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Kenough for All of Us

It seems to be a human trait to look down on others for some reason or another, and what we're reading—or not reading—is one way that happens a lot. In many communities—especially academic ones—there is a clear judgment about what is worth reading and what is not, or what is highbrow and what is lowbrow. Even the terms “highbrow” and “lowbrow” imply a lot of judgement. In fact, they can be traced back to terminology that comes from phrenology, the pseudo-science of “the study of the conformation and especially the contours of the skull based on the former belief that they are indicative of mental faculties and character” (“Phrenology”) that was often used as part of making a claim for white supremacy. From the beginning these words were used to include some and exclude all else, but even calling them canon (those works considered acceptable by the academic and formally educated) and non-cannon (everything else) which might be more politically correct, still has clear ideas of judgement of something being better or worse. However, there are many reasons we should let go of these categories and rankings and understand reading as reading and valuable in and of itself.

There are many arguments for the value of what is generally considered lowbrow literature. Many researchers and writers point out that one of the most commonly disparaged genres, fan fiction, is actually very important at this point in society, noting that fan fiction and other online communities open up the chance to share perspectives and voices of historically

underrepresented groups. there are multiple ways in which we've overlooked the value of a number of different genres.

In addition, it's no secret that comic books, fan fiction, manga, and many other contemporary genres have made their way into classes at universities, and these are more than simply professors wanting to play in class. Understanding that what we easily dismiss as trivial stories are human stories is probably the greatest strength of anyone who looks beyond **exclusive** classifications of literature and delves into works traditionally looked down upon by the establishment.

Looking at recent research and literature, it's clear that many universities, professors, and readers are coming to terms with the idea that even guilty pleasures have things to teach us, but even more than that, perhaps it's time we make a real effort to bring value back to reading simply for the sake of enjoyment, then we might all learn a little more without feeling like we have to hide, ignore, or avoid those things that can make life a bit more fun.

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