

SHOULD YOU REALLY "READ" AUDIOBOOKS?

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I am not proud of it, but like most literary critics, I had never equated audiobooks to reading an actual book. I had always been sceptic about the notion of listening to a book and rolled my eyes every time someone claimed to have "read" a book via a voice narration.

It was not just because of the "literary elitist" in me, but because I firmly believed that reading a book helped readers lose themselves in a fictitious world meticulously crafted through the magic of words. Au contraire, an audiobook is basically someone else reading to you aloud while you are distracted.

Anyway, nothing made me happier than a paperback in my hand and the fresh whiff of the unadulterated pages taking over my senses. However, upon the cusp of my final year as an undergraduate, I realized that my age-old habit of reading books religiously has dwindled due to all the newly emerged variables of life.

So, one fortunate (or unfortunate) day I decided, "Hey, why not give audiobooks a shot?" And this one moment of epiphany drastically changed the way I perceive audiobooks now.

Audiobooks are my daily drivers now. "What changed your mind," you ask? Well, there are several reasons that I feel might change your mind as well. Here are a few that you might find helpful:

SAVES TIME (ESP. FOR SLOW READERS)

If you are a relatively slower reader, you might tend to give up on voluminous books after reading through the first few chapters due to the sheer amount of time it takes. Even if you are a fast reader, given how hectic our lives get as we become adults, it often becomes difficult to set aside the time to read

through these boisterous novels. However, Audiobooks provide you with the leeway to speed up the reading time as you can easily notch the narration up to 1.5x or 2x speeds. Furthermore, you can also combine the two. For instance, you can read a few chapters during your leisure and listen to the rest when you cannot find an opportune moment of solace to pick up the book.

ENTERTAINMENT DURING TRAFFIC JAMS

An audiobook is a great way to spend time during these congestions. You can just plug in your headphones and listen to a motivational narration or a book to keep yourself calm while you are stuck for what feels like an eternity. I was honestly surprised at how many books I finished on the way from my home to university and back. It definitely takes your mind off and helps you relax during the never-ending traffic jams.

EASY TO CARRY

Portability is a huge positive with audiobooks. It is not always convenient to carry books esp. when you are already travelling heavy or going to a party without backpacks of any sort. On the contrary, you always have your phone with you. This basically means you can carry your audiobook everywhere. So, you can always put on some noise cancelling headphones and immerse in the stories even in the busiest of places.

EXPERT NARRATIONS

The audiobooks are generally articulated by a trained narrator. This adds a different dimension to the

experience as the characters are often eloquently personified. They add emotion, accents and pronunciations you might not have included in your own internal dialogue. They bring the story and its characters to life. Additionally, some audiobooks have comments from the authors or narrators that describe what the author was thinking during that particular section or simplify complex situations. On the flip side, it does take away the scope of imagination at times. It is basically like all the movie adaptations where you cannot really construct the characters on your own rather, the portrayal shapes how you perceive the characters. However, this does not feel

like a major downside since there is still plenty of room for imagination when it comes to audio instead of video.

HELPS WITH YOUR READING HABIT

Audiobooks are a great way to foster the reading habit in kids and beginner readers. It helps you understand how imaginative and wonderful novels can be. The exposure can actually push you to pick up a book. Besides, we always have this humongous "to read" list that we usually keep up with. Audiobooks help you cross off books from the list as can easily listen to them while doing chores that do not require much focus. Furthermore, self-help books, for some weird reason, also feel more apt when they are listened to rather than read.

So, to answer the question, should you really "read" audiobooks? The answer is a resounding yes. Whether you are an avid reader or someone who is trying to get in the habit of reading, audiobooks can be a true blessing.

Nafis Imtiaz Onish believes grinning is the answer to everything and avidly loves art, astronomy & all things nerdy. Send him Carl Sagan fan art at nafisimtiaz17@gmail.com

