

VOL 2 | DECEMBER 2024

TELL **the** IMPACT

Magazine

LOCAL
SYMBOLS

2024
STAR
READERS

FUN
FACTS

Our
Impact

May 2023 to
December
2024

Why Do
People
Read?

How to Get
the Most Out
of Every Book
& Knowledge
Application

HEARD OF

Bibliotherapy?

scan me



+plus

BOOK
REVIEWS

ABOUT
readto
impact

About
TELL the
IMPACT
Magazine

Read to Impact (RTI) is an expansive community of booklovers who enjoy reading in its different forms, whether it's for leisure or for personal development. As a community, we provide a platform for readers across Africa to connect, share, and grow together. At Read to Impact, we focus on several key initiatives to promote reading and literacy:

VISION: To become Africa's largest community and network of avid readers.

MISSION: To inspire and drive Africans to empower their minds, enrich their lives, and improve their societies through reading..

Approach to promoting reading and literacy:

- Advocating reading and knowledge acquisition through various initiatives on digital and physical platforms.
- Providing an enabling reading community to accommodate readers at different reading levels.
- Promoting African books to connect our audiences with rich local content and promoting non-African books that will tremendously benefit our community.

Tell the Impact Magazine (TIM) is RTI's publication that heralds the testimonies of growth, impact, and progress primarily from members of the RTI community and network. The testimonies are those resulting from reading. We hope that by spreading these testimonies, young people everywhere, especially in Africa, would be inspired to embrace a culture of reading so they can also count their many blessings from reading. The magazine is published once a year.

If you would like to feature in the 2025 edition or if you have any suggestions for us, please email us at

info@readtoimpact.org

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Editor's Note

DEAR READER,

I am pleased to present you the second volume of Tell the Impact Magazine (TIM), our treasured publication at RTI. When we started this initiative in 2022, we did not anticipate that it would become this symbolic and instrumental in telling our story. But here we are today, showcasing many of the amazing things we have experienced in the RTI community between publishing the first edition and the end of 2024. Thank you for being with us on this journey.

Over the years, we have witnessed firsthand how reading can transform lives. We have seen people build new habits, improve their thinking, and enhance their skills through great books. We have also heard over and over again how people have enriched their leisure through highly satisfying books. However, this edition of TIM seeks to highlight reading for general well-being. It is why we have adopted the theme "bibliotherapy." You will not find any articles specifically on this subject throughout the magazine. Rather, you will find a demonstration of what literature can do in various aspects of our lives. I invite you to think about the word "bibliotherapy" beyond healing or recovery from damage or hurt; let us think about it, in the context of this magazine, along the flexible lines of general well-being. Yes, this perspective does not preclude healing (or the purest technical connotation of the term).

What has reading got to do with general well-being? I will attempt to give a simple example. Socialization contributes to the overall mental health of an individual, a subset of general well-being. Humans are designed to be social beings, so no matter how introverted you are, you will have some need to socialize at some point and to some extent. An endeavor that affords you rich, relaxing, and empowering socialization must necessarily be valuable to you. We can easily say that such endeavor adds to

your general well-being, whether it is from poor to good, good to great, or great to extraordinary.

In the RTI community, literature is our uniting force; we thrive and connect on the new meaning that reading has among us. By enjoying this community effect, many of us are indirectly exploiting the benefits of literature to meet our intrinsic social needs. What we see in this (maybe not) simple example is how reading brings people together and creates rewarding socialization, which improves people's lives in diverse ways, as you would see throughout this magazine.

When you eventually embrace reading like the RTI community does, it will be up to you to decide or explore the kind of well-being you want. This magazine aims to show you examples of how that can happen. We hope you are entertained, enlightened, and inspired. Please feel free to share the magazine with whoever comes to mind. (Note that the magazine is NOT for sale, so beware of any merchandize plot to sink your book budget.)

We would like to hear from you. Please send us your feedback via info@readtoimpact.org. If you would like to support our work in any way or distribute some copies to some young people in your locality or anywhere in the world, you could also kindly write to us.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in reading,

Israel Peters

EDITOR
Tell the Impact Magazine



TIM TEAM

ISRAEL PETERS

(Editor, Publisher)

Israel Peters is the Founder and CEO of Gemsread, a publishing enterprise on the journey of becoming Africa's finest and largest publisher. He is also the Publisher at Gemsread Publishing, the core publishing brand. While pursuing an MA in Publishing as a Global Excellence Scholar at the University of Exeter, Israel underwent a short marketing work placement at the award-winning Edinburgh University Press. During that time, he also volunteered as a member of the Editorial and Innovation Board of The Lit Platform, an award-winning creative agency based in the southwest of England. Israel has worked as an English Editor at MDPI (UK), a leading global academic publisher, as well as other multinational editorial organizations. He is interested in food aesthetics, fine humor, reading, and gaming.

OMOTOLANI ADEBOWALE

(Marketing Director)

Omotolani is a dynamic change maker with a bachelor's and master's degree in civil engineering. She is deeply committed to Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 (education and gender equality). As the host and coordinator of the annual Dream Africa Conference, Omotolani empowers young African women with the tools and knowledge to secure their futures and embrace a life of purpose. She is the Chief Operating Officer at Read to Impact, where she is building a thriving community of bibliophiles who are passionate about personal growth, career success, and mental wellbeing through the power of books. Omotolani is an alumna of the Mini-MBA program of Tekedia Institute and has participated in International Model United Nations Conferences, which have aided her in refining her diplomacy skills and expanded her global perspectives. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, travelling, and eating good food.

JOY OKON

(Editorial Assistant)

Joy Okon is a writer and editor with a bachelor's degree in physiology from the University of Lagos. She is a Publishing and Editorial Assistant at Gemsread Publishing, where she assesses and copyedits submissions while offering administrative and project execution support to the publishing team. Joy is passionate about education, and she volunteers as a science teacher, nurturing young minds in biology. She embodies adaptability and resilience. Outside work, she enjoys traveling, fiction, solving puzzles, and watching sports.

RTI TEAM

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(REGIONAL COORDINATOR, SOUTH EAST NIGERIA)



OUR

Impact

May 2023 to Dec 2024



It's been a year now since I joined this community, and this space has really helped me elevate my reading greatly. I celebrate the love for reading, healing and sense of belonging I have found here...

QUICK GLANCE

- Held 7 successful reading challenges, reaching over 1200 young Africans in our closed community to foster a habit of reading consistently.
- Impacted over 100 young African women through Dream Africa Conferences, birthing a new vibrant sub-community of about 400 enthusiastic young women.

- Created rewarding experiences for about 300 attendees at Readers' Meetup 1.0 (2023) and 2.0 (2024) hosted in 10 cities across 6 African countries: Ghana, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. We collaborated with notable organizations such as Open Window University Zambia, Hazel Online Bookstore, Lagos State Parks and Gardens Agency, and Jarden

Reading Garden.

- Started the first RTI Reading Club at Lady Diana Educational Center, Lusaka, Zambia. (RTI Reading Clubs are designed for secondary school students.)

TESTIMONIALS

Dream Africa 2023

- The program was very insightful. I really gained

clarity in the area of personal branding. Thanks to the organizers. May God reward you for empowering women with so much knowledge.

- BLESSING (NIGERIA)

- Thank you very much Dream Africa. I really learnt a lot and this is exactly what I needed.
- MICHELLE (BOTSWANA)
- Thank you so much, Dream Africa. I really appreciate you for imparting the necessary knowledge to me. I will surely offload it to my fellow peers out there.
- GIFT (ZAMBIA)
- I did not regret signing up for this program. To the first speaker, thank you so much for sharing your story. You have pushed me toward doing better as in being confident in what I do. No more hiding as I will be showcasing myself more. In fact, the first 3 speakers did great. I was just listening and saying to myself, "they are literally telling you to be focused, determined and be intentional, because these are the main things that they did for themselves to be successful and make such impacts." This is really what your theme is: unleashing power. Kudos to all the speakers.

- MAMAYE (SIERRA LEONE)

Dream Africa 2024

- I want to sincerely thank the host, speakers and all who made Dream

Africa a success. May the Lord continually bless and enrich you all. I am yet to recover from the insightful sessions. I got a lot from the personal branding teachings on how to build on this online space and where she said we should use it to change the world. Then, how to start a career in tech and the career talk. What stood out for me were the stories each of the speakers shared about their journey. They made the teaching more interesting and motivating... God bless Dream Africa.

