

THE ICONIC CIRCLE



LITERATURE & SOCIETY

Reading Is Freedom

Why books are far more than entertainment – and why access to literature cannot be taken for granted.

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An editorial article by The Iconic Circle

There are moments when reading seems entirely natural. You sit somewhere pleasant, open a book, read a few pages and immerse yourself in another world for a while. Perhaps by the sea, in a café, in a library or simply at home. There is a book, there is time, and you have the ability to read.

And that is precisely why it is easy to forget that none of this can be taken for granted.

Reading means access, first and foremost: access to knowledge, to stories, to other ways of life and to thoughts that are not our own. Books can entertain, comfort, provoke, educate and sometimes even change how we see the world. Those who read can inform themselves, compare, question and decide.

In this sense, reading is also a form of freedom.

Not because every book automatically sets us free, but because reading opens up possibilities. It allows us to engage with ideas independently. It creates distance from what we are told to accept. It can help us develop language, recognise connections and find a perspective of our own.

Yet for many people, this freedom never even begins.

Some have little access to books. Others grow up in environments where reading plays no part. Still others cannot read, or can do so only to a very limited extent. Financial, social and language barriers add to these difficulties. Cultural participation is unevenly distributed – and so is access to literature.

Children, in particular, show us how crucial it is to encounter books early in life. Not as an obligation, not as a test of achievement, but as an invitation. Those who discover that stories can relate to their own lives often discover more than reading. They discover language, imagination and the possibility of finding their own place in a larger world.

Places where literature comes to life

That is why places devoted to literature matter so much.

Libraries, bookshops, literary centres, schools, little reading corners, public book cabinets, distinctive hotels and cultural spaces create access. They make books visible and give them a place in everyday life. Often, these are the very places that bring literature out of the private sphere and turn it into something shared.

That is also why my interest extends beyond the individual book.

I am interested in where people read. In who passes books on. Who creates spaces. Who brings people into conversation. Who preserves literature and who opens up new ways to access it.

The Iconic Circle grew out of this very idea: a desire to connect books, people, places and encounters. And a conviction that literature is more than something we consume. Literature belongs to our cultural memory. It preserves voices, experiences, thoughts and stories.

Books are part of what we pass on.

Perhaps it all begins with something small: a child finding their first book. A library keeping its doors open. A bookshop where someone discovers exactly the title they need at that moment. Or a person sitting somewhere, opening a book and seeing things from another perspective for a moment.

Reading does not automatically change the world. But it often changes how we see it. And sometimes that is exactly where freedom begins.

An invitation

If you share these thoughts, I warmly invite you to become part of the Circle. Together, we can help make books, education, cultural participation and special literary places more visible and support them. Children, especially, should have access to literature. Because they are the future. Because reading empowers them. Join me, and become part of the Circle.



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