. Parental guidance no longer includes inculcation of reading to a child in terms of leisure and entertainment. As a consequence, children start to perceive reading as something forced, compulsory, something that causes only negative emotions. They get used to delegating all their duties on different types of technology so that there is no sense in making efforts to develop as a personality.

Surely if people are not accustomed to proper reading, this skill needs to be trained. Educational programs provide vast information about text analysis. This teaches to perceive environs correctly and expand horizons of one's worldview, provide information about some historical events or some significant features of a specific nation. However, the main contribution of learning to read properly is an opportunity to delve deep into the depths of one's inner world. In my opinion, the book's aim is to teach people how to speak with themselves. While reading people ponder about their life, compare some facts and make inferences. Without having any skills of self-knowledge and self-awareness, it is hard to understand what motivates people, why they act exactly this way and what these actions may provoke. Reading books is a kind of educational work but it is not about imposing someone's opinion on you. Instead there is a text which might have different interpretations which speaks differently to each person with his individual mindset. Therefore it is pointless to question the importance of reading as it aims at the pursuit of personal development.

IS STUDYING LITERATURE WORTHWHILE?

To make these students closer to the enormous and fascinating world of literature or not? To let your teacher widen your mind and make you see life in another way or not? These are the questions.

Today you often hear teachers complaining about their students who reject to open their minds to the literal masterpieces that are offered for their education at school-college-university-courses and ‘in any place you have a disaster to get stuck in’. Thoroughly selected pieces of the works of the most prominent writers and poets of the students’ native country and those of the foreign ones are blatantly disregarded by the young generation nowadays without much hope for a quick change. The teachers not only waste their time when they try to inculcate the understanding of the literature in a student’s blind mind, but also disturb their nervous system as they see their endeavours are in vain. More and more guides in the unknown and half-real world turn out to be of no interest and use for those who know it is not a book that counts today.

With the 21-century-world developing rapidly, we get more and more chances to entertain ourselves in our life and to make this life better and more comfortable. The brand new gadgets are now put on the pedestal and cosseted-and-cuddled by enthusiastic children from 3 to 63. And if there’s a great chance that these little vicious things are used by the elderly as a means of supporting their lives, little kids and young grown ups use it for fun. Modern technologies are quite jealous, they won’t let you leave them on the shelf, they will fascinate you with more and more options installed in them. And among this crazy pursuit for the latest gadget and the competition with your friend for a most expensive toy suddenly appear these uninformed and misled teachers with their dusty books with absolutely dull stories that have nothing to students’ life and real life as well.

Frankly speaking, easy to understand our young people. And here appears the question – in this deadlock situation with two parallel opinions is it of any use to talk about the importance of teaching literature at schools and universities? Wouldn’t it be better to let the young people have it their own way? Say, to organize an election and if the students bring a verdict of useless for literature – just exclude it from the academic program?

It would. Yes, the mass of students disapproving the studying of literature seems to grow, but we can never say for sure. Yes, there are many individual teenagers speaking out loud they hate literature and consider it rubbish. And this is their subjective point of view. Let them have it. But we can also often see young people having a book in their hand as they sit in a bus, or in a café, in subway and on beaches. Why don’t we think the number of those who do read is bigger? The only reason why we don’t know about their existence everywhere is that they are quiet? They don’t bellow out their love for literature so that the whole world hears them (as our literature-haters eagerly do). And they are quiet because they always think. And it is reading that makes them want to think. Isn’t it a serious enough reason to continue teaching literature?

It really is. Some teachers are disappointed, and they even leave their job and change profession. Some of them are scared because of the ignorance of their students and their angry reluctance to have anything to do with all this stuff. But under the pressure of the ignorance avalanche, they just forget the crucially important role literature has always had and has today for mental and aesthetic development of any civilized person.

Mostly, in the academic program you can find only the literary works that are crucially important for the self-identification, for recognizing yourself as a member of a particular society with its values and those that can definitely teach you something good, decent and noble. Reading such works, students can’t but unconsciously get closer to the understanding of what is good and what is bad. After the unconscious stage comes self-education, when the student decides what are their preferences in genres and behaviors, they learn to estimate

things and understand themselves by comparison and analysis. And then comes the teacher and helps to deeper enter the book and see all the tiny tints of the sense the author meant while writing their book.

All the subjects develop your mind, but only partially, and none of them deals with the development of the most important ability – the ability to think and to think reasonably. All the people can think, but it is reasonable thinking that is important for the building of a society where people abstain from doing harm to others, where they control their desires and foresee the outcome of their actions, where you first think, then act.

So, literature has always been and must always remain one of the vitally important subjects taught. By not making people think and contemplate, by not controlling the way of their estimating life and treating themselves and the others, we pull the trigger and break the net restraining the inhumanity and wilderness sitting in each of us and let them dictate our life.

