

I think the answer to the question of why we read is going to be different for everyone. For the purposes of this discussion, I will speak on my experiences, as well as what resonated with me in the material for this week. I personally read for multiple reasons: to learn, to grow, and to feel less alone. I personally love reading memoirs and self help books because of that immediate and direct way of consuming new concepts and ideas. It allows me to feel like I am working on myself while enjoying someone's writing. When I'm not reading nonfiction, I gravitate toward stories that I feel like I can relate to. Fictional stories, at least to me, are a nice way of getting out of my head, zooming out a little, and thinking about a situation I am dealing with from a different point of view. It often moves or inspires or teaches.

I loved reading part of Shannon Reed's book. I especially liked the chapter in *Why We Read* titled "How to learn to die (and how to live)". It clearly spells out one of the reasons why I choose to read: to normalize unspoken life hardships and learn from others how to navigate it. In this chapter, Reed recollects her memories of when her father was dying and writes "I had to look to an outside source, and *Being Mortal*, with its willingness to talk about uncomfortable truths, was it. Along with my faith and the way I was raised, it allowed me to make choices that were not solely the result of anxiety and panic, which meant that for at least half of the time, I behaved lovingly during those terrible and wonderful weeks." Death is definitely something we are afraid to talk about in our everyday lives, but it is inevitable for all of us. Reading books about the subject really normalizes the experience and allows us to learn how to navigate our way through it.

Furthermore, and from a more cerebral point of view, I think many people read because language is inescapable and it's a different way to view this important social thing. Enfield explains it perfectly: "A friend might explain how a new app works. I might teach my daughter how to use an abacus. You might show me the difference between a major and a minor chord on the guitar. Language will always be involved" (Enfield). Language is our main way of communicating. I'm using language right now in a more direct context, but something very special and layered happens when language is used to write a work of fiction or literature. It allows us to take an idea or moral and see it come alive - see it pop out of the page. For example, I can read a handbook on mindfulness and apply it to my everyday life and that would be the end of the story. However, if I find a book- perhaps like a memoir about a Buddhist - there are more layers to the experience. First, you are going to read a story about a real person going through an experiential journey - perhaps similar to yours. Second, you are learning by their example, rather than general instructions, so it doesn't feel so mundane to read.