- STEPHANIE AKOLISA (NIGERIA)

- This conference was exciting and I love that all the speakers spoke with so much joy. They made it comfortable for their listeners to enjoy the meeting and learn. I learnt a lot, actually, and apart from being motivated, this gave me an insight on what to do about choosing a career path. This is also the first time I will be hearing someone talk about personal branding, and it was explained perfectly. I really hope for a better version of myself. And I really love what Grace Olayinka said about women, "Not playing the victim", "Bring other women into the industry". I look forward to being that woman of impact. Thank you, Dream Africa.

- JOY DIBANI (NIGERIA)

- I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire team for organizing such an incredible Dream Africa Conference. The event was not only informative but truly inspiring. The diverse range of speakers, engaging discussions, and the opportunity to connect with passionate individuals from across Africa made it a remarkable experience. Thank you for all the hard work and dedication that went into making this event a success. I look forward to applying the insights gained and staying connected with the amazing community you've brought together.

- DORICA SINGINI (MALAWI)

- Thank you so much for the insightful presentations from all speakers. They have boosted me up, and I am now ready to start a career in tech. I have always wanted to, but I just felt like I could not manage. But today I am challenged and motivated. Also on my way to build my personal brand on social media platforms.
- This was so wonderful. I really thank you for this wonderful opportunity to learn and increase my knowledge. I was actually having doubts about my career path, but now, I'm sure I can do this. I feel so encouraged. Like these people are so young and yet successful, which is very inspiring.

- FLYNESS TEMBO (MALAWI)

I learnt a lot, and now I am confident that we can do so much in other fields also. Thank you so, so much.

- GRACE CHISALA
(ZIMBABWE)

- What a weekend well spent meeting professional women from different industries! Especially meeting Grace from the tech industry was a life-changing experience.

- AIMEE MISABWE
(RWANDA)

Readers' Meetup 1.0 (2023)



1. Accra
2. Jos
3. Nsukka
4. Akure

Readers' Meetup 2.0



1. Nsukka
2. Lusaka
3. Lagos
4. Juba
5. Jos
6. Harare
7. Birnin kudu
8. Dar Es Salaam

- It was worth it. I'm glad I came, and I met great people.

- SALVIN SALYER (LAGOS, NIGERIA)

- It was a beautiful meeting of like-minded people. We shared interesting ideas. The Readers' Meetup definitely helped me identify a few things I would like to work on in my creative journey. We definitely need more of such. A whole lot more.

- LOVEWELL MWINGA (LUSAKA, ZAMBIA)

- Personally, reading has been a great source of inspiration and self-development. I've been able to develop new ideas and broaden my horizons. In fact, I've managed to read around 30 books in the past year! I would highly recommend these meet-ups to anyone looking to expand their knowledge and connect with fellow book lovers.

- MUKHTAR GARBA (BIRNIN KUDU, NIGERIA)

- My heart swells with delight at having attended the program. The sociability, wisdom, and shared aspirations have left an indelible mark. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the organizers and esteemed panelists; their dedication and insights have made the gathering truly remarkable. May the thread of connection weave a last bonding, nurturing inspiration and collaboration among us all.

- MALOU MEL BAAK (JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN)

- I truly appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Readers' Meetup.

As the coordinator of the Youths Coalition Against Drug Abuse, I see the potential of these events to positively impact our community. By encouraging reading and a love of learning, we can empower young people and help steer them away from negative influences like drug abuse.

- ACTIVIST ABUBAKAR (BIRNIN KUDU, NIGERIA)

- Readers Meet-up 2.0 Juba was massive. The evening was filled with rejuvenation, inspiration, and infinite wisdom. I appreciate the readers community for turning up. Indeed, we connected and were energized, building a lasting and meaningful connection. It was great meeting new readers and exchanging books with them.

- CHUOL TAP (JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN)

- Our city coordinator did a terrific job! The atmosphere was befitting of a true book meet-up. The birds chirping away in the trees above, the cool breeze and drinks to wet our throats for better speaking. I've got to say, though, that readers have a knack for talking a lot. My goodness! People hardly ran out of things to say and you had to impatiently count the seconds while waiting for someone to give up the

"airtime."

- KAYCEE (JOS, NIGERIA)

Community and Reading Challenges

- I'm not just excited about completing a book even though I had to push myself and stay focused to complete it, but it's more like the book coming alive. That's just fascinating. I'm really glad to be in this community, and I do appreciate everyone here.

- MARGARET (LIBERIA)

- The iRead Challenge was a very eye-opening and inspiring one. I love how I was able to learn from fellow readers, and I've come to cherish the community of book lovers that I'm now a part of. I'd say it was a personal success. Even though at times I found it difficult to follow through with reading, I was still able to improve my reading habits and was even inspired to read at least a book each week for the next two years. I'm very happy that I participated and joined this community. A million thanks to the Read to Impact Team.

- ONARIETTA (NIGERIA)

- The reading challenge has been so helpful; I've gotten to read books that have helped in my growth and improvement in my grammar. It has been all fun.

- FLORENCE (UGANDA)

- Read to Impact is my home. I remember

joining as a ‘wannabe’ reader, and now I’m a ‘pro max’ reader. Thank you very much, Read to Impact. I will forever remain grateful to you and the beautiful international family you’ve given me. Y’all are my source of motivation.

- GRACE M. (ZAMBIA)

- The challenge has unfolded precisely as I had anticipated, with remarkable success. I am thoroughly enjoying every aspect of it, and even the books I selected, which deviate from my usual preference, have proven to be unexpectedly enjoyable and informative. Despite the demanding nature of my schedule, I have managed to uphold my reading rhythm by diligently completing the prescribed number of pages each day.

- KAY (NIGERIA)

- It’s been a year now since I joined this community, and this space has really helped me elevate my reading greatly. I celebrate the love for reading, healing and sense of belonging I have found here. Cheers to reading on.

- JULIETH (TANZANIA)

- I’m learning a lot from other participants in the group: from the book talk and snippets that are shared in the group.

- PRETTY ABEL (BOTSWANA)

- The reading challenge has been so helpful. I’ve gotten to read books

that have helped in my growth and improvement in my grammar. It has been all fun.

- FLORENCE (UGANDA)

- I came across RTI while scrolling on my Instagram page on a Sunday afternoon. It was a post about a reading challenge, and I registered for the challenge because I had been searching for an online reading community that could help me grow. RTI has been nothing short of a family because they’ve helped me grow beyond my expectations in these past few years. I have not only experienced this tremendous growth in my academics but with the help of the community, I have learned to cultivate a healthy reading habit. RTI has made me understand that the solutions to some of the problems we encounter daily are hidden in pages of books, and the only way to uncover those hidden secrets is by reading wide and voraciously. In simple words, I will say that I am a proud product of RTI, African’s largest reading community.

- PATRICIA O. (ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA)

- Getting selected as the best reader from my country (Kenya) in 2022 by the RTI literary community was one of my biggest steps in my reading journey. The achievement literally

boosted my readership. Also, it was like a gate pass as it opened more doors in my literary world. Basically, I incorporated with RTI as I saw it’s the best platform where I’d interact with books on a daily basis to stay relevant. Taking part in the “5-Week Reading Challenge” immensely helped me, whereby I’d find myself completing a heap of books within a short time. Being a writer, I must opine that RTI has been my backbone in composing my literary stories. This is because I get to interact with best-selling books, recommendations, and reviews. For any person who wants to grow beyond his intellectual limits and general wellbeing, I recommend him/her to join this reading community. It’s the best among the best.

- W. MESHACK (MIGORI, KENYA)

- For me it was a great experience. Reading and reviewing was a perfect combo. It’s one thing to read and another to be able to contract meaningful or inspiring information out of it. Reviewing tests both your understanding level and your ability to think. To reflect on your reading and summarize, sometimes you connect it to reality and sometimes you just entertain yourself. The book talk session had a great impact. It was my first time on such an occasion. I was very

anxious the first day, but on subsequent days, I was getting used to it. I have “Read to Impact” to thank for this.

- NAFISAH BUKARI (GHANA)

- For me, this challenge came at a time when a lot of things were happening in my life. Always grateful for the Read to Impact community as it drives me to keep reading every day, sharing insights and learning from other readers. I hope for better participation in the next challenge.

