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NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

**Rob:** Hello I'm Rob. Welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm joined today by Finn. Hello Finn.

**Finn:** Hi Rob.

**Rob:** Today we're talking about **literacy** – that means the ability to read and write. And one way to improve your literacy is to read books and **literature** in general.

**Finn:** Yes, reading is good for you – and it can be educational – so you can learn things – but of course it's enjoyable too, isn't it Rob?

**Rob:** Well, it depends on what you're reading. But you sound like a fan of books Finn, could we say you're a **bookworm** – that's a person who reads a lot?

**Finn:** Yes, well, I do. I'm reading a book at the moment on the way to work every day and it's very exciting.

**Rob:** Well, I also like to read books but the problem is there are so many books available, it's difficult knowing which one to choose. Anyway, soon we'll be talking about some people who've been awarded for promoting – or encouraging – the love of reading.

**Finn:** Yes, and we'll be using some book-related vocabulary.

**Rob:** But let's start with a question for you Finn. It's about one of the world's longest books which is in French, and it's by Marcel Proust, and translated into English it's called Remembrance of Things Past. So, do you know approximately how many words that book contains? Is it:

- a) 267,000
- b) 1,267,000
- c) 10,267,000

**Finn:** I know this is a very long book. I think it's in several volumes. I'm going to say b) 1,267,000.

**Rob:** OK. Have you read it?

**Finn:** No.

**Rob:** We'll find out if you are right or wrong later on. So let's talk more about literacy. I think we all know that learning to read has many benefits – many good things that help us. But what **inspires** us, or encourages us to read?

**Finn:** Well, I suppose there were our parents and our school teachers – and then we have the **authors** – the people who write the books. A good author can really **capture your imagination** and make you read their stories. Which authors do you like, Rob?

**Rob:** Well, as a child, I loved Roald Dahl, who wrote stories like Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Now, that was **fiction** – imaginary stories – not based on real people. Now I like travel stories, such as ones by American travel writer, Paul Theroux.

**Finn:** Yes and he also writes novels so we could also call him a **novelist**.

**Rob:** Now, you may have heard of J.K. Rowling. She wrote the Harry Potter books. She is one author who was recently recognised for improving people's love of reading. The UK's National Literacy Trust named her a 'literacy hero' for "turning a generation of children into readers".

**Finn:** Another 'literacy hero' was the actor Henry Winkler, who has **dyslexia** – that's a condition where your brain makes it hard to read certain words. He has written books about a boy with learning difficulties.

**Rob:** Now, not all the 'heroes' are authors. The Trust also honoured schoolchildren, a **librarian** and teachers for their efforts in trying to get people to read.

**Finn:** Yes, reading can also help in other ways. Recently, the former world champion boxer, Mike Tyson said he read books by Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky when he was in prison.

**Rob:** Well, author, Pat Winslow, who worked as a writer in prisons explains why reading and understanding books is a good thing. What words does she use to describe how they looked at **characters** – that's the people – in a book?

**Pat Winslow, author**

*When I was working in prison, very often we would have discussions about the moral compass of a character, what was the motivation of somebody, why did they behave that way? And when people were writing as well, they were actually reflecting on themselves and reflecting on their own patterns of behaviour.*

**Rob:** So she says she discussed stories with prisoners – and one of things they looked at was the **moral compass** of the characters. That's a natural feeling someone has that makes them know what is wrong and what it is right.

**Finn:** They also discussed characters' **motivation** – what made them do things a certain way. And this helped prisoners look at what they themselves had done and what they should do in the future.

**Rob:** So there's an example of how reading can help. Now Finn, have you had any help in answering today's question?

**Finn:** No Rob. It was a complete guess, Rob!

**Rob:** Well, earlier I said the world's longest book is called, in English, Remembrance of Things Past by Marcel Proust. Did you know approximately how many words it contained? Was it:

- a) 267,000
- b) 1,267,000
- c) 10,267,000

**Finn:** Rob, I really have no idea so I'm going to go for b) the middle option.

**Rob:** Which means you were right. It is 1,267,000 words.

**Finn:** That's nothing. A novella. A short novel!

**Rob:** The first volume of this 13-volume book was published in 1913 and contained 9,600,000 characters – I don't mean people, but letters.

**Finn:** I just googled it and found the name in French – À la recherche du temps perdu.

**Rob:** Well done! Well, we hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Please join us again soon for another 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

**Both:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| literacy                 | the ability to read and write   |
| bookworm                 | person who likes to read books and spends a lot of time doing it  |
| inspires                 | gives someone the encouragement or enthusiasm to do something   |
| authors                  | people who write books  |
| capture your imagination | interests or fascinates you   |
| fiction                  | books and stories about imaginary events and people   |
| novelist                 | someone who writes novels (or long fictional stories)   |
| dyslexia                 | a medical condition affecting the brain that makes it difficult for someone to read and spell words correctly |
| librarian                | person who works in a library   |
| characters               | people in story in a book or film   |
| moral compass            | a feeling someone gets that makes them decide what is right or wrong  |
| motivation               | (here) reason for doing something   |

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[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2014/09/140904\\_6min\\_literacy.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2014/09/140904_6min_literacy.shtml)

### More about literacy:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-25219777>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-24953538>