



How Reading Invites Us to Discover Who We Are, to Inhabit Our Essence, and to Live with the Authenticity of Someone Who Knows Their Own Voice

There is a person inside each of us waiting to be found. Not constructed, not invented, but discovered. Reading is, perhaps, the most honest way to reach them.

We grow up receiving versions of ourselves. Family tells us who we should be. School shapes what we should know. Our peer group defines what is acceptable to feel. Society draws the outline of what is normal. And, little by little, we get used to living within these outlines, without questioning whether that space is truly ours, or just what we were given to inhabit.

Reading interrupts this process in a gentle yet radical way. It opens a window to the interior.

The Mirror that Books Offer

When we read a novel and recognize in a character something we never knew how to name in ourselves, something extraordinary happens: we realize that we are not alone in what we feel. That that restlessness, that confused desire to be different, has been felt before, by someone, somewhere. And it was so real that someone wrote about it.

This recognition is liberating. Not because the book gives us answers, but because it returns the right questions. What do I truly value? What kind of person do I want to be? What do I carry with me that no longer belongs to me?

Books don't tell us who we are. They do something more precious: they create enough inner silence for us to hear ourselves.

"Reading is an act of inhabited solitude. We are alone with the words—and, in that solitude, we find company for the parts of ourselves that the world rarely manages to reach."

To know is to Choose

There is a direct link between self-knowledge and freedom. Not the freedom to do whatever one wants, but something deeper and rarer: the freedom to want what is truly ours. To make choices that are born from within, not from without.

A person who has never known themselves ends up living according to the desires of others, not out of weakness, but out of a lack of direction. They don't know what moves them, what satisfies them, what makes them feel whole. And so they fill that void with what is available: the opinions of others, social expectations, the most convenient version of themselves.

Reading (fiction, philosophy, memoirs, poetry) is one of the most accessible ways to begin charting that path. To understand where what has been imposed ends and where what is genuinely ours begins. And it is from that point that choices gain another weight. Another flavor. Another authenticity.

Essence doesn't need to be built, it needs to be discovered

We live in a culture that encourages us to construct identities. To create a version of ourselves for each platform, for each context, for each audience. There is constant pressure to be interesting, consistent, inspiring, for the gallery.

But essence isn't constructed. It exists. It's there, quiet, waiting to be recognized beneath all the layers we've accumulated: the defenses, the performances, the approved versions.

Reading is, among other things, an exercise in stripping away layers. Because it requires silence. Because it demands real presence. Because there are no likes or external validation, only the encounter between the words of someone who has exposed themselves entirely and our capacity to let ourselves be touched.

"Your voice in the world is unique. There is no other like it—there never has been, there never will be. Finding it is a lifetime's work. And books are some of the most faithful companions on that journey."

A Society of Whole Persons

When we talk about reading in Portugal, we often talk about statistics, rankings, and school habits. But what's truly at stake is something else: the human quality of the lives we live.

A society where people know themselves better is a society with more honest relationships, more conscious choices, and less violence, both internal and external. Not because books are a magic solution, but because the habit of reading is the habit of inhabiting one's own inner self. And those who have inner peace treat the world (and others) with more care.

This begins with children who learn that stories are portals. It continues with teenagers who find in books the words for what they cannot say. It extends to adults who, in a late-night book, rediscover a part of themselves they thought lost. And it reaches older people who, through reading, finally understand the thread that has run through their entire lives.

There is no age to start. No background is poor enough, nor is there a history limited enough, to invalidate the encounter with the right book at the right time.

The Personal Power of Knowing Who You Are

Society thrives on words often associated with dominance, control, and hierarchies. But there is a different kind of power, more silent, non-transferable, profoundly personal: the power of those who know who they are.

Those who know who they are don't need constant approval. They don't crumble at the first criticism. They don't get lost in the first challenge. They don't need to copy anyone's life because they recognize that their own life, with all its imperfections and particularities, is worth living fully.

This power doesn't come from books alone. It comes from lived experience, relationships, losses, and the courage to continue. But books are a unique companion on this journey. Because they remind us, repeatedly, that there was always someone who also searched. Who also doubted. Who also chose to be, despite everything, themselves.

Being, despite everything, yourself is perhaps the most beautiful and most difficult thing that exists. Books don't teach you how. But they accompany you while you discover it.



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“Silvia Rodríguez is the executive director of Book 2.0 and Vanilla Project, leading innovative initiatives in the education, cultural, and creative sectors. An expert in creating impactful events and conferences, she has developed platforms that promote dialogue and social transformation.”

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