- BLESSINGS SIBANDE
(MALAWI)

- Read to Impact is a great reading community that anyone who loves to read or wants to keep up with his or her reading habit needs to be a part of. I joined Read to Impact to keep up with my reading habit and met with great readers. At the point I joined the community, I was still developing my reading habit. I started with one of the reading challenges. It was all fun and I made up my mind not to leave or stop reading for any reason. Read to impact has added value to my reading journey in a whole lot of ways. I was able to read all the left-over books I had, and I made sure I participated in the reading challenges because, yes, there are a lot of prizes to be won and special recognitions, but apart from that, the community is welcoming and you get to connect

with other readers from about 40 other countries. How amazing! I recommend the community to everyone I coach on starting back his or her reading habit because it was of great help to my reading habit of today. And I believe as we keep going more, people will keep joining, being a part of such a great reading community.

- CHALYA P. G. (BENIN CITY, NIGERIA)

RTI READING CLUB

- We officially launched the first chapter of the RTI Reading Club on the 30th of October at Lady Diana Education Centre, Lusaka, Zambia. A total of 28 enthusiastic students opted in. Also, Book Bank Bookstore in Zambia generously donated some books to support our mission. The club now has a collection of 13 books, including classics like *The Richest Man in Babylon* by George Clason and *Think and Grow Rich* by

Napoleon Hill. This club chapter is coordinated by Perseverance Jamila Nayame, the RTI Country Coordinator for Zambia.



2024

STAR READERS



**BUKARI
SAMARI
NAFISAH**

G H A N A

Bukari Samari Nafisah is a dedicated reader from Tamale, Ghana. She is a detail-driven and compassionate data analytics student at ALX, with a background in nursing and a passion for improving healthcare delivery. She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University For Development Studies, Tamale campus, Ghana.

As an avid reader, she strongly believes reading can solve half of life's challenges. Her love for reading began in primary 3, where it was both a fun activity and a tool to enhance her vocabulary and comprehension skills. As she grew older, reading became a vital part of her. And now, she enjoys works from diverse genres and authors, fostering her personal development, broadening her perspective, and fueling her curiosity.



**PROSPER
CHIDALU
IDUMA**

N I G E R I A

Prospers Chidalu Iduma is a book enthusiast, collector, and reviewer living in the crazy city of Lagos, Nigeria. Working as a social media assistant and adept in the use of artificial intelligence to facilitate easier and faster results in the workspace, he is a pro at Canva designs, video editing, and generating written contents and cartoon animations for brands.

As a lover of books, Chidalu dedicates his social media pages to talking about and reviewing books, as he's working on becoming a literary culture curator. You can find him on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. When he is not working, he is on his bed reading a book, taking pictures of himself and his current reads, and sharing his reading journey with fellow readers like himself.



**CHALYA
PEACE
GAMBO**

N I G E R I A

Chalya Peace Gambo is from Plateau State, Nigeria. She works with MDC, Vochmal LTD, and the Electoral College Nigeria, and she volunteers with Soaring Eagles Tribe and 24Karat Youths. Chalya founded Peaceful Resolutions Book Club, showcasing her love for reading and literature. She is an avid reader, reading coach, writer, public speaker, and politician.

Her achievements include Outstanding Reader awards from Read to Impact, Special Recognition Award from Electoral College Nigeria, Award of Excellence from Zya Consulting school, and a certified writing course. Chalya writes fiction and shares book reviews on Wix and Substack, making a positive impact in her community.



**TONY
MENDY**

G A M B I A

Born in 2001 in a tiny village called Mariama Kunda, Tony attended nursery school in Mariama Kunda, and primary and junior secondary school in a village called Youna. He went to senior secondary school at Masroor Senior Secondary School, Old Yundum, one among the five best senior secondary schools in The Gambia. He studied arts, which he believes propels his desire for reading and studying. Tony graduated in 2020 and got admitted into the University of The Gambia to study Law (LLB). He read law for a year and a half but deferred the program to join The Gambia Armed Forces as an officer cadet.





AMOS SHIDOBANI

NIGERIA

Amos Shidobani is a multifaceted individual with a passion for growth and learning. He is a writer, an author, a graphic designer, a serial volunteer, and a content creator dedicated to sharing his experiences and lessons learned on his journey of becoming. He is currently an undergraduate law student at the University of Jos, where he balances his academic pursuits with his love for reading, volunteering, and, most importantly, being a Christian.

Through READ-INSPIRE, a weekly letter to a reader called Ty, Amos is committed to sharing personal experiences from his journey of personal growth and development. He is learning, unlearning, and relearning, and his desire is to influence change in his world by first growing and improving himself; he believes that true change begins from within. That is why his personal motto is "I read to influence my world".



AKOLISA STEPHANIE

NIGERIA

Akolisa Stephanie Joy is a writer, an avid reader, and a graphics designer.



CHELSEY CHINWE

CAMEROON

Chelsey Chinwe is from Cameroon. She is a final year medical student who loves reading, journaling, music, board games, and football games. Her interests lie in writing, volunteering, and learning different languages.



BLESSINGS SIBANDE

MALAWI

Blessings grew up surrounded by books, thanks to her dad's vast collection. Reading became a daily habit, sparking her imagination and improving her vocabulary. Now, as a communications professional, she remains committed to reading and lifelong learning.

Books have played a huge role in Blessings' personal and professional growth, helping her sharpen her skills, empower and inspire others. She is committed to RTI's shared goal of promoting growth and empowerment through consistent reading and growth. Blessings truly believes in the power of reading to change lives, and through her involvement with RTI, she looks forward to continue sharing this passion with others on their own literary journeys.



KAYCEE OMEOGA

NIGERIA

Kaycee Omeoga is a teacher, school administrator, chef, voiceover artist, and myriad other things. But chief among all these things is his love and passion for reading, which he keenly and inexhaustibly shares with everyone. A quote he made up and likes to share is "Books are like unlit candles in a dark room, which symbolizes ignorance, and reading is like lighting those candles, which chases the darkness away."



INSIDE THE MIND OF AN *Avid Reader*



PROSPER CHIDALU IDUMA (NIGERIA)

Have you heard of bibliotherapy? Yes, I have. I think it's a term to describe how a person would find comfort in stories that relate to them. It's a description for people who find comfort in reading books, which provides 'healing,' making them empathetic and regaining faith in humanity.

Can a book really change how we see ourselves and our struggles? Yes! Recently, I finished reading *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara, and my perspective on people who have had really traumatic experiences changed. I used to think that no matter how bad the experience you've had is, you can bounce back from it. I observed it might not always be the case. Reading this fictionalized heartbreaking story, I realized that bad things happen to people—I mean really bad things—and restoration can be difficult for them.

I know it's fiction, but the voices in the book were real. One thing reading does is that when we read—consciously or unconsciously—we immerse ourselves in the character's reality and see how and why they do what they do. Only then are we able to 'see' ourselves, and understand their pain and struggle, because we've been there before.

What if reading could be more than just an escape or self-development—could it be a form of healing? Yes. Reading gives us the opportunity to learn, unlearn, and relearn. Most readers have their reasons why they read, but more than anything else, reading has the potential to transform a person's thinking, and that's change, and change is healing.

It all boils down to how books have the capacity to provide solace to troubled readers who are looking for answers. That's why it's said that literature is the mirror of life, serving as a

reflection of how imperfect humans can be and how despite that reality, it has the ability to reshape society.

Who is your favorite African author, and why?

I have many favourite African authors, but prominent among them is Chigozie Obioma. He is one of the African writers who I feel is not celebrated enough. Described by the New York Times as the “heir to Chinua Achebe”—which is quite sensational—he is author of three novels, all of which I’ve read.

I’m fascinated by his congenial mixture of the Igbo and Yorùbá languages in his work; the fusion of mysticism, magical realism, and spirituality; the intricate use of Igbo and Yorùbá proverbs; and, amazingly, the fixture of important historical figures in his stories. His writing is nothing short of remarkable. He is a magician of words, and a master storyteller.

What types of books have had the biggest impact on your personal growth and well-being?

My answer, forever and always, would be fiction. Last year, I read Abraham Verghese’s *The Covenant of Water*, and in one of the chapters, one of the characters said, and I quote verbatim: “Fiction is the great lie that tells the truth about how the world lives!” I marvel at these words till date.

There is a trend that fiction is for ‘unserious’ readers. But fiction is way more than that: it has taken me to nations that I’ve never stepped foot into and made me explore their history, cultures, and traditions. It has taken me back in time to uncover previous histories, systems, and civilizations. It has triggered my sense of imagination and curiosity, making me question why things are the way they are.

