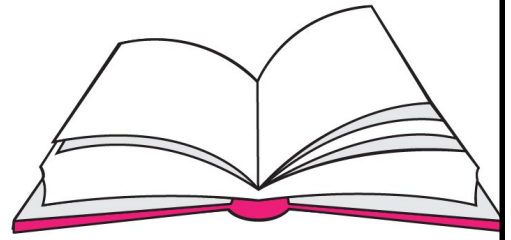


# PALMETTO LITERACY COUNCIL



**January 2022**



## ***From the Director***

Dear Friends,

As we move into 2022, Palmetto Literacy Council reflects upon our many successes in 2021. Despite the restrictions imposed by Covid, we have enacted our vision to improve the literacy of youth and adults in our community by providing free tutoring to those who struggle with basic reading, writing and/or math. Last year, we provided 47 students with tutoring services. Currently we have 32 students paired with tutors and 18 are on the wait list. I am happy to report that in 2021, Palmetto Literacy Council received the support of several organizations whose generous donations make our continued efforts possible.

As the aspiring center of Horry County's literacy education and training, our goal is to promote reading so that our young students will experience academic successes and our adult students will become more informed citizens and better employees. We endeavor to promote a joy of learning and instill in our students a love of reading. And we encourage them to read for both information and for pleasure.

Many of our students have demonstrated an improvement in literacy skills. Indeed, several students have progressed to the point where schools have withdrawn their academic concerns. Our adult ELL students have also demonstrated a better grasp of English and have learned to read and write more effectively.

I recently heard from the father of one of our very first students, Jontae, who was in all pull-out classes at his school when he enrolled in our program. After he

received the one-on-one tutoring he needed and deserved through Palmetto Literacy Council, Jontae will now be joining the general education classes for the coming spring semester. We are so proud that we were able to facilitate his academic successes.

Our organization would be remiss if we did not recognize the individuals who make teaching literacy possible: our volunteers. To our volunteers, thank you for your tireless time and assistance to this organization and for believing in our mission. We are proud to have you on our frontlines. And to our students and parents, thank you for trusting our organization to facilitate a community through literacy. Your success is what gives our organization purpose.

We look forward to a productive, healthy, safe year.

Sincerely,

Dodi Hodges

## **Palmetto Literacy Council**

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# The Real-Life Benefits of Reading Fiction

Research reveals how compelling stories can make us better people

By Holly Parker, PhD

Raise your hand if you've ever felt even just a teensy bit guilty for carving precious time out of your busy life to dive into a book and relish a made-up story. If your hand is in the air, it's there alongside a bevy of others.

National Public Radio (NPR) has a program called "My Guilty Pleasure," featuring books that authors savor privately. Some scholars argue that Oprah's Book Club eases people's guilt for enjoying works of fiction by highlighting stories that simultaneously educate and entertain. A piece in *The New Yorker* explicitly spells out our unease with leisure reading:

"Basically, a guilty pleasure is a fix in the form of a story, a narrative cocktail that helps us temporarily forget the narratives of our own humdrum lives. And, for not a few readers, there's the additional kick of feeling that they're getting away with something. Instead of milking the cows or reading the *Memoirs*, they're dallying somewhere with *Fifty Shades of Grey*."

With work, errands, chores, and family obligations, the notion of giving ourselves permission to walk through a pretend world for a while may seem a bit frivolous or fruitless. Why read stories when there's so much to do?

For now, I'm going to just set aside the fact that leisure time and personal enjoyment are meaningful and important for their own sake, and get to the heart of what this piece is actually about: how the world of fiction enriches who we are in the real world.

In a 2018 study, researchers reviewed experiments on the effect of reading fiction. They found that it modestly improves people's capacity to understand and mentally react to other individuals and social situations. And by and large, that was after reading a single story.

But why does reading fiction fine-tune our social awareness? That's not entirely clear. One possible reason is that when we devote our mental energy to stepping into an imaginary person's inner world, we're essentially honing our ability to do the very same thing with actual people. Indeed, evidence suggests that the same regions of the brain are at work when we're thinking about other people and

their points of view, regardless of whether those individuals happen to be real or fictional characters. Another potential reason is that even though we're trekking into a make-believe realm, the struggles and concerns, the pleasures and hopes, the nuances and social dynamics that unfold for the characters in the story can offer valuable insights on humanity and life. And this knowledge may put us in a better position to understand the people in our social world.

But reading a good tale doesn't seem to be enough, in and of itself, to boost our capacity to empathize with others. For reading to help us do that, we need to actively step out of our own lives and mentally and emotionally carry ourselves away into the story. You can picture the scene you're reading like it's a movie; you feel with the characters and for them. Sadness bubbles up with poignant moments in the story. Absurdity awakens confusion, surprise, or amusement. Cliff-hangers and tense dilemmas evoke jitters and disquiet. As you're winding through a murder mystery, with characters who are absolutely terrified because they know that the killer is among them and one of them is next, your muscles tense and the hairs on your arm stand up.

And when you mentally travel into a story, picturing it in rich detail and getting into the minds of the characters, not only will you be more adept at relating to people, you'll be more inclined to assist others when they're in need. What's more, there are other significant fruits of fiction, such as lessening people's racial bias and raising their interest in the well-being of animals. There's even evidence that reading a book for 30-minutes every day forecasts a sharper, healthier mind, which predicts 20% lower odds of dying about a decade later.