The only problem is connected with the content of this subject. If we let the new books with disgusting and corrupting material remain on the shelves of the bookstores, and really let them appear in the academic programs, then it can make one thing whether it would be better to prohibit reading books at schools at all. But you always hope the government controls the situation.

So, it's clear that the answer to the question whether to teach literature or not is definitely 'definitely, yes'. But how deep should be reading? How deep should the teacher immerse their students into a book? This is quite a tricky question.

On the one hand, reading can never be superficial. If you read a book only because you have to, don't even bother yourself with it. But, normally, reading presupposes correct understanding of the author's intent, not your personal and frivolous interpretation of a work. And discussing a book with a knowing teacher can be very helpful in this case.

But, on the other hand, isn't there some slight danger to dig up the sense the author never had in mind? Who knows for sure what was the author's intention but for themselves?

Literature and reading, therefore, turn out to be complicated things, and talking about it in a strict and only one particular way seems impossible.

Personally, as the one who had to study literature and learn how to analyze it during the whole life, I do have my subjective point of view of this thing. I think, literature is something very personal. And the most important thing that counts here and seems to be most reliable is what you feel. This is always your own heart that tells you whether the book is good or bad, whether it can teach you something useful or not, whether the world in it and its characters are close to you. From my personal experience, I can say you most clearly feel and understand the book just by your heart. If the book talks to you, you need no discussions and analyses to understand it. And, without any doubts, personal feeling and experience of interacting with a book always seems more credible and always has much more influence on your opinion about the book than the interpretations that are offered to you.

Is Reading Literature Worthwhile?

Literature is an important part of our lives. It is not just a source of knowledge, but it is a great opportunity to study human psychology.

First of all, reading literature can really broaden your mind. It is always much more interesting to talk to a person who reads, for they have a huge background and can tell you something new. It does not mean that you have to agree with everything that your intelligent friend says. On the contrary, you should share your ideas with confidence, because we are not alike and this is what makes us humans. Everyone has the right to have a point of view, and you should not be shy to share it with others. Sometimes contradiction can bring something new to the surface that you both fail to notice. But do not be too self-assured. It should be just a conversation, not a quarrel. Otherwise, you both will not understand each other and miss some important clues of the book. Moreover, you may lose a good friend, because nobody likes arguers.

Secondly, pay attention to your state of mind. If you feel like reading a detective story – read it, a novel? – read it. Do not make yourself read something just because it is a “must-read”.

Personally I had a bitter experience with the book “*One Hundred Year of Solitude*”, which had been highly recommended by a friend. I did not enjoy it from the very beginning, but I made myself finish it. Still, it did not change anything, I did not like it at all and I had an unpleasant feeling after that. Literature must give us aesthetic pleasure or teach us something, so if you feel that some book can not give you anything, you have the right to give it up, it is not a crime. Of course, there might be some exception to the rule. I believe that there are some extremely important books, which must be read for you to understand life. For example, “*War and Peace*” is one of them. I read a lot of extracts from it at school, because it was too hard to read the whole book. However, there were always some excuses like homework, tests, exams and so on. But I have promised myself that I would read it some day. “*War and Peace*” is a real must-read, everyone in the world knows it, many writers allude to it, and you can not consider yourself to be an intelligent person, if you have not read it.

Finally, literature can teach you to be a human being. And it is my favourite point. While reading, you sympathize with the main characters, imagine what you would do, and try to understand them. If you had a lot of good read, you will be able to analyze people in your real life, because all the characters were born from authors’ own experience, so it is not just pure invention. There are a lot of problems nowadays, people can not understand each other. We can

not speak in a normal way, we can not solve our problems, we are fighting all the time. And I am not talking about daily routine things, it is a worldwide problem, which can lead us to wars. Literature teaches us to stand in someone else's shoes, to feel sorry for others, and to be humane. It may look too perfect and I do not really like to sound banal, but it is a plain truth. And this is exactly what I love about literature.

To sum up, the answer is yes. Of course, literature must be studied. Without it we can wake up in a “1984” reality and lose our emotions, our love, our sympathy – just everything we have. I can see that many of us do not understand the sense of reading, and it really makes me scary. Our ancestors have cultivated simple kindness for so many years that we have no right to return to Neanderthal man.

IS STUDYING LITERATURE WORTHWHILE?

Is studying literature worthwhile? This is one of the frequently asked questions that may cause some controversy. Although Literature is commonly considered to be a minor subject to study, to my mind, the answer is yes, people should study literature by all means, for a number of reasons.