These are some of the many extraordinary benefits I’ve derived from reading fiction.

If you could meet your favorite author, what’s the one question you would ask?

One question I’d ask is this: “What’s the courage behind why you write?” A lot of writers have amazing ideas and mind-boggling stories to tell, but they lack the courage to write them. Taking the bull by the horn and writing such masterpieces, knowing fully well it’ll be loved and hated as well, make me adore and respect these writers more. It’s a bold initiative and also awe-inspiring: the courage to write.

Has reading helped you make friends with people you thought you’d never meet?

YES! I thought I was the only person who loved books until I joined the RTI community: such wholesome community of friends who never fail to share their thoughts, opinions, experiences, and stories. Also, being courageous enough to post book-related content on my social media platforms has helped me gain friends and supporters internationally, and that was only possible because of my deep love for reading. And it goes beyond books. It has helped me build a deeper connection, solid relationships, and trust with these people.

How do you think reading can change the world?

Every world leader or global thinker has an identifying mark: they are readers. And they all would implore that everyone should read. Reading gives you access to information you might not get elsewhere. It gives room for creativity to flow. It provides answers to questions about humanity, happiness, faith, and poverty. It has the ability to shape one’s thinking about how the world works.

When you read, you gain knowledge, and when you apply the knowledge you’ve learned, you become powerful, you become a force. And this is what differentiates you and gives you an edge over non-readers.

The world’s most influential book is the Christian Bible, and you’d be amazed at how it has been able to transform people. That’s how powerful reading a book is. Imagine everyone in the world becomes a reader; just think about how far we would go, and how much we would achieve. If you want to change your world, read a book.

What’s your most comfortable position when reading?

I love lying on my bed, with my head resting on a soft pillow. And don’t tell anyone, but I escape to my parents’ bedroom when they’re away to lie on their bed. I love the quiet in there as it sets me in the mood to read. It’s so cozy, warm, and comfortable.

Give us a sneak peek into your TBR list. What does it look like right now?

My TBR list, I’d say, is way higher than Mount Everest because I keep adding books that I know I’ll never have the time to read.

Currently, my physical TBR is more than 30 books, and my digital TBR, well, is more than twice my physical TBR. I'd give an estimate of 200+ unread ebooks.

What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out as a reader? One thing I tell people who want to kindle their love for reading is for them to know why they want to read in the first place, as that'll determine the kind of books they should read. Another is to take your time. Reading shouldn't be a competition, as there's no award for who reads the most. It's all about progress, right? A third is to read what you enjoy. If you enjoy fiction, go for it. If it's nonfiction, poetry, or even comics, go for it. Reading is reading. Lastly, don't stick to just physical books alone. Try other reading formats: ebooks and audiobooks. Experiment with these formats and you might love them, you never know.

How has technology influenced the way you read? Technology is a powerful tool in this age, and it has influenced my reading. The internet has made me define my reading genre, and my taste in books has greatly improved. It has introduced me to so many amazing authors I never knew existed. It's become a safe space for me, as I've learned to use it for better causes. Also, it has made me compare the enjoyment social media provides and the enjoyment that reading provides. Trust me, reading is 100 times better.

What do you think is the biggest challenge booklovers face? The biggest challenge booklovers face is inaccessibility to books, especially for the African readership. Now, the prices of books is astronomical. They now cost an arm and a leg, and most people can't afford them. And there are fewer libraries that are available where you can borrow books from. I've not seen a library aside from the one in my secondary school. And that's a huge problem.

Reading is a form of entertainment, and if these people can't afford this kind of entertainment, they look for other forms of enjoyment to fill up that void. Sadly, this is how social media slowly took the place of reading and social interaction.

Are there readers? Yes! Do they have access to books? Unfortunately, no. You will be amazed at the magnitude of readers we have across Africa. In Nigeria, there are readers, I mean

a considerable number of them. Nigerian BookTok is a living proof of that.

Should this stop anyone from reading? No. With the innovation of ebooks, reading has helped and saved lots of readers time and money, as it is the same content of the physical book and you get to carry your device anywhere you go.

If you had to recommend one book that changed your life, what would it be? I avoid this question a lot because there're so many books that have changed my life that it's so difficult to choose which one has had the most impact.

One recommendation: *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. This book details the plight of women and girls in Afghanistan, when it was controlled by the USSR (Russia) and then the Taliban. This is a fictional story, but the themes are alive and real.

In Afghanistan, women and girls can't access education any longer; no proper healthcare, they can't speak in public, they can't talk to men in public. The list is endless. It's a story that shows me how lucky I am, and how if women are being given the opportunity to function, they have the capacity to shape the society and shape the future. It's such a good book. Everyone should read.

CHALYA GAMBO (NIGERIA)

Have you heard of bibliotherapy? Yes, it is more like helping someone who has issues organizing his/her reading life to a better and more comfortable way of reading.

Can a book really change how we see ourselves and our struggles? Yes, books can change a person's perspective of life's growth, struggles, and journey.

What if reading could be more than just an escape or self-development—could it be a form of healing? Yes, it can and it's a great form of healing. It keeps the mind relaxed and at peace.

Who is your favorite African author, and why? Chimamanda Adichie. She relates so well to her readers.

What types of books have had the biggest impact on your personal growth and well-being? Self-help and crime fiction.

If you could meet your favorite author, what's the one question you would ask? John Grisham. "How is he able to come up with the crime fiction with great and unthinkable suspense at the end?"

Has reading helped you make friends with people you thought you'd never meet? Yes, I've made friends with people I thought would never have met; reading has opened me to a special world of possibilities in association.

How do you think reading can change the world? Reading creates the right mindset about how the world should be in peace, harmony, good development, and association. If everyone in the world reads, I think ignorance would be reduced and the world would be a better place. We will keep spreading the love for reading.

What's your most comfortable position when reading? Sitting with my legs crossed in a cool environment.

Give us a sneak peek into your TBR list. What does it look like right now? I have a list of John Grisham books to finish before the year ends. I must say it's been a journey, and hopefully, I will finish before the year ends.

What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out as a reader? Start reading books in your areas of great interest and don't stop reading. Most importantly, join a great reading community.

How has technology influenced the way you read? Technology has done so great. I can read my books online and connect with other readers all over the world.

What do you think is the biggest challenge book lovers face? Getting to meet with book authors and the suspense that goes with all books.

What's the most surprising thing you've learned about yourself through reading? I have hidden skills and the ability to network,

communicate, and travel around the world in one sitting.

If you had to recommend one book that changed your life, what would it be? Atomic Habits by James Clear

STEPHANIE AKOLISA (NIGERIA)

Have you heard of bibliotherapy? No. The only thing I have heard of is "bibliophile".

Can a book really change how we see ourselves and our struggles? Yes. A book brings a whole lot of changes to our perception. It poses as a light in one's life.

What if reading could be more than just an escape or self-development—could it be a form of healing? A book can be a form of healing, especially hard-copy books; it is the best form of healing.

Who is your favorite African author, and why? Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. I love her because of how descriptive she is in writing. Even though her books are fictional, they have a lot to say.

What types of books have had the biggest impact on your personal growth and well-being? Personal development books.

If you could meet your favorite author, what's the one question you would ask? I have not thought of it.

Has reading helped you make friends with people you thought you'd never meet? Yes. It has, most especially on social media.

How do you think reading can change the world? Reading can only change the world when it is made a culture for adults. It is better to begin from when one is a little child because when it becomes a habit, one grows with it and will not stop.

What's your most comfortable position when reading? Lying down with my back and sitting up straight.

Give us a sneak peek into your TBR list. What does it look like right now? My TBR list is filed

with personal development books, I still have 8–10 books to round up the year. I read other genres but not every time.

What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out as a reader? Just make sure you read daily. It could be any time; don't stick to a time, as it might choke you. And read what interests you.

How has technology influenced the way you read? Technology has made it possible for me to be able to have access to books I could not afford otherwise. It has helped to build my reading habit.

What do you think is the biggest challenge book lovers face? The challenges that many book lovers face is that, sometimes, the issues of life overwhelm them. Other challenges are being unable to have reading partners as friends and laziness.

What's the most surprising thing you've learned about yourself through reading? Through reading, I have discovered that I have a choice to make my life the best.