To sum it all up, we can take time to delight in a compelling yarn, and in the process become better human beings who may even live a little longer. That sounds more like a worthwhile investment than a guilty pleasure.

Happy reading everyone.

Reprinted with permission from Holly Parker, PhD.  
[The Real-Life Benefits of Reading Fiction | Psychology Today](#)  
June 7, 2018



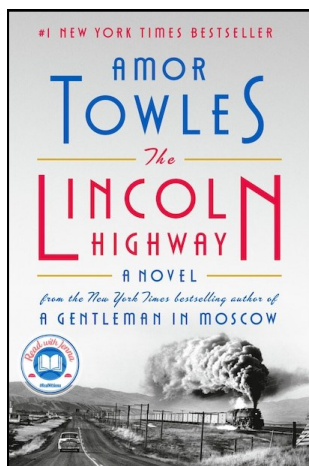
## What's on your bookshelf?

Patricia F. D'Ascoli

Do you have a New Year's reading resolution? I do. This year I plan to read at least three books per month. For those who regularly read, perhaps this isn't an impressive goal. But for those, like me, who watch too much TV, it is definitely ambitious. If I cut down on my viewing, I believe I can achieve this goal. Because I often need a specific reason to read, I joined a book club, which is a great motivator for reading. If I am stuck on what to read next (other than the required monthly read) members who are voracious readers regularly recommend books.

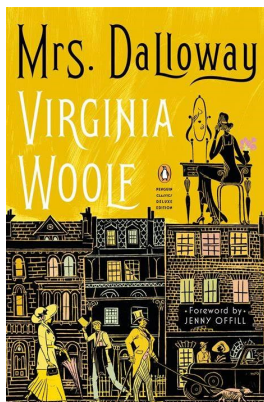
There are, in fact, several books on my To Read list. For Christmas my sons gave me several books (two nonfiction and one novel): *Lost in Thought* by Zena Hitz, *Insight* by Tasha Eurich and *Above the Bay of Angels* by Rhys Bowen. I am currently in the middle of *Quiet* by Susan Cain. My problem is that I find myself reading more than one book at a time. I don't recommend this approach. So my secondary reading goal is, accordingly, to focus on one book at a time.

Last month the club participated in a book exchange, and I received *The 7 1/2 Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle* by Stuart Turton. So that's on my list as well. In December, I completed the club's January read: *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles—an impressive 576 pages that were captivating enough to grab and sustain my attention. If anything, I read it too quickly and have since forgotten elements of the plot. With the assistance of 20 club attendees on January 19, however, I will be able to immerse myself in a lively discussion of a book that I highly recommend.



Set in the 1950s, the book interweaves the stories of four characters as they make their way across the USA on the Lincoln Highway, one of the earliest transcontinental automobile routes across America which run from Times Square in New York City west to Lincoln Park in San Francisco. Brothers Emmett and Billy originally set out to travel from their home in Nebraska to San Francisco, but through a

series of unforeseen circumstances, they are forced to travel east instead to reconcile several serious misunderstandings with fellow journeyers Duchess and Wooly. Paths cross and diverge throughout the novel until conflict is tragically resolved in New York.



Despite the detour, Emmett and Billy learn much about themselves and life in general and in the end, the heroes are able to get back on track after experiencing—as necessary in any good novel—loss. More importantly, however, they receive insight and inspiration to sustain them as they travel with renewed hope toward San Francisco where a new life awaits.

The book club organizer chose this year's books based on the theme of "Reading Around the World." So after immersing ourselves in America, next month, the club will head to England as we read *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. It's a book that has long since been on my radar, so I am looking forward to reading this novel.

I'd love to hear what you are reading. Send me an email at [patricia@palmettoliteracy.org](mailto:patricia@palmettoliteracy.org) and let me know. Next month, I will share my thoughts on a book (maybe even two) from my To Read list. In the meantime, happy reading!

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## The Logophile

Preston McKeever-Floyd

A perennial New Year wish is, "I wish you a happy and prosperous New Year." Prosperous is an adjective defined as auspicious, favorable, marked by success or economic well-being, enjoying vigorous and healthy growth, flourishing. (Merriam-Webster). In common usage, *prosperous* is essentially making or having a lot of money.



The term is derived from Twelfth Century Old French, *prosperite*, "flourishing or thriving condition, good fortune, wealth, success in anything good or desirable." (Etymology Online Dictionary). The etymology of *prosperous* suggests a far more nuanced meaning than contemporary parlance suggests.

I am intuitively drawn to *prosperous* as *flourishing*. Numerous are the stories of great wealth being squandered, lost by misfortune, or the miserable rich who are not *happy* despite possessing great wealth; however, *flourishing* suggests a rich life marked by the seasons and vicissitudes yet thriving. Of course, this includes wealth as a means, not an end-in-itself. So, *I wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.*



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EXCELLENCE.  
ACCOUNTABILITY.  
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Palmetto Literacy Council is a nonprofit, tax-exempt, 501c(3), volunteer organization.  
We provide 2 hours each week, free tutoring for school-age children to adults  
who struggle with basic reading, writing, and/or math.