Exploring the depths of the plot and interpreting the narration is a bit of a challenge, which not only gives us food for thought, but also unlocks the opportunity to be inside looking out, so that we get a deeper understanding of the reality we live in. Among all the humanities, literature stands out for its ability to teach people some important life lessons. It offers unique ways of comprehending the reality, representing ideas, emotional insights and more. Literature serves as a means of gaining experience first-hand, because it gives access to the range of emotions and events, which are unlikely to be explored directly. For instance, when analyzing the plot, the readers may acquire experience and learn better ways to behave, without making crucial mistakes in real life. In a broad sense, the close study of literature is a thought-provoking process, which allows people to get a multidimensional perspective on life.

Furthermore, it is undeniable that literature introduces us to the events and people, helping to get a glimpse of different beliefs. It transports us to another reality, gives an insight into culture, historical background or mentality. That's why a profound consideration of the narration broadens the horizon and awakens the knowledge, that we would not be able to grasp to such a big extent.

From a practical viewpoint, the study of literature is beneficial in terms of developing some language and communication skills. When interpreting, people are likely to perceive and memorize words and expressions unconsciously, that in its turn, enables the readers to enrich the vocabulary and master the language, especially a foreign one. Moreover, the analysis of the stylistic devices used in the text provides a better understanding of the power of words. The more we read thoroughly, the more evident it becomes what effect a certain stylistic device has on the reader.

In general, I tend to think that studying literature is an adventure worth trying, during which we open our hearts and minds, create new ideas and become wise, no matter how challenging it might be.

IS STUDYING LITERATURE WORTHWHILE?

The study of literature involves reading stories, poems, plays, novels and essays, thinking about them, discussing them and writing about them. Nowadays literary study has little or no utilitarian value. But I believe that the study of literature is a practical discipline. It cultivates important skills that make it an indispensable part of university education.

Studying literature offers students the opportunity to think, discover, evaluate and analyze the world around them in broader, more universal terms. Literature naturally lends itself to involving those higher level thinking skills that teachers so desperately want for their students. In the classroom, the teacher can lead the student to think critically about what has been read. If students are taught to analyze literature carefully, using all the tools available for analysis, then students learn to think logically. Classroom discussions improve reading and thinking skills, they increase the student's ability to express thoughts orally. Then the teacher can use these processes to stimulate in students the desire to organize and record their thoughts in writing. Thus the study of literature can be seen as practical intellectual discipline. It directly involves the student in the analysis of difficult literary texts and develops verbal skills. In other words, a person trained in the study of literature will be well equipped.

Furthermore, reading literature increases knowledge in an active way. A thorough grounding in literature automatically provides knowledge of our literary heritage and at the same time increases our awareness of history, cultural values, psychology, sociology and other branches of human knowledge.

But none of these advantages is the real reason most people choose to study literature. Literary study expands our capacity to sympathize with other human beings, enhances our ability to see and imagine human complexity. It broadens our intellectual horizons and enlarges our power to experience life vicariously. It develops our skills for discerning aesthetic principles and improves our ability to take pleasure in the written word. We live in an age that dangerously underestimates the power and importance of imagination. Studying literature has power to broaden our sympathies and stimulate our imagination. It seems to me that the practical arguments for studying literature are really great.

Dasha Chernova, 4th Year, 2BA

Is Studying Literature Worthwhile?

In my opinion, studying literature is definitely worthwhile. First of all, studying literature helps us to be more attentive. It shows us the hidden clues, which the author has left to pay heed to. We can become detectives, while trying to find all the stylistic devices and figuring out their meaning. This process is gripping and captivating. Time spins away when you study another literary masterpiece.

Secondly, studying literature broadens our mind, educates us. Some knowledge the books contain is of great importance in real life. Studying literature is the main assistant of revealing this knowledge and the true meaning of the books. Without discussion I would have never understood that John T. Unger from F.S. Fitzgerald's story "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" is so practical and cynical or what impact the war had on the main character in J. D. Salinger's story "For Esme - with Love and Squalor". Studying shows us the real intentions of the character's deeds, demonstrates genuine feelings and emotions, helps to understand the character and explain his/her behavior.

Thirdly, studying literature is a great helper in learning languages. It can be a vivid example of how language is used in real life. It illustrates every style and form of language from informal to formal and from slang to high-flown words. The stories we read are the source of enriching our active and passive vocabulary. Studying helps us to "feel" language, comprehend and use everything it can tell us (and now we know it can tell us a lot).

Fourthly, studying literature is an illustration of how we should or should not behave in various situations. When we discuss the characters, we form our opinion about them, learn from their mistakes or try to keep in mind their way from rags to riches. This experience is extremely valuable. Sometimes literature can even help us to make vital choices. Without discussing literary masterpieces, we become more liable to mistakes as it is very easy to misinterpret the information the author has given us.

To sum up, literature is one of the richest and the most informative constituents of any language. Without studying it we will never be able to understand language, "feel" it, use it properly. Studying literature helps us and gives us experience in various spheres of life, which makes it one of the crucial subjects at the university.