If you had to recommend one book that changed your life, what would it be? “Think Big” by Ben Carson.

BLESSINGS MARY SIBANDE (MALAWI)

Have you heard of bibliotherapy? No! Let me look it up this very minute. Sounds interesting! Just did! It involves reading books on specific issues to deepen your understanding of it and help cope with it or address it. I think I've been unknowingly doing this without putting a label on it. I read a lot about anything I am experiencing. Can a book really change how we see ourselves and our struggles? Definitely! For example, reading about things we struggle with or experience helps us know that we are not alone. It also helps us learn different perspectives on how others navigate similar situations.

What if reading could be more than just an escape or self-development—could it be a form of healing? It sure is. No doubt about that. Words can be soothing, enlightening, and healing, as they teach us and help us reflect

and deal with the different things that we are going through. It's good to not just read but engage with the writing, introspect, and apply it to our lives. I first learnt about mindfulness and staying present from *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. It was a life changing book for me. I think it's one of the first self-help books I read. It taught me to live fully and enjoy every moment. I think I must read again; it has been years.

Who is your favourite African author, and why? Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. What a woman! I love what she believes in. Feminism, gender equality, women empowerment and autonomy. I am actually doing a master's degree in Gender and Development right now and I hope to grow into a woman like her. She is accomplished, classy, well spoken, smart, intelligent, wise, and so composed. She is one of the powerful women I look up to. Her words give me life!

What types of books have had the biggest impact on your personal growth and well-being? Self-help and inspirational books. They help me unlearn, relearn, and learn concepts that help me navigate life better. I would love to write a book and share my experiences and perspectives, too, one day, i.e. *The Power of Now*. *Be Water My Friend*. *Who Moved My Cheese?*

If you could meet your favourite author, what's the one question you would ask? When you think back to your younger self, what actionable steps did you take to become the best version of yourself? What actionable steps can I take to become the best version of myself? – A Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Advocate.

Has reading helped you make friends with people you thought you'd never meet? Ha! Yes. Even as I am typing these answers, I am reflecting on how I have connected with a whole community of awesome readers through the Read To Impact Community. I also occasionally participate in “Utawaleza Book Club” in Malawi, where we meet monthly to discuss a recommended book that we all read. A great way to interact with and meet likeminded people.

How do you think reading can change the world? It broadens your understanding and view of the world. It teaches, it inspires, it heals, it propels you to act on your goals and aspirations. It reminds you that your potential is limitless. It guides you on your path. It enhances your knowledge and makes you want to also write so others can benefit from your perspective. There is a limitless number of ways that reading can change the world.

What's your most comfortable position when reading? Comfortably sitting on my cozy reading corner of the couch. I will have a proper cozy reading corner in the next two years.

Give us a sneak peek into your TBR list. What does it look like right now? My to-be-read list has been a bit all over the place since I started school because I must keep up with academic reading as well. But here it goes:

- i. *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz
- ii. *Set Boundaries, Find Peace* by Nedra Tawab
- iii. *Drama Free* by Nedra Tawab
- iv. *The things You See Only When You Slow Down* by Haemin Sunim
- v. *How Do I Forgive You?* By Janis Abrams Spring
- vi. *And all textbooks about women, gender equality, and feminism*

What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out as a reader? Pick the books that tell the stories that resonate with you the most—the things you feel, struggle with, want to improve on, want to become, are passionate about. I personally just don't read randomly; I am enriching my life with the content I consume in one way or another.

How has technology influenced the way you read? Whew! This one right here! Before technology—esp. social media—I used to bury myself in books all day long. Now, there are too many distractions that take up the time that we could be using to read. But on the other hand, I love that we can collect as many digital books as we want, carry them around, and conveniently read them anywhere. I also love that we can listen to audiobooks. That's some easy form of reading right there; or should we say being read to?

What do you think is the biggest challenge booklovers face? I think the biggest challenge that book lovers face in this age is finding time to read the books that they plan to read or want to read. There's a lot going on in our lives: work, catching up with friends and family, school, and all that, and you know social media. Sometimes, it can feel like you're just rushing through the days and time and there's just not enough time to sit back, relax, and just read. Too much busyness. We are living in a world that's moving so fast, and it can get hard to slow down and just pick up a book and read sometimes. Regardless, I know that we all have to prioritize what is important to us and if reading is important, we must set aside time to read the books that we need to read or want to read.

What's the most surprising thing you've learned about yourself through reading? That we all basically go through the same things all over the world. Whenever I read about experiences that are so similar to mine—growing up, daily routines, my habits, the kind of relationships I've been in, the kind of friendships I have experienced, the things I struggle with, the things I excel at, a whole lot of experiences that are so similar to the last dot—I am convinced we are all going through the same things, but then, sometimes, we deal with them differently and, sometimes, similarly and that's what shapes our outcomes.

And that concept is just so magnificent and so beautiful. And it just emphasizes the power of reading because since we basically go through similar experiences, emotions, habits, you will definitely learn, unlearn, or relearn something about yourself or improve on something about yourself based on the literature you consume. and that is the most beautiful thing about life and books. We learn from each other.

If you had to recommend one book that changed your life, what would it be? *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle

If you are in Enugu, Nigeria, Gemsread Publishing (a sister brand of RTI) invites you to a reading of **Ka Chi Foo Nu** by **Harachi Nnamchi** in conversation with **Lynda**.

This is an opportunity for you to begin 2025 on a high literary note through a book discussion, bookish games, book signing, and a refreshing conversation with the author.

And yes, there will be light refreshment.

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How to Get the Most Out of Every Book & Knowledge Application

BY WAFULA MESHACK (KENYA)

It's pretty unfortunate that we effortlessly talk of the number of books we've read, our reading cultures, etc., but we barely share the great benefits we reap from the very same books.

When was the last time you applied the knowledge you learnt from any of the books you read? If you took long to get an answer, then you probably happen to be a reader but not a benefactor. Buying books is a form of investment and they should reward you (remember, you purchased them with money, so you should get profit). Here are top tips to help you get the most out of every read.

First, scrutinize yourself and know what you're looking for. Books are not dissimilar to food. If you want vitamins, you go for foods enriched with vitamins; if you require energy, then you have no other choice than to go for energy-giving foods. Books are not different in this regard. If you want to improve yourself by working on your general wellbeing, including spirituality, finances, motivation, academics, and research, then you'll have to go for spiritual /religious, financial, motivational, and research books, respectively. This will get you glued to the book from cover to cover since you're feeding yourself with what your body and soul needs.

Secondly, be ready to read or simply avoid distractions. Sometimes, you might have the best read that you were yearning for, but the environment doesn't favor your desire to read. Always make sure your surroundings are in favor of your knowledge absorption. Some of the common ways to ensure this are checking on the weather before sitting under a tree, switching off your phone or placing it on silent mode, switching off the TV or reducing the volume of the audio gadgets, especially when in the house, etc. Having a specific reading time helps one to plan in advance. However, it is advisable not to force oneself to read just because your timetable dictates. First, make sure the environment is conducive. If you can't change the environment, then postpone and fix it at a later time. Remember, understanding the book is what matters and not you completing it on time.

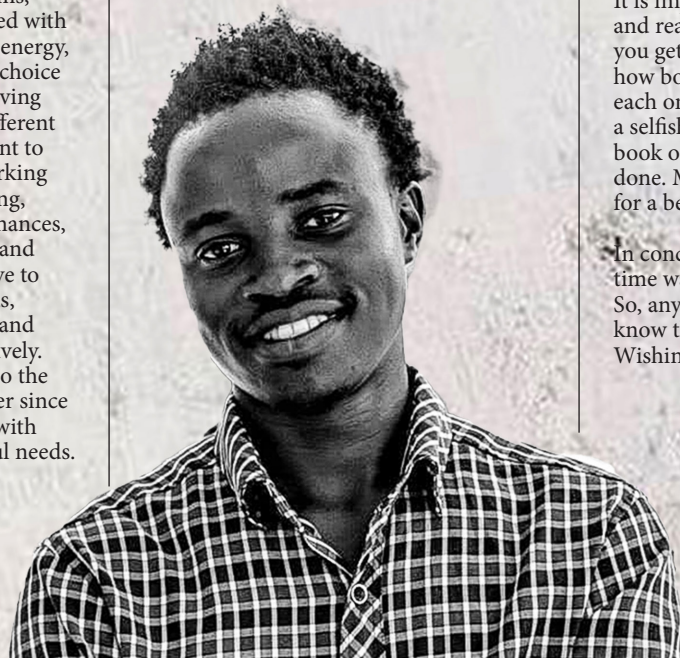
Listen to the book while reading. Take notes and make summaries while reading. Don't wait till you're done with the whole book. It is better if you do it right after each chapter, part, or section. This helps you to remember more and

makes the reading enjoyable. Make them brief and easy to skim through. If you're reading a borrowed book, beat the temptation to scrutinize others' summaries on the book covers or some pages because individual needs and the lessons learnt are different. Once you're done with it, that's when you can compare the notes.

