

How Reading Transforms Us

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The New York Times:

MOST writing seeks to influence you to think or feel how the author wants you to think or feel. The article you are reading now is no exception. We want you to think about certain things in a certain way.

But there's another kind of influence, not typically associated with writing, that works in a different fashion. Here, you don't try to make people think or feel in any particular way. Instead, you try to get them to be themselves.

As parents, for example, we urge our children to discover what will engage them, in a career perhaps, or in a relationship. And although we may wish that a spouse would be a bit more like this or that, we also know that the best kind of love enables someone to become his or her own true self.

Could a writer have an indirect influence of this kind, getting readers to think about themselves anew? We believe so. Indeed, in several studies over the past few years, we have found evidence that such influence is characteristic of literary art.

Read the whole story: [*The New York Times*](#)