Novels: Everyone Should Read Them

The culture of reading novels is in great decline. In the modern digital world, majority of what we read is in the form of pdfs and audio books. Be it a student who already has many course books to read or an employee who is occupied by an extremely hectic schedule, I think everyone should read novels. And they should read them before going to bed.

To begin with, reading a novel is fun. You dwell in the mental picture of the protagonist, characters, and events for a while. This not only is a meditation which refreshes your mind, but you will also be enhancing your vocabulary, grammar, and writing simultaneously. Unlike reading course books, where we obviously procure information and facts directly, reading novels cultivates a long-lasting knowledge, providing refreshments at the same time.

Reading is a great cure for wanderlust too. Even if we have all the riches and time in the world, we cannot reach every place. But books can take you to your dream destination. They can walk you through the alleys of Tokyo; they can show you the wildlife of Africa; they can even make you fight a battle that was fought some centuries ago. Books will introduce you to the most powerful and intelligent humans that were born on Earth at different times and help you see things from a perspective that you never thought of. Novels can change your life completely. They can be fatherly advice or a mentor for you at times.

Research has also proven how beneficial novels can be to us. Researchers at Emory University focused on neural effects of reading novels on 21 students. They were given sections of novels to read every evening, and their functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) was done the following morning. The results showed heightened connectivity in an area of the brain associated with receptivity for language and the primary sensory motor region of the brain.

Psychologists David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano, at the New School of Social Research, New York, have concluded from their research that fictional literature enhances social empathy and compassion in people, making them understand other people’s emotions and develop good social relationships.

Someone might argue that movies can make us feel the same way. Have you ever watched a movie that was based on a novel that you read beforehand? Well, I have, and I quit watching the movie before the interval. Movies restrict your imagination and make you see the world through the director’s eyes instead of your own. This is not the case in novels. Though you are reading words scribbled by a second person, you will have full control over your mental picture.

So, what is the best time to read a novel? I think it should the last activity of the day, right before bed. It probably will not be wrong to claim that people these days have problems falling asleep at the desired time. This is because we glue ourselves to either a laptop or a mobile screen. The reason is, these electronic devices emit a blue light which causes insomnia. The light suppresses the melatonin in our bodies, which is a hormone that regulates sleep and wakefulness. Hence, reading a novel is an ideal last activity before bed to help you get a pleasant night’s sleep.

For me, novels are a mental gym, and reading them is a psychological workout. In addition to the numerous advantages mentioned above, it provides you with a mirror to reflect on all the different angles in a life. Reading literary works is like a drug, and it is better to get addicted to books rather than chemicals, isn’t it? So, how about reading a book for at least 20 minutes before you go to bed tonight?