It is now time to apply what you've learnt. This is now the most important part because you'll be trying to be a result of your reading (books). Let your close friends and relatives notice some changes in you. You should become what you read. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said "If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads." When Elon Musk was asked how he learnt to make rockets, he simply said he read books. Great world icons like Warren Buffet, Mark Zuckerberg, and Bill Gates have linked their successes to readership.

It is important to join book clubs and reading communities where you get to remind each other on how books have been of help to each one of you. Also, don't be a selfish reader. Recommend a book or share a copy once you're done. Mind the welfare of others for a better growth of society.

In conclusion, have in mind that time wasted is never recovered. So, anytime you sit down to read, know that you're using time. Wishing you all the best.



Why Do People Read?

BY CHALYA P. G. (NIGERIA)

“What I know for sure is that reading opens you up. It exposes you and gives you access to anything your mind can hold. What I love most about reading: it gives the ability to reach higher ground. And keep climbing.”

- Oprah Winfrey

Reading has affected my mind in a positive way: I gain a tremendous amount of knowledge and ideas, I improve my writing skills, and I learn new things. I get to travel and explore the world in one sitting through reading. Reading helps me know what happens where; I also get to know about different cultures around the world in preparation for travelling around the world. In this article, I share some key benefits of reading you can also expect for yourself.

BENEFITS OF READING

- **Improve Your Focus:** Being able to better focus and concentrate for a long period on a complicated work is very essential to success and wellbeing. *“Deep work is the ability to focus without distraction on a cognitively demanding task. It’s a skill that allows you to quickly master complicated information and produce better results in less time. Deep work will make you do and provide the sense of true fulfillment that comes from craftsmanship.”* — Deep Work by Carl Newport. Continuous reading helps to build this ability over time.
- **Gain Valuable Knowledge:** When I read, not only do I gain new information, I also gain new insights on previous knowledge. I also read to acquire new skills for

productivity.

- **Boost Your Communication Skill:** In any place of business, the art of communication is key. Knowing how to effectively communicate is a skill you can build through continuous reading.
- **Entertain Yourself:** Have you ever wondered what joy a reader derives from picking up a book? Stephen King said, *“Books are unique portable magic.”* Have you ever picked up a book to read and you couldn’t drop the book until you finished reading? That feeling of immersion in a world created with just words provides so much engagement and joy to the soul. There is always a perfect book genre for everyone!
- **Improve Your Mental Health:** Books—whether fiction or non-fiction—have been employed in bibliotherapy since the early 1900s, and they have been shown to work. In fact, a study found that 10 weeks of stress-reduction bibliotherapy can result in a significant decrease in anxiety, stress, and an increase in overall quality of life.
- **Improve Your Thinking:** Readers are smart; they gain analytical thinking skills on how to carry out given tasks. You tend to think well when you read, and you get a lot of ideas on how to carry out certain tasks and projects.
- **Reduce Stress:** When I’m stressed, I pick up a book to read; just a chapter can give a chill. Research has proven that just 30 min of reading can lower your blood pressure and feelings of psychological distress. Dr. David Lewis said *“Losing yourself in a book is the ultimate relaxation.”*
- **Improve Your Ability to Empathize:** Books can help improve your ability to empathize with others; empathy has many benefits as it can reduce stress,

improve your relationships, and inform your moral compasses. Research has shown that long-term fiction readers tend to develop a better “Theory of mind”, the term used to describe our capacity for empathy and ability to understand others.

- **Improve Your Memory and Concentration:** Do you always forget things? Do you have a to-do list but you can’t quite remember what’s on it? One of the advantages of reading is the ability to improve memory and concentration. Reading every day can improve your memory and help you learn how to store new information and recall memories more effectively.

On a final note, there is a book for everyone. *“Books were my pass to personal freedom. I learned to read at age three, and soon discovered there was a whole world to conquer that went beyond our farm in Mississippi.”* – Oprah Winfrey. Start a chapter today; you would be glad you read!



Books: A *Way* **OF** *Life*

JOY OKON (NIGERIA)

What do you do when you don't know what to do? Books can offer escapism, or an opportunity for relaxation, or a distraction. However, they can be something more—a way of life. We can—quite literally—learn how to live, turn our lives around, or simply be, all by reading.

As described by Anne Bogel in her book *I'd Rather Be Reading: The Delights and Dilemmas of the Reading Life*, “Reading is a lifestyle. Our books shape us, define us, enchant us, and even sometimes infuriate us. Our books are a part of who we are as people, and we can't imagine life without them.”

Sometimes, reading can be a dangerous thing. That's because it gives us a mirror with which we can be able to view ourselves. However, that self-reflection can be the first step towards changing our lives for the better. In his book, *The Power of Regret: How Looking Back Moves Us Forward*, Daniel H. Pink talks about how the power of self-reflection can be the driving force behind self-change by harnessing the power to improve our sense of self.

But what if you simply don't know what to read? You have picked up one book after another, yet none of them speaks to you. In their book, *The Novel Cure: From Abandonment to Zestlessness: 751 Books to Cure What Ails You*, Ella Berthoud and Susan Elderkin wittingly offer a collection of literature (751 to be exact) for just about any ailment out there. Are you suffering from a broken heart? The book proffers a dose of Niall Williams's *As It Is In Heaven*. Are you being wracked by guilt over? Then you need a dose of *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. While the proffered solutions may not be everyone's cup of tea, the book provides a basis from which we can start to draw inspiration for our reading choices. In addition to this, it also encourages the exploration of different book genres.

My point is simple and straightforward: reading can be a therapeutic process. The right book in your hand is a powerful thing; as a reader, you can connect with it on a personal level, providing comfort, guidance, and even self-discovery. Make up your mind today to make books a core part of your life and be sure to let others know about the ways in which doing so improves your life.



FUN FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

1

IF YOU HAVE READ EVERYTHING OR ARE FAMILIAR WITH EXTENSIVE LITERATURE, THEN WE CAN CALL YOU "OMNILEGENT".

2

IN 2009, RESEARCHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX FOUND THAT READING FOR ONLY 6 MINUTES A DAY CAN REDUCE YOUR STRESS LEVELS BY 68%.

3

EVERY 10 YEARS, YOUR SKELETON REPAIRS AND RENEWS ITSELF. THAT MEANS YOU HAVE DIFFERENT BONES NOW THAN YOU DID 10 YEARS AGO!

4

DO YOU ALWAYS CARRY A BOOK WITH YOU? IF YES, WE CAN CALL YOU "BOOK-BOSOMED". IT WAS COINED BY SIR WALTER SCOTT AND FIRST APPEARED IN HIS 1805 POEM THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.

5

THAT ENJOYMENT YOU DERIVE FROM THE SMELL OF BOOKS IS CALLED "BIBLIOSMIA".

6

THE FEAR OF RUNNING OUT OF SOMETHING TO READ IS CALLED ABIBLIOPHOBIA. IT'S REAL, SORRY.

7

YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE NICER IF YOU READ FICTION, ACCORDING TO A 2017 STUDY BY RESEARCHERS FROM KINGSTON UNIVERSITY.

8

9. THE LONGEST NOVEL EVER IS IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME BY MARCEL PROUST. CAN YOU GUESS THE PAGE COUNT?

