

Midwest Book Review

Praise for **READING MATTERS**

Reviewed by Diane
Donovan June 2022

Reading

Matters Janet

Levine

Armin Lear Press Inc.

978-1-956450-14-9 \$24.95 Hardcover; \$19.95 Paper

It's a well-known adage that "Reading great literature can unlock your mind." But, how exactly does this process work, and how do the results resonate in modern times?

Janet Levine creates an opportunity for literature readers to better understand the importance of literary creations: "Maybe the books we explore open our awareness to ideas we've never thought of—or to an experience we remember in some way. When the books jolt us into recalling those moments, usually subconsciously, a switch clicks on, and we see perceptions and assumptions that we've looked at before in a new light. This may occur in an instantaneousepiphany. Or it might be an epiphany that forms incrementally over time."

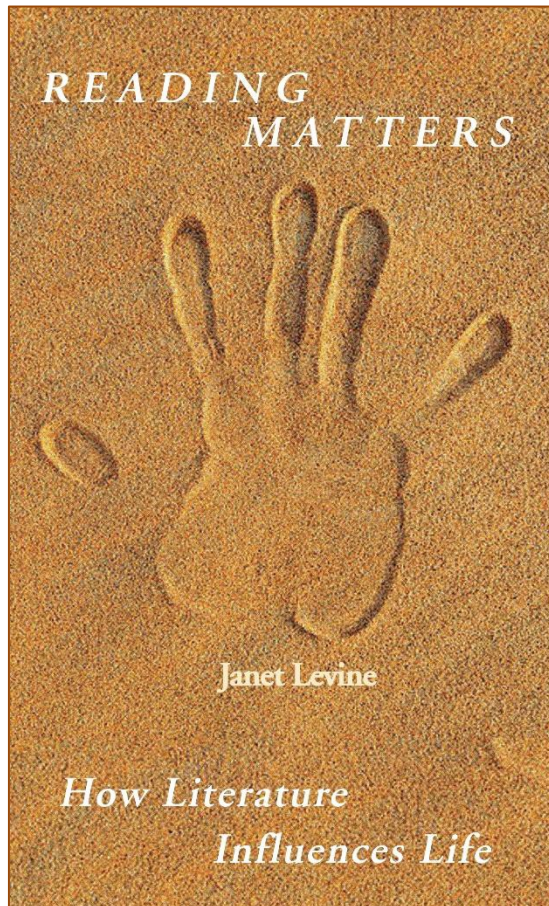
Reading Matters: How Literature Influences Life draws important connections between reading choices and decision-making processes, using a range of literary examples, from Herman Hesse's spiritual journey in *Siddhartha* to the passage of time and its impact on memory in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

More so than most literary analyses, **Reading Matters** explores a sense of self, place, and society that are represented in these major works. It considers the impact of these works around the world and links them in chapters which move between analyses to cross-compare the literature and its impacts on other countries and individual lives.

Ideally, readers of this survey will be either widely read, or will choose to read (or reread) the selected major works featured herein, in conjunction with this book. This approach will lend familiarity and immediacy to Janet Levine's comments and reinterpretations of the characters and their deeper impact and meaning.

Epiphanies tend to come from life experiences, but they also can stem from literary influences. In exploring the presence, nature, and incarnations of these realizations in major writings, Levine provides important food for thought and guidelines for literature classes and readers interested in all kinds of works, from fiction to poetry and plays.

The broad inspections and applications of **Reading Matters deserves recognition and discussion in a variety of ways; from book clubs interested in pursuing literary reinterpretations to high school to college teachers seeking a modern discussion of why classic literature remains relevant and important to today's readers.**



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Great writing in great stories can draw the reader into another's walk, another's way. It's the beginning of human understanding and moral development, qualities sorely needed in today's world. Levine's book is an educator's compelling testimony to that enduring truth.

—Deval L. Patrick, former governor of Massachusetts 2007-2015 (BA, Harvard, English and American Literature)

Janet Levine's thoughtful and creative approach to the act of reading is greatly important. For a reader who fought censorship most of her life, this

book showed me how the freedom to read is an essential link to personal growth and our ability to be pro-active and make a better world.

—Barbara M. Jones, Ph.D. Retired, Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association; Executive Director, Freedom to Read Foundation

As a systems convener of learning communities for over 40 years, I find Levine's book engages inspiring readings that offer effective catalysts for change in mind structure. This book reflects her life's work as an educator.

—Milton D. Cox, Founder and Editor-in-Chief Emeritus, *The Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*

An inspiring demonstration of how great literature can change our minds, and our lives.

—Tom Harper, prize-winning author of *The Orpheus Descent*

Janet Levine's first work *Inside Apartheid* earned media attention throughout the United States. She is also the author of *The Enneagram Intelligences*, nominated for the 2002 Grawemeyer Education Award. Levine is the founder and leader of several successful non-profit organizations in South Africa and the US.