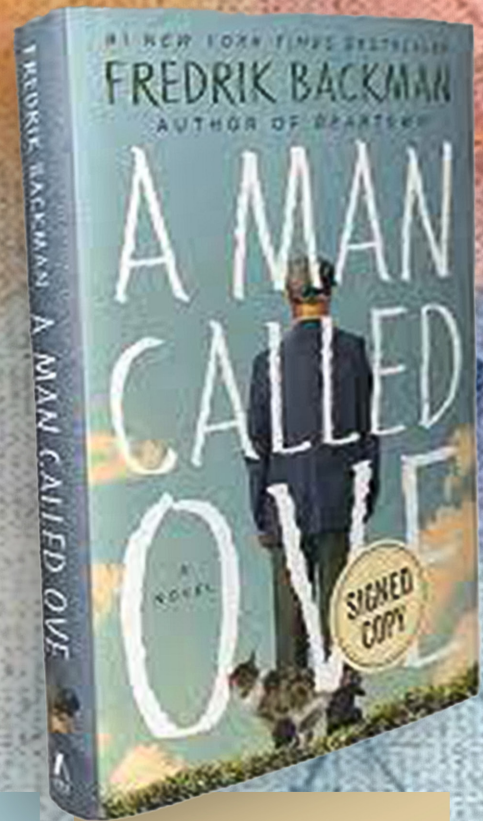
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TINY WORMS THAT LIVED IN THE SPINE OF A BOOK WERE THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD "BOOKWORM".

Book Review:

A MAN CALLED OVE

(Fredrik Backman)



Trigger warning: this book contains several attempts of suicide.

It is a novella about love, friendship, family, loneliness, and living in a world that is rapidly changing without waiting for one to catch up. It is about loss and what that can mean to the people left behind.

Ove is a curmudgeon. He is a 59-year-old Swede of unwavering values and principles who did not see the point in driving any other car apart from a Saab. After all, why should you need a frilly GPS or radar to show you how to parallel-park?

Ove seems unbendable. Then, he meets Sonia.

“People thought Ove saw the world in black and white, Sonia was colour. Sonia was all the colour he had.” We see that Ove may seem cranky. Nay, he is cranky. But we see that he is mostly a product of a time that preached about a right way and a wrong way of doing things. Ove bleeds integrity; therefore, he doesn’t see any reason why his suggested course of action in any given situation should be discarded. Ove saves a man’s life and wonders why the newspaper wants to interview him instead of the man who almost died. Through Ove’s story, we see what grief can do. We get to understand that loneliness, most of the time, creeps slowly on us so that by the time we realize, it is almost too late. A Man Called Ove tells Ove’s story

in a witty and engaging manner without losing its solemnity. Fredrik Backman crafted a story of familial and romantic love along with their risks and reward.

In the words of one of MCU’s heroes, “what is grief, if not love persevering.” This book delivers on wit, comedy, and an unforgettable emotional ride from start to finish.

BY JOY OKON (NIGERIA)

A GOOD GIRL'S GUIDE TO MURDER

(Holly Jackson)

In a closed case, an A-grade student won't let it go.

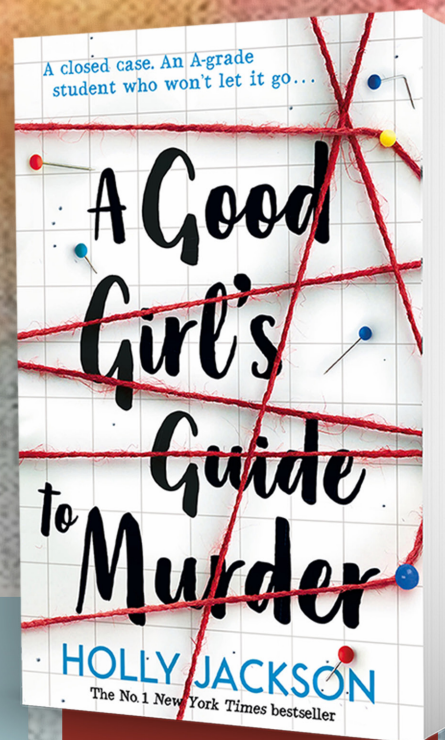
At first, I hesitated to dive into this book because I'm not typically a fan of fiction books. Often, they don't quite meet my expectations. But as I saw the relentless hype about this book all over X (formerly Twitter), recommended by some of my favorite book reviewers, I couldn't resist. I had to pick it up. To my surprise and delight, this book shattered all my preconceived notions. It exceeded every expectation I had; it certainly worked its magic on me. It's a testament to the power of a compelling narrative, it draws you in from the very beginning and refuses to let go.

This novel is part of a series that also includes the books "Good Girl, Bad Blood" – part 2, and "As Good As Dead" – which is part 3 of the series. The fact that everything in this series was interconnected was something really special that I loved. The first book can be read independently (that's why it made it into my top 10 in 2022), but the rest of the series continues to include elements from it. While you may think you know everything after the first book, let me just tell you,

you do not! I recommend it's much better to read the whole series.

It is the story of a 17-year-old girl, Pippa, a straight-A student and genius, who decides to do her school's final-year research project (dissertation) on the murder of a local girl she went to school with, Andie Bell, which happened in her town 5 years ago. The case has already been closed by the police, convicting the late Andie's boyfriend, Sal Singh, as the murderer. But the schoolgirl genius Pippa is convinced that Sal is innocent and, therefore, decides to investigate the murder case by herself, this time using her methods in her school research project as her case study. She starts to uncover secrets that the real murderer wants to remain hidden. Now, how far will they go to keep Pippa from the truth? I don't want to spoil it.

This series brought back memories of my college days, particularly of my best friend who once embarked on a daring final-year project about the intricate web of relationships between university lecturers and their students, focusing on the topic of "Sex Corruption" (a subject that always drew a few



laughs). Her audacious project certainly stirred the pot and got her into some interesting, and occasionally troubling, situations. As a result, she eventually had to change her title. It serves as a reminder that sometimes, it's the most unconventional paths that lead to the most enlightening experiences and unforgettable stories.

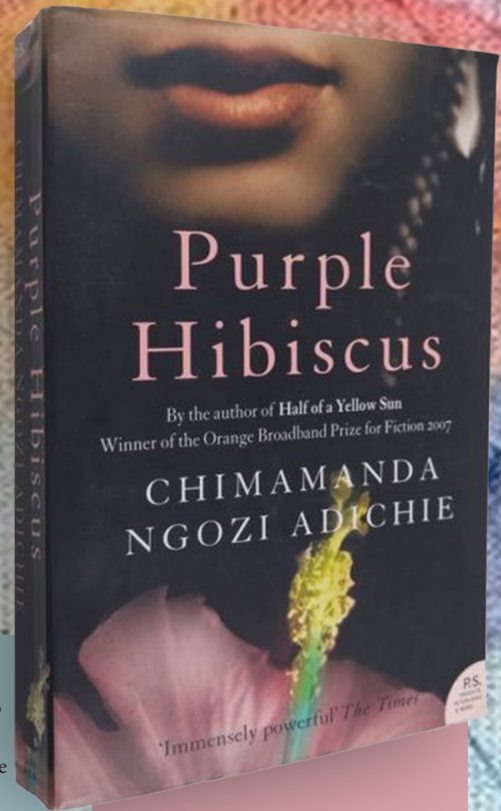
This book is a must-read for fans of mystery, suspense, and coming-of-age stories. It's a book that challenges genre conventions, keeps you guessing until the very end, and leaves a lasting impression. Whether you're a seasoned fiction aficionado or a reluctant reader like myself, this book has the power to captivate and entertain.

So, if you're looking for a book that will keep you up all night, challenge your assumptions, and leave you wanting more, "A Good Girl's Guide to Murder" is the perfect choice. Trust me, you won't be disappointed.

BY FRANK M. LWAKATARE
(DODOMA, TANZANIA)

PURPLE HIBISCUS

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee describes this book as “a sensitive and touching story”, and I cannot agree more. Published in October 2003 and set in postcolonial Nigeria, *Purple Hibiscus* follows the story of Kambili Achike. Told from her perspective, the story reveals the complex dynamics of the Achike family.

Kambili is the 15-year-old daughter of Eugene and Beatrice. Their home is dominated by her devout Catholic father, a wealthy businessman who imposes a strict religious regime in his home. He is also abusive (physically and psychologically) as a father and a husband, subjecting his two children to harsh punishments and beating his wife to the point of causing two miscarriages.

Auntie Ifeoma is the only sister of Eugene. An ardent Catholic herself; she works as a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Despite the death of her husband, she creates a much happier world for herself and three children than does her brother. The role she plays in the book is significant. Things change in the Achike household after Kambili and her brother, Jaja, return from Auntie Ifeoma's house in Nsukka. Being in Auntie Ifeoma's home opens her eyes to real family relationships and faith, unlike the

one she's being raised in. She also encounters Papa-Nnukwu, her paternal grandfather, who Eugene has abandoned and refused to take care of because for refusing to leave his traditional religion and embrace Christianity.

When Eugene gets to learn of these associations, a series of tragic events unfolds.

Adichie is a master storyteller who weaves a masterpiece that is both personal and universal, as this book uncovers the trauma and pain that young adolescents go through in the hands of extremely religious parents. Deft and beautifully written, Adichie produces a powerful piece that invites the reader to delve into the disintegration of an average Nigerian family, drawing us to an extraordinary, heartbreaking ending.

The book explores the theme of family dynamics. Contrasting her family with that of Auntie Ifeoma's, Kambili examines the discrepancies: the cheerful and happy environment in Auntie Ifeoma's home, as opposed to the fearful and intimidating atmosphere of the Achike's; freedom to express and associate with other people; the remarkable beauty and shock of Auntie Ifeoma's Catholic practices, which imbibes the clapping of hands and Igbo choruses.

Another theme is domestic violence. In the Achike household, Eugene wields extreme power, punishing and thrashing anyone who disobeys his orders. He beats up his wife—Beatrice—so badly that she lost her pregnancy on two occasions.

A third important theme in the book is faith and religious hypocrisy. Eugene, a staunch Catholic, follows a strict religious tradition. He enforces a law which demands that no one is to eat before going to Mass. Anyone who goes against the rule bears the brunt of Eugene's anger. He abandons and disregards his father—Papa Nnukwu—because he has refused to do away with the traditional ways of his ancestors and embrace Christianity.

Above all, this book takes a different approach to politics, social unrest, religious extremism, a country under an oppressive regime without the slightest hint of freedom, and other essential social issues.

BY PROSPER CHIDALU IDUMA
(NIGERIA)

LOCAL SYMBOLS



THE YORUBA
NATIVE ATTIRE

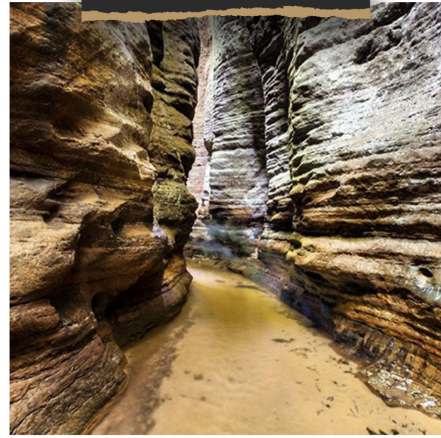
The Yoruba native attire, with its earliest documentation in the 1900s, exemplifies the rich cultural heritage and aesthetic appeal of the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. For women, this attire consists of the Iro—a wrapper that goes round the lower half, and the Buba—a loose-fitting blouse. The Ipele, a matching shoulder sash complements the outfit, adding a layer of elegance and modesty. This attire is especially significant for married women, symbolizing dignity and status.

For men, the Dansiki is a popular traditional garment worn with matching trousers. The Dansiki is a loose-fitting tunic. It is typically made from handwoven

or intricately embroidered fabric, showcasing both functionality and artistry.

BY DAMOLA A. (NIGERIA)

AWHUM CAVE



Have you ever heard of “Awhum Cave”? It is in Enugu State in the southeastern part of Nigeria. You might have heard about it, seen it, or even visited the place, but I sure can bet you can always learn new things about this interesting and relaxing place in Enugu. The cave is huge as it spans over 5 kilometers in length, making it the longest cave in West Africa. Yes, you read that right!

According to the inhabitants of the village where the cave is located, the cave and its waterfall are sacred. They—and several tourists who have visited the place—also claim that the water from the cave has healing powers. The earliest historical record of the cave cites it as a shelter for the surrounding inhabitants during the Nigerian civil war. It is said that the explosives could not bring down the cave, making it a safe place to hide from the war.

Awhum Cave is a beautiful place that not only encourages sightseeing but also allows for several activities like hiking, rock climbing, cave walking, swimming, and meditation. The cave is formed from limestone and has the stalagmites and stalactites formation. While exploring the cave, you will come across some cultural significance, human habitation, artifacts, and pottery tools.

BY OLUWATOSIN SAMUEL (NIGERIA)

RTI COMMUNITY AWARDS 2024

The RTI Community Awards have been instituted to celebrate the outstanding contributions of our dedicated members, city coordinators, and country/regional coordinators. The virtual ceremony for 2024 (December 26) specially recognized 18 remarkable individuals and awarded 9 for their exceptional impact and results. Through these recognitions, we aim to show our appreciation for their invaluable efforts, highlighting that their dedication is truly valued. This celebration also inspires greater commitment and fosters stronger connections within our community for the year ahead.



MOST SUPPORTIVE MEMBER AWARD
3. Chalya Gambo (Nigeria)

CATEGORY: CITY COORDINATORS
TOP 3 CITY COORDINATORS OF THE YEAR AWARD

2. Chuol Tap (Juba, South Sudan)
5. Oko Patricia (Nsukka, Nigeria)
7. Perseverance Jamila (Lusaka, Zambia)

CATEGORY: COUNTRY/REGIONAL COORDINATORS

TOP COUNTRY COORDINATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

7. Perseverance Jamila (Zambia)

CATEGORY: GENERAL COMMUNITY

MOST INSPIRATIONAL CONTRIBUTOR:

4. Prosper Chidalu Iduma (Nigeria)

TOP 3 READERS OF THE YEAR AWARD:

1. Nafisah Bukari (Ghana)
4. Prosper Chidalu Iduma (Nigeria)
6. Kaycee Omeoga (Nigeria)



Traveling Bibliophile CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Let's take a brief tour across Africa through some books. We are keen on cities or countries, and the hint will tell you which we want in some cases.

Can you solve the puzzle?



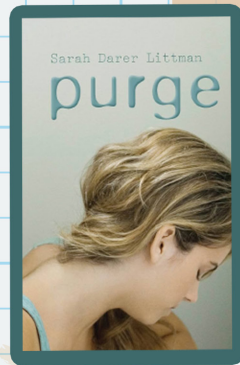
ACROSS:

2. Promise Onyekachukwu takes you there in Nigeria before you flip the pages.
5. The name "George Samuel Clason" says it all.
7. Glory, fiction inspired by the removal of a long-standing leader through a coup.
8. Homegoing. Yes, it's a nation.
9. City setting of a trilogy from an Arabic Nobel laureate.
10. Things Fall Apart (*it's not Nigeria, sorry*).

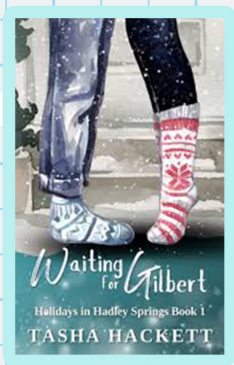
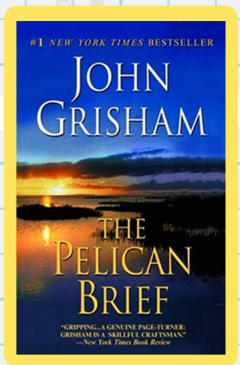
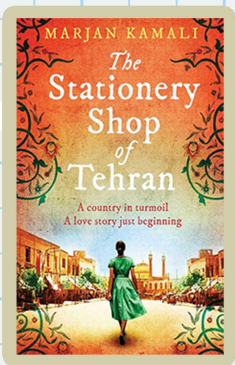
DOWN:

1. Michael Afenfia's Nigerian setting.
3. Afterlives. Still a nation.
4. The Blunder. Yet another nation.
6. Kintu is set here.

Prize: NGN 20,000 (or the equivalent in your local currency).
Send your answers via email to info@readtoimpact.org. The first correctly solved puzzle we receive wins the game. All the best!

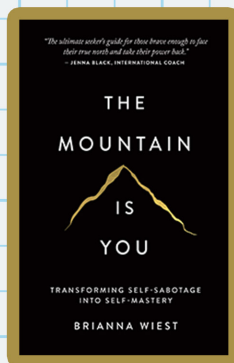
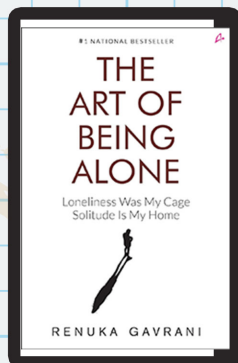


FICTION (MENTAL HEALTH)



FICTION (GENERAL)

— Book — RECOMMENDATIONS



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